
Sober Second Thought: The Effects of Accountability, Anger, and Authoritarianism on Attributions of Responsibility

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This experiment explored the joint impact of accountability, anger, and authoritarianism on attributions of responsibility. Participants were either accountable or anonymous while watching an anger-priming or a neutral-emotion-priming video clip. In an ostensibly separate study, participants also were either accountable or anonymous while determining responsibility and punishment in fictional tort cases. As predicted, priming anger both simplified cognitive processing (i.e., reduced the number of cues used in making judgments) and amplified the carryover of self-reported anger to punitive attributions and actual punishment. By contrast, accountability increased the complexity of the judgment process and attenuated the carryover of anger to attributions and punishment. These results generalized across four replication cases that varied in story content; degree of defendant intentionality; and target, type, and severity of harm.

Anybody can become angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy.

—Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Psychologists have begun to unravel the complexities of this Aristotelian insight by exploring how anger arises and how it influences subsequent judgments (Averill, 1983; Lerner & Dodge, 1993; Quigley & Tedeschi, 1996). Research converges on two important principles. First, anger arises primarily when people attribute harm to stable, controllable, internal causes within a perpetrator, producing strong inferences of blame (Averill, 1983;

Betancourt & Blair, 1992; Weiner, Folkes, Amirkhan, & Verette, 1987; Weiner, Graham, & Chandler, 1982). As such, anger is the principal emotion associated with justice judgments. Second, once anger arises, it activates simple heuristic modes of information processing. Anger leads people to rely on stereotypes and easily processed rather than effort-demanding cues (Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994). It also leads people to attribute negative outcomes to individuals rather than to situational forces (Keltner, Ellsworth, & Edwards, 1993). Whether one explains this pattern of anger judgment correspondence by invoking a recursive relationship between blame cognitions and anger (Quigley & Tedeschi, 1996) or an associative network (Berkowitz, 1990), it becomes clear that anger can activate blame cognitions as much as blame cognitions can activate anger.

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Building on these two principles, one might ask (a) whether people routinely assign greater blame when they feel angry than when they do not or (b) whether decision contexts that encourage people to be self-reflective moderate the tendency for anger to enhance blame attributions. Given that people make most decisions in social/institutional contexts in which they feel (implicitly or explicitly) accountable for their conduct (Semin & Manstead, 1983) and that certain types of accountability encourage self-reflective thought and moderate other judgmental biases (for reviews, see Lerner & Tetlock, 1994, in press; Tetlock & Lerner, in press), the possibility that accountability moderates how readily people translate anger into attributions of responsibility merits investigation.

The present research explores how accountability and anger triggered by a prior event affect punitiveness toward defendants in fictional tort cases. We adapted a now standard priming method by inducing punitiveness in one study with an anger-arousing video and examining its effects on attribution of responsibility in a second, ostensibly unrelated study. Participants were either accountable or unaccountable for their responses to the anger-priming or neutral-emotion-priming video. In the ostensibly separate study, participants also were either accountable or unaccountable for their responsibility attributions.

Hypotheses: Amplifying and Attenuating Punitiveness

Based on prior research (Averill, 1983; Keltner, Ellsworth, & Edwards, 1993; Quigley & Tedeschi, 1996), we expected that anger-primed participants subsequently would make more punitive attributions than would neutral-emotion-primed participants. Moreover, we expected that these effects would occur across a wide range of vignettes despite the fact that the defendant appeared in a separate study and had no relation to the source of the participants' anger. Consistent with Wilson and Brekke (1996), this punitive carryover could be viewed as a form of "mental contamination" in which the implicit desire to punish operates outside of conscious awareness, causing people to use arguably irrelevant information (their emotional state) in their subsequent judgments.

Drawing on the tendency for people to react negatively when their belief in a just world is threatened (Lerner & Miller, 1978) and on Durkheim's (1893/1984) classic analysis of the social-psychological functions of punishment, we proposed that participants who saw the anger-inducing video would be more prone to punish future defendants if they learned that the transgressor in the video had escaped punishment than if they learned that he had been caught and punished. Drawing on evidence that authoritarianism reliably pre-

dicts the tendency to feel threatened by violations of the social order and to respond punitively (Altemeyer, 1988; Griffitt & Garcia, 1979; for a recent review, see Peterson, Dory, & Winter, 1993), we also expected that high-authoritarian participants would make more punitive attributions than would low-authoritarian participants across all four vignettes.

Accountability could moderate the impact of situational and dispositional predictors of punitiveness in two analytically distinctive ways: (a) inducing more complex and nuanced processing (thus attenuating the tendency toward greater punitiveness among anger-primed and authoritarian participants by increasing the number of cues considered) or (b) inducing less complex heuristic processing (thus reducing punitiveness by turning participants into "fence-sitters" who simply want to avoid appearing overly punitive to the interviewer (cf. Cialdini, Levy, Herman, & Evenbeck, 1973)).

The first hypothesis asserts that, under conditions of normative ambiguity (when the views of the prospective audience are unknown), accountable participants should abandon their cognitively miserly ways and become flexible, balanced thinkers who actively entertain counterarguments from conflicting sides. In a pre-emptively self-critical fashion, they prepare to account for their position by scrutinizing both exacerbating and extenuating circumstances surrounding transgressions and constructing complex anticipatory justifications for those attributions (Tetlock, Skitka, & Boettger, 1989). The result of this self-critical process should be judgments that are more nuanced, less extreme, and less susceptible to incidental emotion. Previous research lends support to this hypothesis. Accountability to an unknown audience reduced the tendency for happy persons to rely on stereotypes in social judgment (Bodenhausen, Kramer, & Süsser, 1994), increased tolerance for evaluative inconsistency (recognizing both good and bad features of particular policies) (Tetlock, 1983), reduced overattribution and overconfidence (Tetlock, 1985; Tetlock & Kim, 1987), and generally activated more complex and systematic forms of information processing (Chaiken, 1980; Hagafors & Brehmer, 1983; Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; McAllister, Mitchell, & Beach, 1979; Mero & Motowidlo, 1995).

According to the second hypothesis, accountability does not increase complexity of thought; rather, it just triggers impression management movement toward either the anticipated audience or the safe mid-point on response scales (cf. Cialdini et al., 1973; Tetlock, 1983). In this view, participants seek to avoid (a) appearing excessively punitive and (b) the cognitive work of analyzing complex patterns of information in the tort cases. Consistent with this general logic, experimental work has shown repeatedly that when participants know (or

think they know) the views of their prospective audience, they shift their own views toward a more easily defensible position (Adelberg & Batson, 1978; Jones & Wortman, 1973; Klimoski & Inks, 1990; Tetlock, 1983; Tetlock et al., 1989).

*Hypotheses: Disentangling Heuristic
From Systematic Routes to Attenuation*

Several tests can help disentangle the heuristic versus systematic processing explanations. If, as the heuristic hypothesis holds, accountable participants simply want to avoid appearing punitive to an interviewer and therefore avoid making extreme judgments, only participants in an accountable for responsibility judgments condition should make less punitive responses. Because unaccountable participants, and participants in an accountable for responses to the video condition, think that their responsibility attributions for the negligence (tort) cases are completely private, they have no reason to censor their responsibility attributions. If, as the systematic processing hypothesis holds, accountability leads participants to process all information in a more complex and self-critical manner, then they should heed only normatively relevant information (e.g., volitional control) and not permit "irrelevant anger" to contaminate and inflate later judgments of punitiveness. As a result, participants in both accountability conditions should make less punitive responses. The latent hypothesis here is this: Once accountable-for-video-responses participants learn in the "video study" that an interviewer will evaluate their responses, their very mind-set should shift from that of passive responders to that of active information searchers. This shift should persist (at least) to the conclusion of the "attribution study." Similar to the persistent cognitive effects observed from manipulations of mindfulness (Alexander, Langer, Newman, Chandler, & Davies, 1989; Langer, 1989) and minority influence (Nemeth & Chiles, 1988; Nemeth & Kwan, 1985), we predict that accountability will produce cognitive effects that extend beyond the initial task in which those effects are activated.

Further evidence for disentangling heuristic from systematic effects will come from tests of attributional differences between accountable and unaccountable participants. According to Shaver's (1985) prescriptive model for attributing responsibility, the extent to which an actor has control over an outcome should be one of several key determinants of the extent to which the actor is held responsible for the outcome. If the systematic processing hypothesis holds, then the degree of actor's volition (theoretically a function of the presence of free will and the absence of external coercion) should increase attributional punitiveness toward the defendant among both groups of accountable participants. By con-

trast, unaccountable participants should not pay attention to this information. They will determine responsibility via global impressionistic assessments that are skewed by selective attention to information congruent with their emotions (Forgas, 1995).

We also will examine whether an angry attributional set carries over from anger elicited by the video to judgments of heightened intentionality in the vignettes among unaccountable but not accountable participants. If the systematic processing account holds up, then increasing anger elicited by the video will lead to higher perceived intentionality in the vignettes, but only among unaccountable participants. Motivated to analyze the evidence in a self-critical manner, both groups of accountable participants should be less likely to allow anger to sway their perceptions of intentionality.

Finally, evidence will come from tests of differences in emotional experience between accountable and unaccountable participants. Because this is the first study to investigate the impact of accountability on emotion, emotion predictions for the systematic processing hypothesis could take several forms. One variant of the systematic processing hypothesis would suggest that balanced, self-critical thought will lead participants accountable for their video reactions to experience less emotion, particularly anger (cf. Erber, Wegner, & Theriault, 1996). Another variant would suggest that accountability *will not* affect the intensity of emotion but *will* affect the extent to which anger influences subsequent attributions. We will test both (a) whether accountable participants experience less emotion than do unaccountable participants and (b) whether the causal paths between anger over the video and subsequent punitiveness toward the actors in the vignettes fall to insignificance among accountable, but not among unaccountable, participants.

METHOD

Overview

Participants were led to believe that they were participating in three unrelated studies. The first study asked participants to complete a self-report questionnaire "for demographic purposes," the second to watch and respond to a video clip for "perceptual research," and the third to read and respond to vignettes for "attribution research." After all three studies, participants responded to a series of funnel interview probes designed to assess demand awareness.

Participants

A total of 291 undergraduate psychology students participated in return for course credit. Two independent judges, blind to condition, coded responses to

the funnel sequence of demand awareness questions. The coders assigned scores of 0 to responses that demonstrated no awareness whatsoever of the true hypotheses and of any connection among the studies (e.g., "to study juries"). They assigned scores of 1 to responses that essentially reiterated the introductory information given to participants (e.g., "to study how people determine responsibility") or generated a novel hypothesis that contained no awareness of the connection among studies (e.g., "to study effect of differences between whether the incident occurred to you personally or someone else"). Scores of 2 represented responses that generated a plausible but incorrect hypothesis about the connection among the studies (e.g., "connection between political ideology and legal blame"). Finally, the coders assigned scores of 3 to responses that contained evidence that participants accurately understood the true hypotheses and connection among studies (e.g., "to see whether the video affected how I respond to the questionnaires"). Reliability analysis of the codes yielded an alpha of .95. A total of 86% of participants received scores of 1 or lower, whereas 9% received scores of 2. Those participants who received scores of 3 (3%) were dropped from all analyses, as were students who mistakenly participated more than once (2%). The final sample consisted of 278 participants.

Design

To examine the effects of anger and accountability on punitiveness across diverse situations, this study employed a $3 \times 3 \times 4$ mixed factorial design that manipulated accountability (unaccountable, accountable for perceptions of video clip, accountable for responsibility judgments in vignettes), emotion priming (anger with injustice feedback, anger with justice feedback, neutral prime with no reference to crime), and vignette content (construction worker, parking attendant, used car salesman, assembly line foreman). Accountability and emotion priming were between-participant factors, whereas vignette content was a within-participant replication factor.

Materials

Authoritarianism measure. A 7-item scale with possible responses ranging from 1 to 7 measured authoritarianism (adapted from Skitka & Tetlock, 1992, 1993). The items asked participants to indicate how important it was to strengthen law and order, follow God's will, increase politeness, preserve respect for authority, maintain respect for the United States as a world power, preserve moral standards by punishing troublemakers, and teach children the virtue of respect for authority.¹

Emotion induction. Prior research (Gross & Levenson, 1995) indicated that video clips successfully provide a dynamic rather than static means of eliciting discrete emotions such as anger with only minimal levels of other emotions. Therefore, we employed a video clip pretested to elicit anger in which a bully humiliates and beats up a teenager (Gross & Levenson, 1995). Just prior to watching it, the experimenter explained that there would not be enough time to show the end of the video and so she would let participants know ahead of time how it turned out. In the *anger with injustice feedback* condition, participants read that "the bully was charged for his crime and found not guilty because of a technicality." The bully and his friend "walked away from the trial as free men, and both have been in trouble with the law subsequently." Participants in the anger with justice feedback condition watched the same video and read ahead of time that "both the bully and his friend served a significant amount of time in jail for their crimes. After their release, neither man has been in trouble with the law."

By contrast, in the *neutral-emotion* condition, we employed a video clip of abstract shapes and colors that previously has been shown to elicit little or no emotion (Gross & Levenson, 1995). No justice or injustice feedback accompanied this video clip.

Accountability induction. In both accountability conditions, participants read that they would be interviewed by an expert with unspecified views on the topic and that their interviews would be audiotaped for the interviewer to better examine their responses and assess the character and quality of the reasoning behind their choices. At the start of the "second study," participants assigned to the *accountability for video perceptions* condition heard and read the following:

Dr. Alan Barnett will interview you about your judgments and feelings in response to the video you are about to see. Dr. Barnett is a postdoctoral researcher in communication studies. Please bring your responses to the video with you to the interview room so that he can examine them. Leave other materials here.

At the start of the "third study," these same participants were told that their attributions would be completely private and anonymous. As such, they were instructed to write personally identifying information only on the (removable) cover page. By contrast, participants assigned to the *accountability for responsibility judgments* condition were told that their responses to the video would be private and anonymous. They were given the same instructions about writing identifying information only on the cover page. At the start of third study, they were told,

Dr. Alan Barnett will interview you about your judgments and feelings in response to the case you are about to read. Dr. Barnett is a postdoctoral researcher working for a bipartisan commission studying how people determine responsibility for harm. The commission is not linked to any political party. Please bring your attribution sheets with you to the interview room so that he can examine them. Leave other materials here.²

Finally, participants assigned to the *unaccountable* condition read prior to each study that their responses would remain confidential and that they should write personally identifying information only on the (removable) cover page. They expected no further contact with any associates of the experiment.

Vignette manipulation. To test the replicability of effects, the within-participant factor presented participants with four different vignettes in counterbalanced order. Two vignettes (used car salesman, assembly line foreman) came from a study by Hamilton and Sanders (1981); the other two (construction worker, parking attendant) were constructed for this experiment. The Appendix presents each vignette in full. The vignettes differ from each other in several ways, notably (a) story content (negligent main actor is either a construction worker, a parking attendant, an assembly line foreman, or a used car salesman), (b) the person who experiences harm (harm occurs to self vs. another person), (c) the type of harm (broken ankle and collarbone, unspecified broken bones, dismembered hand, or unforeseen car repair), (d) the severity of harm, and (e) the level of main actor's intentionality. Whereas differences in dimensions (a) through (c) are face valid, a pilot study ($N = 24$) confirmed differences in dimensions (d) and (e) for each of the counterbalanced vignettes. The raters perceived higher intentionality in the assembly line vignette ($M = 4.08$) than in the parking attendant vignette, $t(23) = 2.68, p < .05$, and perceived higher intentionality in the used car salesman vignette than in the average of the other three vignettes, $t(23) = -7.59, p < .05$. They also perceived the harm in the used car salesman vignette as significantly less severe than that in the average of the other three vignettes, $t(23) = -8.65, p < .01$.

Procedure

The experimenter informed participants that they would be taking part in a series of three short and unrelated studies because her experiment alone would not fill the allotted time. She explained that two faculty members in the department each had added a brief study to make use of the full 1-hour session.

The first study ostensibly investigated demographic patterns. Participants completed 7 items measuring authoritarianism and 5 filler items measuring political beliefs. The second study ostensibly investigated "how people respond to videos." Participants watched a video for approximately 4 minutes and then completed an emotional arousal questionnaire in which they rated the extent to which they felt each of 27 separate emotion terms (cf. Gross & Levenson, 1995). The emotions appeared in alphabetical order so as not to indicate our interest in any single emotion.³

The third study ostensibly investigated how people determine responsibility for harm. Participants read a series of four counterbalanced vignettes, each describing a harm resulting from negligence by a worker. Immediately after reading each vignette, participants completed a series of Likert 7-point scales (ranging from 1 to 7) assessing their reactions to it. In these, 1 item assessed perceptions of the main actor's volition and free will, and 3 filler items asked general questions about the vignette. Drawing on prior attribution of responsibility research (Fincham & Jaspars, 1980; Hamilton, 1978; Schlenker, Britt, Pennington, Murphy, & Doherty, 1994; Shaver, 1985; Weiner, 1995), the following 5 items assessed punitiveness toward the main actor in each vignette:

1. To what extent should the construction worker (parking attendant/assembly line foreman/used car salesman) be blamed for not preventing your injury, if at all?
2. To what extent should the construction worker (parking attendant/assembly line foreman/used car salesman) be punished for not preventing your injury, if at all?
3. Was the construction worker (parking attendant/assembly line foreman/used car salesman) reckless and irresponsible in this situation?
4. To what extent was the construction worker (parking attendant/assembly line foreman/used car salesman) negligent, if at all?
5. How much money, if any, should the construction worker (parking attendant/assembly line foreman/used car salesman) have to pay you (the worker/car owner) for pain and suffering?

Collapsing the 5 punitive items across the four vignettes produced a 20-item punitiveness scale with an overall alpha of .82.

After responding to all the questions for each vignette, participants gave open-ended responses to one question about how they determined responsibility in the last vignette they read, and they also answered a funnel series of questions designed to assess demand awareness—a series that began with general questions about the possible purpose and hypotheses of the third

study and ended with specific questions about possible connections among all three studies:

1. What do you think the purpose of this study was?
2. What hypotheses were the researchers trying to test?
3. How many separate studies did you participate in this hour?
4. If you participated in more than one study, were they unrelated or related to each other?
5. If any were related, what do you think the connection was?

Finally, accountable participants were sent to an interview office in another part of the building. Once participants reached the supposed interview office, a sign on the shut door offered one of several possible excuses for canceling all further interviews that hour (e.g., interviews running behind, interviewer left for lunch) and instructed participants to (a) complete a short questionnaire in lieu of the interview and (b) take credit and debriefing forms from a folder taped to the door.⁴ Unaccountable participants received credit and debriefing forms immediately after completing all questions. All participants were mailed a letter after all data had been collected that fully disclosed the procedures and reiterated participants' rights as participants.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

To establish the effectiveness of the anger prime, we ran an analysis of variance (ANOVA) on self-reported levels of anger after watching the video. Replicating the results of Gross and Levenson (1995), the standardized anger scores for negative-emotion-primed participants ($M = .41$) exceeded those of neutral-emotion-primed participants ($M = -.77$) by more than 1 standard deviation, $F(1, 275) = 126.02$, $p < .01$. This effect did not interact with authoritarianism, nor was there a main effect of authoritarianism on anger. Contrary to our predictions, no differences emerged between the anger primed with injustice feedback and the anger primed with justice feedback conditions. In light of this result, we tested for all possible interactions among justice priming and the other independent variables affecting responsibility attribution. Because no more differences emerged than would be expected by chance, all future analyses collapse across the two levels of justice feedback in anger priming.⁵

Prior to collapsing analyses across the vignette replication factor, a multiple ANOVA (MANOVA) tested whether the independent variables produced different effects on different vignettes including possible interactions. As expected, no more differences emerged than

would be expected by chance, and none of the differences meaningfully altered any of the patterns reported here.

Initial tests of reliability for the authoritarianism scale yielded acceptable but weak results; the average interitem correlation was .35, and the alpha was .76. To refine the scale, we omitted 2 items with notably lower individual item-to-total correlations: (a) importance of following God's will and (b) importance of increasing politeness. This procedure created a stronger average interitem correlation ($r = .50$) and a more reliable scale (alpha = .82). Finally, we divided participants into high and low authoritarianism based on a median split.

Principal components analyses of the emotion items with varimax rotation yielded five factors before eigenvalues fell below 1: anger, interest, fear, happiness, and irritation. All factors formed reliable scales; alpha levels were .94, .84, .90, .76, and .67, respectively.

Hypothesis Testing

Did anger and authoritarianism amplify punitiveness? As predicted, participants exposed to the anger prime made more punitive attributions than did participants exposed to the neutral-emotion prime, $F(1, 270) = 4.65$, $p < .05$, anger prime $M = .07$ versus neutral-emotion prime $M = -.14$. Also, high authoritarians made more punitive attributions than did low authoritarians, $F(1, 270) = 11.06$, $p < .01$, high authoritarians $M = .19$ versus low authoritarians $M = -.19$. Both main effects held across all four vignettes. No interaction emerged between these variables. It also is important to note that no first-order interactions emerged between either of these variables and accountability, nor did any second-order interactions emerge among all three variables.

*Did accountability attenuate punitiveness among angry participants?*⁶ As predicted, a planned comparison found that participants exposed to the anger prime made less punitive attributions if they were accountable than if they were unaccountable, $t(181) = 2.27$, $p < .05$, accountable $M = -.05$ versus unaccountable $M = .30$. Somewhat surprisingly, participants exposed to the neutral-emotion prime also made less punitive attributions if they were accountable than if they were unaccountable, $t(93) = 1.96$, $p < .05$, accountable $M = -.28$ versus unaccountable $M = .11$. Both effects held across all four vignettes. The top half of Table 1 presents punitiveness means as a function of emotion at each level of accountability.

Did accountability attenuate punitiveness among high authoritarians? As predicted, high-authoritarian participants made less punitive attributions if they were accountable than if they were unaccountable, $t(137) = 1.75$, $p < .05$, accountable $M = .07$ versus unaccountable

TABLE 1: Punitiveness as a Function of Accountability, Emotion, and Authoritarianism

	Unaccountable	Accountable for Video Reactions	Accountable for Responsibility Attributions
Neutral prime	.11 ^a	-.29 ^b	-.26 ^b
Anger prime	.30 ^a	-.09 ^b	-.01 ^b
Low authoritarian	.09 ^a	-.28 ^b	-.39 ^b
High authoritarian	.37 ^a	.02 ^b	.12 ^{b*}

NOTE: Positive numbers indicate increasing punitiveness. Means in the same row that do not share superscripts differ at $p < .05$ in single degree of freedom comparisons.

* $p < .10$.

$M = .37$. Low-authoritarian participants also made less punitive attributions if they were accountable than if they were unaccountable, $t(137) = 2.29$, $p < .05$, accountable $M = -.32$ versus unaccountable $M = .09$. Both effects held across all four vignettes. The bottom half of Table 1 presents punitiveness means as a function of authoritarianism at each level of accountability.

Did accountability activate systematic cognitive and emotional processing? This hypothesis suggests that anger should drive punitiveness among unaccountable but not accountable participants. By contrast, potentially mitigating versus exculpatory information in the vignettes, such as perceptions of free will versus coercion, should influence punitiveness among accountable but not among unaccountable participants.

To test this idea, we regressed participants' punitiveness scores against their perceptions of the extent to which the defendant acted out of free will versus coercion and their self-reported anger. A significant interaction emerged between accountability and perceptions of control/free will, $b = .56$, $t(3, 274) = 3.33$, $p < .01$. Increasing perceptions of free will for the defendants led to increasing punitiveness toward those defendants, but only for accountable participants. Unaccountable participants failed to consider the coerciveness of the situation confronting the main actor. The interaction between accountability and self-reported anger was not significant, but a comparison of the Pearson correlations between anger and punitiveness among unaccountable participants ($r = .20$) and accountable for attributions participants ($r = -.01$) approached significance ($p = .08$).⁷ Figure 1 summarizes the paths to punitiveness as a function of accountability. Whereas self-reported anger significantly predicted punitiveness among unaccountable participants but not among accountable participants, perceived free will predicted punitiveness among accountable participants but not among unaccountable participants.

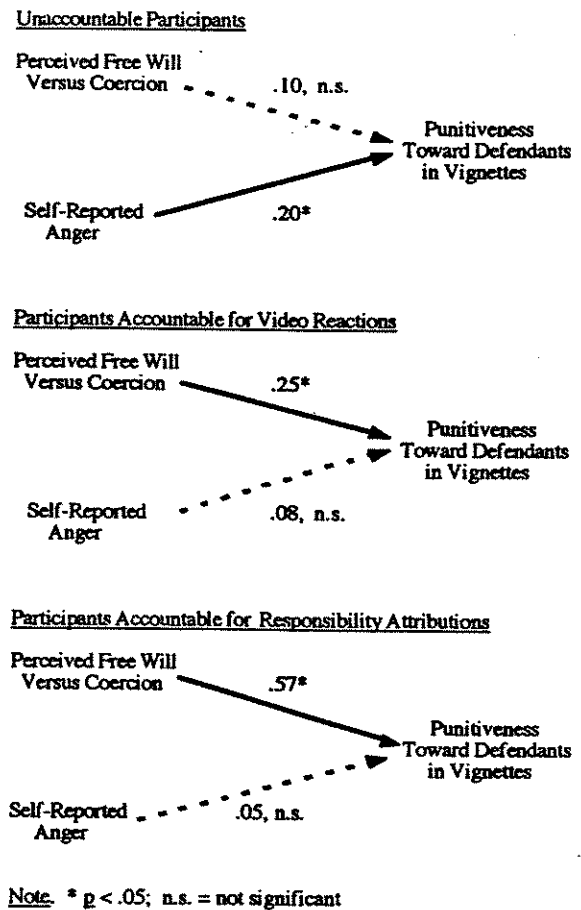


Figure 1. Three paths to punitiveness: The influence of perceived personal control of actors across the four vignettes and participants' self-reported anger as a function of accountability.

Drawing on past work on the tendency of anger to both simplify thought and activate blame cognitions, as well as the tendency of accountability to motivate self-reflective and systematic information processing, it was hypothesized that an angry attributional set should carry over from anger elicited by the video to judgments of heightened intentionality in the vignettes, but only among unaccountable participants. As expected, increasing anger led unaccountable participants to perceive greater intentionality among the actors in each vignette, $b = .22$, $t(96) = 2.20$, $p < .05$. By contrast, increasing anger had no effect on perceptions of intentionality among accountable participants, $b = .01$, $t(178) = 0.11$, $p > .10$.

As a check on the robustness of these effects, we tested whether this same pattern would hold not just for how

punitively participants thought about the actors but also for how punitively they acted toward the actors. To test this idea, we created an aggregate punishment index by averaging the standard scores for the two punishment items across vignettes:

1. How much money, if any, should the construction worker (parking attendant/assembly line foreman/used car salesman) have to pay you (the worker/car owner) for pain and suffering?
2. To what extent should the construction worker (parking attendant/assembly line foreman/used car salesman) be punished for not preventing your injury, if at all?

We then regressed punishment scores onto self-reported anger separately for accountable and unaccountable participants. As expected, among unaccountable participants, increasing anger over the video led to increasingly severe punishment of the principal defendants in the vignettes, $F(1, 96) = 9.69, p < .01$. By contrast, among accountable participants, increasing anger had no effect on severity of punishment, $F(1, 178) = 2.56, p > .10$. Also consistent with the systematic processing hypothesis, perceptions of free will versus coercion had no effect on severity of the punishment among unaccountable participants ($p > .10$). These participants punished the principal defendants in each vignette with equal severity regardless of the extent of perceived external coercion. By contrast, perceptions of free will versus coercion influenced the severity of punishment among accountable participants, $F(1, 178) = 8.60, p < .01$.

In sum, it is worth noting that not only participants accountable for their responsibility attributions but also participants accountable for their video responses adhered to Shaver's (1985) normative model. Apparently, a preemptively self-critical mind-set, once activated among participants in the accountable for video reactions condition, persisted to the conclusion of the attribution study.

Did accountability moderate emotion? We submitted the average of the five emotion factor scores to a one-way accountability ANOVA. Consistent with the diminished-emotion hypothesis, participants accountable for their reactions to the video reported experiencing less overall emotion, ($M = -.09$) than did participants accountable for responsibility attributions and unaccountable participants ($M = .05$), $F(1, 276) = 6.3, p = .01$. However, no differences emerged in anger across the three conditions, $F(1, 276) = 3.3, p > .05$. Participants accountable for video reactions were every bit as angered by the video as were participants in the other two conditions. In addition, an analysis of covariance among participants accountable for video reactions found that covarying out

anger scores did not diminish the effects of accountability on punitiveness.

DISCUSSION

Amplifying and Attenuating Punitiveness

Although participants believed that the attribution study was unrelated to the video study, the anger-primed participants made more punitive attributions than did participants who were not primed to experience any particular emotion. This extends the previous finding that not only stable moods (cf. Schwarz & Clore, 1983) but also temporarily activated emotions shape judgment processes (Bodenhausen, Kramer, & Süsser, 1994; Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994). Furthermore, angry participants are more punitive, even though the anger is "incidental" as opposed to "integral" affect (Bodenhausen, 1993); the target that elicited the emotion no longer is present, and participants themselves think that the anger-eliciting situation and the later attributional judgments are completely unrelated. This finding also is consistent with the two principles described in the introductory paragraphs: (a) that anger plays a primary role in justice judgments and (b) that anger elicits simple heuristic modes of thought. Finally, this finding is consistent with Wilson and Brekke's (1996) recent analysis of mental contamination.⁸ The punitive carryover might represent a form of misattribution; people apparently do not recognize the true determinants of their judgments. The implicit desire to punish operates at least in part outside of conscious awareness, causing people to use irrelevant information in their subsequent judgments.⁹

As expected, punitiveness was affected by dispositional propensities as well as by situational prompts to punish. High authoritarians made more punitive attributions than did low authoritarians, although high authoritarians were no more affected than low authoritarians by the anger-inducing norm violation portrayed in the video. The first finding is consistent with prior research on authoritarians and their reactions to potential threat to law and order (for a review, see Peterson et al., 1993). The second finding suggests that there is no special dispositional sensitivity to respond to this emotion induction by becoming angry. Because the scene in the video unambiguously violated fairness norms, individual differences in sensitivity to such violations apparently were overwhelmed. Almost all participants experienced intense anger and, unless explicitly encouraged by accountability pressures to become more self-reflective, translated those feelings into more punitive judgments of unrelated events. Future research might explore the possibility that authoritarianism predisposes

heightened anger only in situations involving ambiguity about whether norm violations occurred.

Accountability, whether activated before or after the emotion prime, attenuated punitiveness. This attenuation occurred, moreover, regardless of how angry or how strongly authoritarian participants felt prior to making judgments of responsibility and punishment.

Mechanisms Mediating Attenuation Effects

This study assessed the relative merits of two conflicting interpretations of attenuation. According to one interpretation, attenuation may be due to systematic cognitive and emotional processing in which accountable participants attempt to exercise self-control over their judgment process and to prevent indefensible considerations (e.g., anger over a prior event) from contaminating the judgment at hand (Tetlock, 1983, 1985; Tetlock & Kim, 1987; Tetlock et al., 1989). According to the other interpretation, attenuated punitiveness is simply a low-effort attempt among accountable participants to gain the favor of the prospective audience by conforming to its standards.

On the one hand, the lack of interactions between (a) anger and accountability and (b) authoritarianism and accountability suggests that a simple response-threshold adjustment model might explain the data. According to this model, accountable participants simply became more reluctant—across the board—to endorse punitive sentiments because they suspected that the interviewer would disapprove of such views (a possibility notwithstanding our efforts to make the preferences of the anticipated audience as opaque as possible).

On the other hand, if response-threshold adjustment occurred, then it was not a simple low-effort process. Here we need to consider four patterns of evidence that support the systematic interpretation.

First, if one invokes Shaver's (1985) prescriptive model for the attribution of responsibility as a normative baseline, then accountability switched off the normatively unjustifiable cue and switched on the normatively justifiable one; accountable participants considered the possibility of coercion before attributing blame, and they were relatively less influenced by their own preexisting anger when compared to unaccountable participants.¹⁰ By contrast, unaccountable participants failed to consider situational constraints and the extent of the actor's free will in determining his responsibility; they simply translated their anger into more punitive judgments toward the tort defendants.

Second, punitive attenuation, coupled with increased attributional complexity, occurred regardless of whether accountable participants expected to justify their reactions to the video in the second study or to justify their attributions in the third study. Thus, even accountable

participants who thought that their attributions would be completely private displayed attenuated punitiveness and a systematic mode of processing.

Third, the most common response to open-ended questions about whether the prospect of being interviewed affected the way in which participants responded to questions during the experiment was, in the words of one participant, "I thought more about the reasons why I picked certain answers and made sure that I had justification for each response." Importantly, *none* of the open-ended responses indicated that participants thought less punitiveness would be evaluated favorably. In addition, *none* of the responses contained inferences about the views of the prospective interviewer.

Fourth, rather than finding differences in the degree of anger experienced, anger was as high among participants accountable for video reactions (pre-emotion priming) as it was among unaccountable participants and participants accountable for responsibility attributions (post-emotion priming). This suggests that accountability did not attenuate punitiveness by reducing anger triggered by norm violations. Accountability apparently attenuated punitiveness by influencing how participants dealt with their anger.

Taken together, these four lines of evidence favor a systematic rather than a heuristic interpretation. The route to attenuation appears to be a conscious monitoring of mental processes in which accountable participants ask themselves the question: What justification do I have for attributing blame and assigning punishment? This interpretation is consistent with prior work documenting that pre-decisional accountability, under certain circumstances, can motivate people to form more differentiated impressions of others (Tetlock, 1992; Tetlock & Lerner, in press). It also leads to the testable hypothesis that cognitive capacity will interact with accountability when predicting punitiveness. Attenuation among accountable participants should appear only when participants are not under cognitive load (cf. Gilbert & Osborne, 1989) or time pressure (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983).

Perhaps the most interesting implication for accountability judgment research is that a systematic thinking style, once activated among participants in an initial task, can persist to the conclusion of an unrelated task. Rather than coasting through the "required subject pool hour" in heuristic mode, participants accountable for their video reactions shifted into a systematic mode that carried over to the next task. Future research might test the generality of this "accountability carryover" effect across time, tasks, and other contexts. For now, it appears that just as information from one task can "contaminate" (and thereby degrade) judgments on other tasks (Wilson & Brekke, 1996), so too can style of thinking

induced by one task immunize (and thereby improve) judgments on other tasks.

It also is worth stressing that the accountability carry-over effect should not be dismissed as the product of mere misunderstanding in which accountable for video participants mistakenly assumed that they were going to be accountable for their judgments in the attribution study. First, only 3% of participants were even the slightest bit suspicious of the true connection among the studies; the stringent demand awareness code (see methods section) allowed us to eliminate these participants from all inferential analyses. Second, post hoc analyses showed that regardless of the level of demand awareness among the remaining participants, the same carryover effects emerged. Given that virtually no one was suspicious and that no relationship emerged between level of suspicion and punitiveness, we find relatively little cause for concern that accountable for video participants misunderstood the accountability instructions.

Perhaps the most important implication for affect judgment research is that social/structural relationships moderate the otherwise recursive relationship between blame cognitions and anger. Specifically, accountability reduces the impact of anger on punitive attributions and on actual punishment. Given that people make most decisions in social/institutional settings in which they are accountable for their conduct (Semin & Manstead, 1983; Tetlock, 1991, 1992), the present results indicate that misattributions of incidental anger might not be as common as previous research would have us think. Returning to Aristotle's observation, controlling the influence of anger is not easy; it requires the sort of effortful and self-critical thought that certain accountability systems stimulate.

APPENDIX

Case: Used Car Salesman

Dave is a used car salesman. Dave always had been honest with his customers in the past. One particular day, on his own initiative, he sold a customer a used car that he knew to have a hidden defect. As a consequence, the customer had to spend an additional unexpected \$1,000 to repair the car.

Case: Assembly Line Foreman

Joe is a foreman on an assembly line. The company was trying to fill a large order, and Joe did not want to stop the line. Joe always had been careful about safety procedures in the past. On this particular day, he noticed that the safety guard was improperly attached but decided to do nothing until the end of the day. As a consequence, a worker lost two fingers.

Case: Construction Worker

You were walking down a street that was undergoing construction when your foot fell through a hidden gap between two boards. Your ankle got caught in the gap as you fell forward, breaking both your ankle and your collarbone. You could not use crutches because of the broken collarbone, so you had to spend 6 months in a wheelchair.

You later found out that Mark, a construction worker, chose to leave the job site before adequately checking the boards that were covering the sidewalk. He did not check the boards because his shift was over and he was told that the construction workers no longer would be paid any overtime because this job was losing money.

The end-of-the-day guidelines that Mark received provided absolutely no instructions about how to check the safety of the site before leaving. At the time of the incident, he was the safety manager, a job he had long looked forward to obtaining.

Case: Parking Attendant

You were on a motorscooter in the city when a car came out of a hidden intersection and ran into you. As a result of the accident, you broke several bones that required you to be in a wheelchair for 6 months. You later discovered that the car that ran into you had been a "runaway"; it had been parked on the top of a steep hill and had rolled right into the intersection without any possibility for you to get out of the way.

The person who parked the car, Bill, works for a valet parking service. He had been told that the car's parking brake was not working correctly, but he chose to park it at the top of a hill because it was the first space available. He was in a hurry to park the rest of the cars in line so that he could get good tips from customers.

Bill usually enjoyed his job; he had been parking cars with this agency for many years. Bill never had received any procedural guidelines at all about how to park cars with faulty parking brakes.

NOTES

1. Participants completed the last 2 items only after they completed "all three" studies. According to experimenter observations, participants perceived the items as an extension of the first study. To ensure that responses to these items were not affected by manipulations, we submitted the items to a 3 (accountability) \times 2 (emotion priming) MANOVA. Even with a generous alpha level ($\alpha = .10$), results revealed no significant effects of the manipulations on these items.

2. To ensure that accountable participants understood what they would and would not be asked about in the interview, the experimenter repeated the appropriate accountability instructions (in synthesized form). She also answered any clarification questions raised by participants.

3. Emotion terms appeared as follows: afraid, alert, amazed, angry, anxious, astonished, blue, concentrated, contemptuous, disdainful, disgusted, downhearted, elated, fearful, gleeful, interested, irritated, mad, nervous, repulsed, sad, scared, scornful, surprised, tense, turned off, and warmhearted.

4. The brief questionnaire contained open-ended questions on (a) participants' expectations of the interview, (b) whether participants' expectations influenced their responses during the experiments, and (c) participants' feelings on learning that the interview was canceled.

5. One possibility is that the highly involving video manipulation of norm violation and resulting anger overwhelmed the simple written manipulation of whether the transgressor was caught. Follow-up work should explore this issue.

6. Prior to testing this hypothesis, we tested differences between the two types of accountability overall and between the two types of accountability at each level of emotion and at each level of authoritarianism. Finding no differences whatsoever, we collapsed across accountability for this analysis.

7. We compared the correlations using Fisher's r -to- z transformation.

8. Although similarities exist between this process and mental contamination, we do not wish to imply that any influence of anger on attributions of responsibility is undesirable or indefensible. As Solomon (1990) argued, "The idea that justice requires emotional detachment, a kind of purity suited ultimately to angels, ideal observers, and the original founders of society, has blinded us to the fact that justice arises from and requires such feelings as resentment" (p. 34). In the final analysis, judgments of whether attributional judgments are biased hinge on the factual assumptions that we make about the perceived pervasiveness of Type I and Type II errors (convicting the innocent vs. exonerating the guilty) as well as the moral-political assumptions we make about the perceived seriousness of these two errors (Tetlock, 1992).

9. The punitive carryover may also be consistent with the "affect as information" principle in which individuals inadvertently rely on preexisting feelings to evaluate a novel target stimulus (Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 1996). For example, it is possible that participants inferred from their residual anger over the video clip that the targets in the vignettes deserved to be punished. Several problems emerge from this interpretation, however. First, individuals rarely mistake prior feelings as reactions to new targets if (a) they attribute those feelings to their correct cause and (b) that cause is unrelated to the target stimulus (Berkowitz & Troccoli, 1990; Forgas, 1995; Keltner, Locke, & Audrain, 1993; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). In this case, both conditions for undermining the "affect as information" principle were met. Participants reported their feelings of anger in response to the video before we measured the dependent variable, and all participants thought that the video study was unrelated to the attribution study. A second problem is that discrete emotions (as opposed to moods) rarely are misattributed because individuals know their specific causes (Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994). Finally, if "feelings as information" held, then we would have found that the path from anger to free will was stronger for angry than for neutral accountable participants. Instead, we found that the path was not significant in either group.

10. In line with other research finding that increased cognitive complexity leads to attitude moderation (Linville, 1980, 1982; Tetlock, 1986; Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1996), it makes sense that the increase in complexity activated by accountability reduced punitiveness across emotion conditions.

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