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Citation

Doorn, J. van. (2018). Anger, Feelings of Revenge, and Hate. *Emotion Review*, 10(4), 321-322. doi:10.1177/1754073918783260

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/70792>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Comments

Anger, Feelings of Revenge, and Hate

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Abstract

In the current comment, I discuss what is unique about hate in relation to anger and feelings of revenge. It seems that hate can be distinguished from the related emotions anger and feelings of revenge by a difference in focus: Anger focuses on changing/restoring the unjust *situation* caused by another person, feelings of revenge focus on restoring the *self*, and hatred focuses on eliminating the hated *person/group*. Though grounded in existing literature, future research is needed to empirically confirm the unique characteristics of these three emotions.

Keywords

anger, feelings of revenge, hate, humiliation

What anger, feelings of revenge, and hate have in common is that they typically involve negative situations and lead to behaviors that can be disadvantageous to others. The review by Fischer, Halperin, Canetti, and Jasini (2018) takes a functional perspective on hate, in which this and other important similarities and differences between hate and closely related emotions are discussed. However, although their review compares anger with hate, and recently anger has been compared to feelings of revenge (Elshout, Nelissen, & van Beest, 2015), a comparison of hate and feelings of revenge has not yet received much attention in empirical and literature studies. In this comment, I would therefore like to extend Fischer et al.'s discussion by more specifically reflecting on differences concerning anger and feelings of revenge in relation to hate.

In what follows, I suggest that anger, feelings of revenge, and hate are characterized by a different focus. For example, the goal of anger is to restore or change the (unjust) situation. This can be achieved through coercion aimed at the anger-eliciting perpetrator, though not necessarily. Experiencing anger in third-party situations, where there is both a perpetrator and a victim, also motivates more prosocial behaviors focused on the victim (for a review, see van Doorn, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2014). The review of available studies on hate, as described in

Fischer et al. (2018), clearly demonstrates that hate goes beyond this restoration goal. Instead, the goal of hate is to hurt and eliminate the hated target. Compared to anger, feelings of hate often involve deep and *repeated* violations of one's (sense of) justice, which might explain a shift in focus: instead of observing an unjust *situation* caused by the other (anger), one observes an example of the other's unjust *nature* (hate; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988).

Although research on revenge is even scarcer than research on hate, the few studies that do exist seem to indicate that the experience of feelings of revenge (Elshout et al., 2015) is closely related to the experience of hate. Both hate and feelings of revenge are elicited by humiliation, seem to last longer than other emotions, and have the goal to apply suffering (Elshout et al., 2015; Fischer et al., 2018). One might question whether "feelings of revenge" should be regarded as a separate emotion or whether this is actually an experience one would call hate. After all, it has been argued that revenge is an act of hate (Bar-Elli & Heyd, 1986). Unfortunately, recent studies measuring feelings of revenge did not include a measure of hate or compare characteristics of feelings of revenge and hatred (Elshout et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies measuring hate did not measure potential feelings of revenge.

Nonetheless, there are some indications that hate and feelings of revenge are not one and the same emotion. Elshout et al. (2015) suggest that feelings of revenge induce a focus on the self. That is, vengeful responses often result from offences that induce a self-threat, eliciting negative self-conscious emotions, such as shame and humiliation (Elison & Harter, 2007). Experiences of humiliation or ridicule can be regarded as an appraisal shared both by hate and feelings of revenge. However, it seems that hate is less likely to induce such a self-focus as compared to feelings of revenge. As mentioned previously, hate is an emotion with a focus on the innate nature of the other. It could therefore be argued that feelings of revenge involve an intrapersonal focus (Frijda, 1994), whereas hate involves an interpersonal focus. This might explain why revenge is typically an act that is performed by the person him/herself: in order to restore the self, one cannot let someone else do "the dirty work"

(Bar-Elli & Heyd, 1986). When it comes to hate, it seems that others can perform “on behalf of” the person him/herself. For example, in cases of intergroup hatred directed at a particular outgroup, one member of the ingroup can perform a negative act towards the outgroup on behalf of the whole ingroup. In that sense, one could argue that feelings of revenge contain a more explicit personal aspect than hate (Bar-Elli & Heyd, 1986).

The self-focus that characterizes feelings of revenge is also important in explaining the enduring nature of both hate and feelings of revenge. On the one hand, hate generally lasts longer than other emotions because it is not so much a reaction to a specific event, but one that is based on the appraisals of the fundamental nature of the hated person (Fischer et al., 2018). On the other hand, feelings of revenge are generally a reaction to a specific event and last longer because they may involve more planning and there is not always an opportunity to act upon them. Research indeed seems to indicate that the opportunity for revenge is a key variable in differentiating whether feelings of revenge turn into behavior (Elshout, Nelissen, van Beest, Elshout, & van Dijk, 2017).

A synthesis of the literature described here makes clear why anger, feelings of revenge, and hate are judged as being closely related, but also suggests that what makes hate, anger, and feelings of revenge different is their focus. Anger focuses on changing/restoring the unjust *situation* caused by another person (e.g., van Doorn et al., 2014), feelings of revenge focus on restoring the *self* (e.g., Frijda, 1994), and hatred focuses on eliminating the hated *person/group* (e.g., Fischer et al., 2018). Though grounded in existing literature, future research is needed to empirically confirm the unique characteristics of these three emotions.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Is Hate Worst When It Is Fresh? The Development of Hate Over Time

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Abstract

When it comes to eggs, two aspects are central—taste and nutritional value. And it is when eggs are fresh that these are at their peak. Hate “tastes” worst, that is, its negative intensity is highest, when it is fresh. Yet, when hate is not merely a temporary eruption but a constant feature, it distorts the agent’s behavior and attitudes. As such, its moral value worsens with maturity.

Keywords

change, development, hate, intensity, love, moral value, profundity, time

“Love and eggs are best when they are fresh.”

Russian proverb

In their thought-provoking article, Agneta Fischer, Eran Halperin, and Daphna Canetti (2018) present an admirable account of hate. Rather than detailing the many ways in which I agree with this account, however, I shall set out the central issue of the nature of enduring hate.

Emotions are commonly characterized as being brief and intense. This raises doubts concerning the feasibility of enduring