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Rotem Leshem & Rakefet Sela-Sheffy  
Tel Aviv University

## Emotion-identity management through talk: Anger talk in young Israeli men's accounts on a negative experience

**Abstract** The nexus between emotions and identities has long been accepted. Moving away from macro categories of group-identity, the present study takes a micro-sociologist perspective in focusing on individuals' *emotion management* as related to accomplishing identity tasks in interaction. Using natural talk in conversation, we propose a micro-analysis of the unfolding of different emotion-identity strategies throughout a specific encounter. In a previous study we examined the verbal performance of young Israeli men during an offensive bargaining-episode. The present study focuses on 12 of these subjects' *retrospective accounts of this negative experience* during an *unstructured interview*. Assuming that the interview setting imposes on interviewees certain interactional rules, notably the expectation to perform emotion-exposure, we ask how these speakers abide such expectations in accordance with their broader cultural models of self. Analysis shows that without being asked specifically about emotions, all our interviewees invoked *anger* in their narratives, however differently: 1. their *accounts of the aggressive bargaining-episode* divided between *stories of Emotion & Relations* – where anger works as a moral justification to one's action – and *Control & Strategy stories* – where anger talk is avoided. 2. Solicited to reminisce *other negative past events* in their life, most of the interviewees invoked anger, but split between extensive anger talk and anger attenuation. These differences are explained by different framings of the offence to their self-image, on the *personal vs. social* levels, in terms of different *models of self* – individualist-centered vs. collectivist-oriented. These findings provide insights on the emotional versatility of individuals sharing the same highly stereotyped social identities, such as masculine identity, in terms of dynamic management strategies conducive to restoring self-worth in a specific encounter type.

### Introduction

The nexus between emotions and social identities has long been accepted. Sociologists speak about social-specific emotion rules (Hochschild 1983, Lively 2000), whereas cultural psychologists and anthropologists look at emotions as contingent on cultural models of self, distinguishing between different groups (e.g., national, ethnic, gender, or others; Cross & Madson 1997, Kitayama et al. 2006, Lutz 1982, Mesquita 2001). However, how are these grand-scale cultural models actually shaped and performed in the various concrete situations of a

person's life? In contrast to macro inter-group perspectives, micro-sociologists are concerned with the diverse and flexible emotional manifestations in changing socio-cultural settings (Cahill 1999, Pollak & Thoits 1989). In this context, the focus is on how emotions are performed by individuals according to their social relations in immediate surroundings (Scheff 1988) even when they share similar socio-cultural backgrounds.

Following Goffman and the interactionist approach, the key notion here is *identity work* (Snow & Anderson 1987), which is unceasingly at play in everyday encounters. This notion conveys the complex strategies a person uses, if unintentionally, to demonstrate their sense of self and self-worth vis-à-vis their interaction counterparts (Goffman 1959). To deal with the role of *emotions* in identity work, sociologists use the notion of *emotion management* (Hochschild 1983), which refers to strategies of evoking or suppressing feelings, to pursue role-related goals. Emotional expressions are thus taken to be important means of accomplishing tasks related to specific social identities (e.g., gendered identity; Vaccaro, Schrock & McCabe 2011). Viewed as such, our aim here is to meticulously trace the unfolding of emotion-identity management in a given encounter. We focus on the reworking of past negative feelings in retrospective accounts of conflict events. We examine how individuals load these feelings with moral values so as to perform a desired self, according to one's understanding of the encounter rules and goals.

Taking *natural talk* in conversation as a central channel for emotion-identity management, we analyze ways of *talking about* an unpleasant experience during an *unstructured interview*. As studies in Ethnography of Speaking and Conversation Analysis show (Billig 1999, Katriel 2004), individuals' discursive performance is constrained by the codes and rules of the specific genre of verbal interaction in which they are currently involved. We proceed from the assumption that an interview is one such culturally defined genre of verbal interaction, where interviewees are specifically encouraged to use emotional discourse to describe their relations with others (Josselson 2013). Accordingly, we follow the 'narratives as practices' perspective in interpreting the speakers' accounts of their past feelings as an interaction-embedded practice, instrumental to their identity construction (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2008). As complex forms of transforming personal experience to everyday verbal utterances (Labov & Waletzky 1997) these narratives provide multifarious techniques of maneuvering one's report to produce one's desired self as the protagonist of this report (including, notably, ways of talking about feelings). While the interviewees were not asked to talk about specific emotions, but rather to describe the event in their own words, all our interviewees resorted one way or another to semantic fields related to *anger*. This fact suggests

that in their understanding of the interaction code, managing anger was implicitly expected from them as adequate 'emotionally acting subjects'. Rather than reducing the notion of anger management to anger control (Allred 1999), it is discussed here within the broader sociologist perspective on emotion management, in the framework of which control is only one culturally-evaluated way of mobilizing anger for identity performance.

Our informants in this study are young middle-class Jewish-Israeli men who recently graduated high-school. Stereotyped as emotionally rigid and restrained, Israeli manhood has recently attracted growing scholarly attention, with the view to problematize this stereotype (Lomsky-Feder & Rapoport 2003, Kaplan 2007). In contrast, moving away from the inquiry into macro group-identity categories, the present study takes a zoom-in perspective on how members of a mainstream, highly stereotyped social group, such as young men, actually construct and review culturally defined models of self during a concrete conversation. We ask how they use anger talk to bridge between their self in the reported event and the one which is expected from them in the interview.

In a previous study, we showed how these speakers avoided emotional discourse during an offensive encounter, but were more inclined to use emotional discourse in their retrospective accounts of this event (Sela-Sheffy & Leshem, forthcoming). In both cases, the speakers' emotional talk is taken to be part of a shared cultural repertoire on which they draw in their various life routines (Lupton 1998, Swidler 2001, Wetherell 2012). This repertoire determines to what extent speakers may be aware of their feelings and how they are inclined to verbalize (or to talk *about*) them in appropriate situations. At the same time, as discursive psychologists argue, emotions may be mobilized in conversations to accomplish specific interactional goals (Edwards 1999), such as, for instance, rebutting implied accusations or claim authority. While acting competently to accomplish such goals inevitably depends on the broader social context of the speaker's life (Beatty 2014), it also hinges on one's ability to comply with the appropriate forms of emotion talk in every encounter type (Billig 1999).

This is all the more conspicuous in encounters of asymmetrical power relations (Clark 1990), such as therapy sessions, for instance, where the patient is expected to adapt to the rules set by the 'professional' party (e.g., to reflect about one's own life and feelings). Similarly, the qualitative interview is one such type of asymmetrical interaction, in which the interviewee is expected to perform a certain degree of emotional self-exposure in regard to personal relations. The interviewer facilitates this, by letting one speak freely and reflexively about their personal experience (often with the aim to moderate the structural asymmetry between

them and empower the interviewee; Mishler 1991). Yet, doing so the interviewer still imposes a form of asymmetrical relations, with which the interviewee is expected to comply (otherwise the interview is considered unsuccessful). The verbal-emotional behavior of the interviewee thus indicates their cultural competency to perform the role of the 'examined subject' (Pfister 1997) according to these recognized interaction rules.

## Materials and method

Our materials are taken from an interdisciplinary culture-brain research,<sup>1</sup> in which the participants were young Israeli men (approx. 18 yo). The research setting included two different events: (1) an aggressive bargaining episode (in the form of an ultimatum game),<sup>2</sup> and (2) a subsequent qualitative interview. Unlike the usual design of ultimatum game experiments, in the present study we borrowed this format for the purpose of tracing emotion-identity talk during an unpleasant bargaining – and adjusted it accordingly, to allow direct verbal interaction between the players. This elaborated format included 10 rounds of bargaining for each one of the subjects, each round comprising a 30 seconds verbal exchange between the subject and the rival. The rival (an experimenter) was instructed to play aggressively and humiliate the subject. This aggressiveness was very often addressed by the short bargaining exchanges. The subsequent individual interviews lasted ca 30 minutes each. These were conversation-like interviews, in which the subject was encouraged to recount in their own words their experience during the bargaining-episode. All the materials collected in this research are thus types of natural talk. They all were recorded and carefully transcribed.

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- 1 This study was designed as part of a joint Culture-Brain project, "The great virtue of anger control: What culture tells and brain detects"; Talma Hendler, Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Jadd Neeman (a project of *The Science of Virtue*, Templeton Foundation, Chicago University), 2010–2012. The experimental setting was designed and performed at the Functional Brain Center, The Sourasky Medical Center and Tel Aviv University (Talma Hendler, Head). See Gilam et al. 2015. We are greatly indebted to Tamar Priel, Netta Kaminsky and Liat Bar-Tal for their indispensable assistance in the research, and to Maayan Cohen for helping with the transcripts. Special thanks go to Gal Raz, Gadi Gilam, Tamar Lin and Eyal Fruchter for subjects recruitment and logistic coordination, including recordings of the verbal interactions. We are grateful to Talma Hendler, Jad Ne'eman and all the other members of the project team for their thoughts and discussions.
  - 2 In this game, the subject has to accept or reject offers, made by the rival, of splitting between them a virtual amount of money. If he accepts the offer, the money splits accordingly; if he rejects, both parties gain zero.

In our previous study we examined the verbal performance of 30 subjects with an in-depth analysis of the performance of one of them during the bargaining-episode and the interview (Sela-Sheffy & Leshem, forthcoming). As mentioned, we found that most of these subjects performed an aggressive-alienated identity management during the bargaining exchanges, yet hardly resorted to explicit emotional discourse. In the present study we focus attention on the performance of 12 of these subjects during the subsequent interviews. The interviewers encouraged them to talk about their feelings during the reported event, and to reminisce about similar other unpleasant encounters in their life. Our analysis of these subjects' talk aims at tracing the scope and variability of the emotion-identity strategies they employ throughout their talk, and how these strategies transform according to the abovementioned different encounter tasks. The analysis comprises three phases:

1. *Analysis of the initial narratives describing the bargaining-event.* Such narratives usually unfolded at the beginning of the interview, in response to the interviewer's opening request: "tell me about this event."
2. *Analysis of another story* that came up at some point during the interview, when the interviewer solicited the subject to recall a similar event from their life.
3. *Conversation analysis of specific question-answer segments* throughout the interview, where the interviewer explicitly encourages the subject to perform self-analysis – by posing questions inciting emotional self-exposure (e.g., "how did you feel?"), reflexivity (e.g., "why do you think the rival acted the way he did?") or self criticism (e.g., "would you change the way you acted during the bargaining-episode?").

Overall, analysis pointed at the following: 1. Anger was invoked, explicitly or implicitly, by all the subjects (either in their initial or their additional narratives, or in both) throughout the interviews. 2. Interviewees split in framing their relations with the rival in their stories. In light of these preliminary findings, we concentrate on how anger talk differentiates in accordance with the different framings of the reported conflict, what interactional goals it is designed to achieve and how it relates to cultural models of self in each case.

## **Emotion management of anger through talk**

### **A. Initial Narratives**

Unlike their clear tendency to avoid emotional discourse during the reported episode, the subjects' performance in the interviews was more complex. Their initial descriptions of the event demonstrated extensive reworking of past feelings,

modeled according to two different narrative types (each type performed by six different subjects), as follows:

- A narrative of *Emotion and Relations (E&R)*, which focuses on the rival's violation of proper interaction rules.
- A narrative of *Control and Strategy (C&S)*, which focuses on the logic and goals of bargaining, and the moves of the participants.

1. *An Emotion and relations (E&R) narrative – evoking anger with reference to a personal conflict*

The following interview sequence is a typical example of how this type of initial narrative unfolds in response to the interviewer's opening request:<sup>3</sup>

*Vignette A*

I: Let's... tell me simply what happened

S: he annoyed me <quietly> <chuckles>

I: <chuckles>

S: really!

I: yeh?

S: he... we started the first play, [I] still didn't... it took me a while eh... to try and feel a little bit, to see eh... to see what was going on, there was never a sort of an offer he gave [that was] more than ten. He started with ten-ten <rapidly> so eh... I accepted <sniffs> and then he simply eh... jumped to something very very low. so eh... I said no.

I: what, right after the ten-ten?

S: yeh, three... he gave [me] three-seventeen!

I: wow, it's strange, why did he... did it?

S: I don't know <chuckles> so I didn't agree, and then he offered eh... five. so eh... so I agreed, and then again he offered low numbers <rapidly> I told him I was not prepared eh... to go on like that, and... that he... in the end he would take us both down to zero. he said "you don't understand eh... the rules of the game" like, [he] tried to convince me that I was wrong.

I: <chuckles>

S: OK, And then there was the second round... <sniffs> so he then already eh... started like with eh... one-nineteen or something like that. so eh... I pressured, I told him "listen, now we are in a new game, I'm going eh... in that way to take us both down to... zero-zero and that's how we'll end up"...

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3 I = interviewer; S = subject (interviewee). All translations from the Hebrew transcripts are ours. We attempted to render in the translation the closer equivalent language register as possible. Main transcript conventions: underline = emphasis; dash in brackets (-) = slight pause; [square bracket] = authors' clarification additions; <pointy brackets> = para-linguistic signals.

I: you told him

S: yeh

I: just a minute, why why did you do that actually?

S: ... [cause] the [was] not willing to compromise. he didn't he didn't agree to to compromise in in any way... like I didn't demand that he'd give me more <loudly> ... but eh... I told him like... show. show eh... minimal respect... he said to me "you don't understand the rules of the game", and... continued to offer once again a low number... so again I told him no. and then he said "OK, it goes like that", so he gave [me] eh... nine and to himself eleven... so I said <slowly> "OK, this is a kind of... a kind of improvement", so I agreed, then he said "Oh... you were screwed up, I see you don't understand the rules of the game". and then once more he gave [me] something like one or two. something like that... so I told him that... <chuckles> I will continue to refuse, and... I told him once again no. and that's it <laughs>

I: you were, it.it sounds like it was... stirring up things <loudly> inside, like according to what you describe it, it...

S: he... yes, he... all the time, he told me <loudly> ah... that I didn't understand properly the rules of the game, and then it.it caused me to doubt myself, it caused me to wonder, maybe I actually didn't understand properly. maybe there is some meaning behind... but I said... OK, I will go along with it... I will go with it until the end.

I: but what did it make you feel to him?

S: a... anger <chuckles quietly>

In response to the interviewer's request, the interviewee concentrates attention to his negative feelings, using an array of verbal and nonverbal cues signaling emotional exposure. He then proceeds to accusing the rival, elaborating on the latter's unfair offers – in response to which, so he reports, he reacted aggressively. The interviewer now inquires why, as a subject-in-the-episode, the speaker took a conflictual attitude towards the rival. At this point the interviewee provides moral justifications to his own behavior by emphasizing the rival's personal offensive action, while cautiously admitting his own vulnerability to it ("it caused me to doubt myself").

In this initial narrative the interviewee's negative feelings occupy center stage, as requested by the interactional rules of the interview. His account of the bargaining-episode concentrates on the rival's misbehavior (cf. the notion of 'othering'; Vaccaro, Schrock and McCabe 2011), which, according to the speaker, triggered his own anger as an adequate response. This story thus uncovers a hidden aspect of the speaker's emotional experience that was not made explicit in his verbal performance during the bargaining-episode. To judge by his conversational inferences (Gumperz 1996) and maneuvers during the interview (in contrast to his performance during the episode), anger talk is positively evaluated in the present context – taken here to reflect the speaker's moral advantage in managing interpersonal relations: He is a person who knows how to sensitively present his vulnerabilities and respond accordingly.

## 2. A Control and Strategy (C&S) narrative – avoiding anger through cognitive-business like talk

Let us now examine the other type of initial narratives provided by other subjects in our sample, as exemplified by the following segment:

### Vignette B

I: OK, hm... what was there?

S: (-) ah... kind of a game [in which] we want to gain as much money as possible, each one of us, when he [is] (-) actually the one who divides the money and I need to agree, yes or no

I: OK

S: now (-) he wasn't so smart, in my opinion, and he, [I] don't know if he was teasing me or not... but he offered me like, ridiculous offers like, (-) he had twenty shekels to divide, so he offered, let's say, three and seventeen [...], three for me and seventeen for him

I: OK

S: now, I told him from the beginning that I can only accept [an offer of] ten-ten (-) from the beginning ten-ten, that way we both just gain a lot (-) and... we both gain a lot (-)

I: yes

S: and it's five rounds, each time, if each of us gets ten-ten this means one hundred (-), this means we're getting to the top of [the experiment] record table (-)

I: yes

S: the lowest score there [in the experiment record table] is around eighty three

I: yes

S: that's what I'm saying, let's do ten-ten, simply, both of us will just gain and find our way into the record table

I: yes

S: he was not [listening] (-) he is stubborn (-) all the time [he] tried to tease me... so, hm (-) the problem is that I'm stubborn too (-) so ah, [there] was a lot of zero-zero [in our game], zero for both of us (-) and we didn't gain a lot of money, cause he didn't compromise and I didn't compromise and it was a mess (-) so ah... in my opinion he wasn't smart (-) if I was managing the money I would have done it differently

I: go on, go on, tell me a little bit ah... what, how was [the rival] like, what it...

S: hmm also he was not speaking nice (-) like, nothing, ah... "you..." <begins to imitate the rival and immediately stops> he degraded my intelligence. [it's really] nothing like...

I: what, like, [he] told you that you were stupid?

S: [he] hinted [at that], (-) like, hinted, and "what are you, what are you... you are drafted to combat service" and stuff

I: really

S: nonsense, but like, it's nonsense, (-) ah... it stands to reason that if it wasn't in an experiment and stuff he wouldn't talk like that (-) ah... and also... (-) he just was, he said I was stubborn, but he was pretty much stubborn, cause he didn't agree to... I



said “fiftv-fifty let’s [do] fifty-fifty all the time and it’s simple (-) we would both gain a lot of money”, but he didn’t... [listen] (-) he all the time tried to tease me and (-) to give me ridiculous proposals (-) but ah...

I: why, like, how do you understand this?

S: what do you mean, how do I understand this?

I: like, why do you think he acted like that?

S: ah... I don’t know wh... why, because eventually our aim was to gain money

In this case, the prevailing emotion-identity management strategy is that of reducing anger and reframing the reported event through cognitive-business talk. The initial narrative here provides a matter-of-fact description of the bargaining-episode. Unlike in the former example, rather than addressing the rival’s offensive action and the emotional response it provoked, the interviewee criticizes the latter’s incompetence as a negotiator by using cognitive semantics (“he wasn’t so smart”). He further reconstructs in detail his own attempts, as a subject-in-the-episode, to talk the rival into behaving rationally. When the interviewer inquires how he felt facing the rival’s aggressiveness, he plays down the rival’s offence, focusing instead on the formal rules and goals of bargaining. He also underplays his own emotional reaction, by describing the rival’s failed attempts to evoke an angry response on his part (“[I] don’t know if he was teasing me or not”, “he degraded my intelligence. [it’s really] nothing, like”). Overall, this initial narrative thus reflects the interviewee’s refusal of the interviewer’s expectation of emotional self-exposure in regard to the narrated conflict. In contrast to the interviewee in vignette A, the speaker here frames the reported event according to its pragmatic goal – to gain money. Along this line, he describes his relations with the rival in terms of rational strategic moves, according to which the rival is a bad player in comparison to himself. His resisting invitations to emotional reflexivity thus suggests that this interviewee attributes negative value to exposure of emotional problems and interpersonal relations in performing his self in a personal conversation.

## B. Other stories

While in their initial descriptions of the bargaining-episode the interviewees split between embracing and rejecting emotional discourse, in their other stories they all shared a similar tendency to talk about emotions, however with variations.

Among *interviewees who told E&R initial stories*, three speakers were unable to recall other similar conflict events from their life, or recounted instead success stories. The other three recounted stories of conflict with peers, in which their own aggressive behavior was induced by their rival’s provocations, which they actively resisted. Similarly to their initial narratives, their additional stories attribute moral

value to negative feelings, so as to justify their behavior in the narrated event – for example, by associating anger with positively evaluated traits like determination or justice. The following extract is typical for this type of stories:

*Vignette C*

S: (-) hm just, we were just queuing at the bus station, at school, and then, one kid just passed bye, [this was] when I was in eighth grade and he in ninth (-) and then he... like shoved me, (-) just like that, towards the other kids in the queue (-), just like that, just, without [any reason] <loudly> eh such an asshole

I: yes

S: out of nowhere, I didn't do anything to him. <snuffling> so I, like, shoved him back, a little bit, and then he shoved me really bad, like, on everybody else there. I was infuriated. so I slapped him in the face (-) and then immediately all his friends that were with him, like, pushed me, but they saw that it was [actually] his fault, so they just yelled at me (-) "ha! are you being rude", and stuff, "he is a year older than you", and stuff <mocking the boys> and then I told them "what do you want! he started [the fight]" <calmly>

In this case, the story is about an unjustified personal humiliation of the teller. His hurt feelings ("I was infuriated") triggers his own violent action against the rival ("I slapped him in the face"). But this action is valued positively, by the speaker as well as by the rival's friends, who admitted that he did it with a reason ("they saw that it was his fault"). The interviewee thus narrates an act of saving face, in which anger is positively evaluated as a moral feeling.

In contrast, among *interviewees who told C&S initial stories*, only one speaker was unable to recall a similar incident from his life. All the others in this group narrated past conflict events with an offensive rival, to which they, as the stories' protagonists, responded with restraint. Unlike in the former case, the additional stories told by these interviewees usually revolved around conflicts of *social* rather than personal nature, and were intended to demonstrate the speaker's ability to avoid confrontations and act 'wisely'. This type of additional stories thus deals with emotional *control* in anger-provoking encounters. Feelings are evoked here only as a challenge, which the speaker has successfully coped with in pursuing his goals – to escape troubles and maintain social order. Here is an example of a story of this type:

*Vignette D*

S: me and my mother we went by the car. my mother parked the car, and... it was close to a shop in my town, never mind. <snuffling> I opened the door [of the car], and my door brushed the other car a bit, like, brushed. not hit, not a knock, nothing. I immediately shut [the door], checked [the other car], saw that there was nothing [no damage]. the guy gets out of his car and starts to yell and stuff...

I: hm

S: now, I tell him, calmly, and... and quietly, "no need to yell, no need, like, I apologize, look nothing happened, nothing... a misunderstanding <slowly> and then he started

shouting and yelling, and then I said ok, ok, I'm sorry, thanks and goodbye, and headed away from him, and then he started yelling at my mother. kind of. now my mother is not involved in the incident, she is just there, and also he... he... was in a violent mood, violence, like in one second he's, like, going to hit her. now... I somehow, It gets to you somehow, there's nothing you can do, I also have to protect her, that's my family

I: yes

S: and in such incidents, I wouldn't stand aside and... be a pacifist... I stood in front of him, I shoved him, so to speak. I didn't... hit him, no, god forbid, I don't do this <snuffing> I held him and told him "listen good... game over, here you stop, you go to your car. and that's it", he understood that, wait a minute, what was going on [with him], he got into his car and this was over. and I didn't do this [thing]... like "I was not a sucker" or "who is this guy to speak to me like that", it was more... I had to somehow put my foot down, to protect my family... like

This story narrates an extreme offence against a collective social unit – the speaker's family. The interviewee constructs his self as rational and restrained – in contrast to the emotional irascible other guy. This is very similar to the way he described himself vis-à-vis the rival in his initial story. However, here he points at an emotional crack in his reticent front ("It gets to you somehow"), which also incited some violence, though controlled, on his part ("I wouldn't stand aside and be a pacifist"). Yet, in this case the interviewee's disposition to anger entails a more 'socially-oriented' moral justification – the need to defend one's own collective unit from a brutal attack ("I had to somehow put my foot down, to protect my family").

In sum, the additional stories provided by the interviewees who told *E&R initial stories* show consistency with the same emotion-identity management strategies that prevailed in their initial narratives. In both their stories, anger is invoked as a positive moral feeling, instrumental in managing aggressive encounters with peers – to justify the speaker's own reported aggressiveness in the past event. In both cases resorting to emotional reflexivity thus seems conducive to the speaker's goal of presenting oneself adequately according to his expected role as an interviewee and maintaining dignity.

However, an interesting shift of strategies is revealed by the additional stories of those whose initial narrative were of the *C&S* type. They, too, invoked anger as a moral justification of their own aggressiveness in the reported event – which fact stood in contrast to their initial narratives, where they refused emotional self-exposure and underplayed anger. Still, in their case, anger is framed in a way that is not in disaccord with the rational self they present in their initial stories. Here it is mobilized in response to threats on their *social* rather than *personal* identity (i.e., an offence on a collectivity to which they belong). Given that all the additional stories in the sample are solicited by the interviewer in direct association with the speakers' initial descriptions of the bargaining-episode, this type of

stories is especially indicative of the cultural value attributed to anger talk. They suggest that anger talk is judged by almost all the speakers in the sample, including those who are less disposed to it, as a legitimate strategy for restoring dignity in recounting identity-threatening events.

### C. Conversational sequences of self-analysis

Finally, we examined the subjects' conversational techniques in responding to the interviewers' questions that encouraged reflexivity and self-exposure, assuming that such techniques disclose how the speaker perceives the norms of an interview interaction and their own role in it.

Overall, interviewees who told stories of *E&R* were more prone to self-exposure in the first place. They were more willing to tell stories, and did not hesitate to elaborate on the motives of the protagonists – the rival's and their own. They were neither reluctant to explicitly reveal negative feelings, nor to share with the interviewer their view of their own personality and personal history, often using emotional therapeutic discourse (e.g., “[at the time] I didn't feel I was mentally ready for military service”).

In contrast, interviewees who told stories of *C&S* made massive use of various conversational techniques to resist invitations to reflexivity and self-exposure – such as repeating the interviewer's questions, responding with a question, or criticizing the questions (e.g., “what an interrogation!”). They provided laconic accounts of the past event and evaded further elaboration on motives, sometimes using explicit closure signals (e.g., “enough, that's it, game over”, or: “what does it matter actually”). To underplay the rival's offence and their own vulnerability, these interviewees often rebut the interviewer's interest in their emotional reaction (e.g., “this is nonsense”, “I wasn't excited”, or “I'm not a person who takes such talks to heart”).

## Conclusions and discussion

This study aimed at tracing in detail the ways emotion-identity management unfolds throughout an interaction, in accordance with the speaker's role and goals in this interaction. Drawing on examples from young Israeli men's accounts of a past negative experience, we analyzed if and how they resort to talking about past feelings during a specific type of interaction – that of an interview. These men's narrative patterns and conversational techniques are taken here as cultural resources recognized as appropriate in certain encounter types. Analysis traced the skillfulness of the speakers, operating as interviewees, of using or avoiding such emotional-discursive options as conducive to restoring one's self worth.

Since anger in particular permeates all the accounts in our sample, the use of *anger talk* attracts specific attention. Analysis points at differences in the speakers' evocation of anger, and the moral values they attribute to it, according to two narrative aspects:

1. *The different framing of the rival's offence in the reported event: accounts of the bargaining-episode* divided between focusing on *personal conflicts* and focusing on the 'objective' rules of bargaining; while the former were infused with anger talk as a positively evaluated emotion to justify the speaker's action, the latter avoided it. *The additional stories* divided between recounting *personal* and *social* conflicts (cf. Wang & Conway 2004, for this distinction in inter-cultural perspective); in most of these stories anger talk was mobilized, though differently, to rationalize the speaker's ways of 'solving the problem' – ranging between a morally justified emotional reaction to emotional control, respectively.
2. *The temporal distance of the reported event from the present*: while the initial stories recounted an event from the speakers' immediate past (the bargaining-episode), the additional stories usually went much further back. Whereas the former split between invoking and avoiding anger, most of the latter had recourse to anger talk one way or another.

The fact that only half of the initial stories but most of the additional stories (particularly these told by tellers of *C&S initial narratives*) resorted extensively to anger talk – this fact is telling in more than one respect. For one thing, it attests the prevalence of anger talk as a strategy of emotion-identity management available to all these speakers in cases where they are required to account for identity-threatening events, at least in encounters such as an interview. Since the interviewees were not instructed to speak about anger (or any other bad feeling) in their accounts, their use of anger talk, however differentiated, transpires that all of them, including those who resisted invitation to emotional exposure, felt they were actually *expected to feel angry* during the interview. At the same time, the sample of stories at hand reveals the range of legitimate improvisations of anger talk (from extensive use to rejection) at disposal of these interviewees. This emerges not only from the differences between speakers, but also from the shift of strategies of some speakers (those who told *C&S initial stories*) in different points along their interview (i.e., between one's initial and additional story). Moreover, these speakers' selective and flexible use of anger talk in moving between their initial and additional stories suggests that mobilizing anger to account for an offence in the immediate past may be more inflicting on the speakers' desired presentation of self than doing that with reference to events of the remote past. Apparently, recounting bad feelings right after a negative event may mean that

one's entitlement to this experience (Sacks 1992, 242–248) indicates that he is still angry during the reporting event. This may incite the audience's greater attention to his present emotional state, which increases his vulnerability in the present encounter.

All this complicates men's stereotypic disposition of presenting a tough front when facing an identity threat (Sasson-Levy 2008) and tending to underplay vulnerability to negative experiences (Lois 2003). In light of the present findings, rather than fixed dispositions, these inclinations appear as culturally-evaluated strategies hinging on specific circumstances. All this helps pinpointing the role of *anger* in particular as an *active* emotion that works for these speakers to navigate their accomplishment of a moral action (e.g., winning in a personal conflict or defending one's collective unit) in narrating identity-threatening events. The different forms of anger talk thus allow the interviewees to reconcile identity and interaction tasks – that is, to comply with the interviewer's expectation to self-exposure, and at the same time to restore their self-worth in a masculine style. This, in accordance with their different framings of the threat to their identity. Those who framed it as a *personal* offence used anger talk in a more or less consistent way throughout the interview, whereas those who understood it as a *social* offence shifted between different strategies of anger moderation (i.e., between disavowal of anger through cognitive-business talk, to anger control) to maintain social order.

Taken together, these alternating ways of denying or attenuating anger make up a different emotion-identity management than that of invoking anger as a morally positive emotion. The difference seems to lie in two different cultural *models of self* – individualist-centered model as opposed to collective-oriented one (Kitayama et al. 2006, Mesquita 2001) – that coordinate the ways anger is mobilized in each case. Yet, contrary to studies that discuss these models of self as distinguishing between given grand-scale identity categories (e.g., Western vs. Eastern group identities), our findings show how both these models inform differences in the emotion-identity performances of individuals sharing the same identity category (i.e., Israeli men). According to the individualist-centered model (e.g., as is often associated with the Western model), emotions and relations are evaluated for how they meet one's personal needs. This is in accord with the way interviewees who told *E&R* stories invoke anger (in both their initial and additional stories) to accomplish personal goals. Whereas in the collective-oriented model (e.g., as associated with the Asian model), one's sense of self is tied with belonging to certain social groups (be they families, communities, or professions), in which they are significantly and reciprocally enmeshed. Accordingly, anger reducing strategies such as those used by tellers of *C&S* stories throughout the interview, work to deny

framing of the reported aggressive events as personal conflicts. This individualist vs. collectivist perspective unveils the coherence of a person's overall emotion-identity management throughout the interview, despite shifts and alternations.

In light of this, moreover, an interview can be understood as an interaction type that encourages performance of an individualist-centered self. Accordingly, those subjects who talked explicitly about their bad feelings abided the individualist model and thus were prone to perform successfully their role as interviewees. Their narratives demonstrated a moral-emotional alertness to personal conflicts, in restoring dignity while still abiding by the rules of the interview. Contrarily, the other interviewees abided a collective-oriented model of self – in that they avoided stories of personal relations, and divulged that they perceived emotional exposure as morally undignified, if not harmful to achieving one's goals (at least when facing an audience with authority such as an interviewer). These interviewees thus had to use other ways of restoring their dignity in an interaction where they were expected to act in disaccord with their own inclinations – they had to invest greater rhetorical efforts to express bad feelings, as expected in the interview, without being too personal. Their use of anger talk was thus framed in socially-oriented contexts.

Finally, beyond an in-depth glance at the complex interaction-dependent performance of emotion-identity management, what broader cultural insights can be suggested by the fact that the young men in our sample, categorized by the same social identity, and operating in identical interaction events under similar conditions, split in their framing and use of anger talk? Without venturing to generalize about how the specific emotion-identity strategies analyzed here infuse Israeli masculine culture(s), the differentiated narratives at hand raise questions regarding the permeation of Western psychological-oriented discourses in this culture. Research shows that large sections in Israeli society reject the widespread discourses of self-exposure (Friedman-Peleg 2014, Katriel 2004). Along this line, in the present study, complying with the individualist-centered model of self and claiming moral advantage by exposing negative emotions may be understood as a signal of the speaker's acquaintance with psychotherapy practices and global notions of personal improvement (Illouz 2008). Whereas avoiding emotional discourse to describe personal conflicts and mobilizing negative feelings only through collectivist frameworks may be understood as a signal of one's rejection of the moral value attributed to these practices and notions. While exploring the access and proclivity of Israeli men to this Western psychological repertoire lies beyond the scope of this study, it is a task for further studies to expand on how such discursive models are actually received by such identity-groups so as to inform their emotion management routines in concrete encounters settings.

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