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Why Individuals Protest the Perceived Transgressions of Their Country: The Role of Anger, Shame, and Guilt

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The present research examined emotions as predictors of opposition to policies and actions of one’s country that are perceived to be illegitimate. Two studies investigated the political implications of American (Study 1) and British (Study 2) citizens’ anger, guilt, and shame responses to perceived harm caused by their countries’ occupation of Iraq. In both studies, a manipulation of pervasive threat to the country’s image increased participants’ shame but not guilt. The emotions predicted political action intentions to advocate distinct opposition strategies. Shame predicted action intentions to advocate withdrawal from Iraq. Anger predicted action intentions to advocate compensation to Iraq, confrontation of agents responsible, and withdrawal from Iraq. Anger directed at different targets (ingroup, ingroup representative, and outgroup representative) predicted action intentions to support distinct strategies (Study 2). Guilt did not independently predict any political action intentions. Implications for the study of political action and emotions in intergroup contexts are discussed.

Keywords: guilt; anger; shame; emotion; collective action; protest

By definition, a democracy’s decisions are subject to debate. Individual citizens are free to pass judgment on the rationale, costs, and consequences of their government’s policies. Although citizens often agree with their government’s actions, history suggests that they sometimes perceive their government’s rationale for a policy to be immoral or judge the harmful consequences of a policy to be unacceptable (Zinn, 1999). Individuals express opposition to such perceived transgressions by participating in political activities with the aim of changing their government’s course of action. For example, they may sign a petition, display a button, or participate in a demonstration (Brady, 1993). In this way, citizens’ actions can (at least in principle) affect elected representatives’ subsequent behavior, thus holding them accountable and providing a check on their (ab)use of power.

The social critic H. L. Mencken (1880-1956) has been quoted as saying, “Every decent man is ashamed of the government he lives under.” Mencken’s quote, while
revealing his cynicism, also suggests that emotion might play an important role in fueling the process by which citizens of a democratic society place checks and balances on the actions of their elected officials. The present research considers how three self-critical emotions (anger, guilt, and shame) might predict a desire for political protest among citizens who perceive that their country has committed a transgression against another nation.

In two studies, we investigate the predictors of American and British citizens’ political action to oppose their countries’ occupation of Iraq after the 2003 collapse of Saddam Hussein’s government. Although some citizens of both countries continue to support their governments’ ongoing involvement in Iraq (Gallup, 2006; Pew Center, 2004), our focus is on understanding those who oppose the occupation. Since the initial invasion of Iraq, a growing number of American and British citizens have come to question the rationale for the invasion and to voice their opposition to the harmful consequences of the occupation (Gallup, 2006; Houppert, 2005). As such, the occupation of Iraq provides fertile ground for examining how individuals’ emotional reactions might motivate efforts to exert controls on the perceived transgressions of their group.

In developing a model of responses to perceived national transgression, we draw on previous theory and research on intergroup emotion and collective action. However, our approach can be distinguished from this literature in two important ways. First, we consider the implications of a country’s transgression for its national image. Second, we examine the predictors of the specific political strategies that individuals may advocate in their opposition to their country’s transgressions.

**IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSGRESSIONS FOR IMAGE THREAT**

When a country (or any group) engages in acts perceived to be harmful and illegitimate, its citizens’ collective self-definition as moral and good is undermined (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). The extent to which such threats to group image are enduring depends on one’s interpretation of the transgression. When a transgression is attributed to causes that are uncontrollable or unstable, it will be perceived as a one-time event that is unlikely to be repeated (see Gold & Weiner, 2000; Weiner, 2001). In such cases, the transgression is less likely to impugn the character of the ingroup because its long-standing intentions have not been undermined. As a result, ingroup members’ emotional and political responses should focus on the specific transgression in question—for instance, by addressing its causes and consequences— rather than on the maintenance of the group’s image.

In other cases, however, a transgression is perceived to reflect the destructive intentions of the group. Such attributions to stable characteristics are associated with the belief that similar transgressions are likely to occur in the future (Gold & Weiner, 2000) and thus are perceived to reflect on the group’s enduring image (Liu, Karasawa, & Weiner, 1992; Weiner, 2001). We propose that in this instance the group experiences a more pervasive threat to its image, thus shifting the focus of members’ emotional and political response to questions of collective self-definition and image management. Although others have argued that attributing negative events to internal, stable causes should increase emotional reactions such as shame (Tracy & Robins, 2006), the present research is the first to investigate how image-threatening attributions made by a targeted out-group predict emotional reactions to an ingroup’s transgression as well as distinct behavioral intentions in the intergroup context.

**PREDICTING ACTION ON BEHALF OF SPECIFIC OPPOSITION STRATEGIES**

A second advance in the current research is to make finer distinctions between the types of protest people might carry out. Previous work has investigated collective and political action that aims to challenge an existing social inequality. For example, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), relative deprivation theory (see Walker & Smith, 2002), and realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) consider why members of disadvantaged groups take action to improve their group’s position within a status hierarchy. In the present work, we are instead interested in what might motivate members of one group (i.e., citizens of a country) to protest specific actions carried out by their group that are seen as harmful to an outgroup (i.e., another nation).

Furthermore, although individual activists and social justice organizations usually advocate distinct strategies and solutions through their political activities (South End Press Collective, 1998), prior work on collective action has tended to examine general protest behavior (or intentions) without distinguishing between different messages of opposition. It is critical to understand why people prefer particular strategic responses to perceived injustice because some strategies may be more effective than others. The present research examines predictors of political action intentions to support three distinct opposition strategies most relevant to a country’s transgression: compensation to those harmed by the transgression, confrontation of those responsible for the
Individuals experience emotions about their personal actions and interactions but also about their membership in a group and its relationships to outgroups (E. R. Smith, 1993). Different emotions are associated with distinct patterns of appraisals or cognitive judgments about a situation or relationship (see Roseman & Smith, 2001; E. R. Smith, 1993). As such, emotions experienced in an intergroup context are suggestive of the particular political interpretations that people have about the intergroup relation (see Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002).

Prior research on reactions to ingroup transgression has focused on the group-critical emotions of guilt (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998) and anger (Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006). There has been no examination of the role played by shame in responses to one’s country’s transgressions, and no study has considered all three emotions simultaneously as predictors of political protest. Yet, as Mencken’s quote suggests, shame might be a common emotional reaction to the perceived wrongdoings of one’s country. As will be discussed in further detail below, it is useful to examine shame alongside similar emotions such as guilt and anger because shame is uniquely associated with the appraisal that an ingroup’s transgression poses a pervasive threat to its image (Lickel, Schmader, Curtis, Scarnier, & Ames, 2005).

Theory and research also suggest that emotions motivate individuals to take action (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Shure, 1989; H. J. Smith & Kessler, 2004). Discrete emotions orient individuals toward a specific mode of responding to a situation because specific emotions are linked to distinct goals and action intentions (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992). In the context of a country’s transgression, then, emotions can help explain why people participate in action on behalf of specific opposition strategies (Leach et al., 2002). The specific hypotheses derived from this analysis are presented in more detail below.

**Anger**

Anger is typically directed at an agent appraised to be responsible for a transgression (Frijda, 1986). At least two subtypes of anger may be differentiated by a secondary appraisal of the specific agent responsible for the injustice (Lazarus, 1991). Group members’ anger may be directed at a third-party agent that is blamed for a transgression (Montada & Schneider, 1989) or it may be directed at the ingroup when it is held responsible for wrong-doing (Leach et al., 2006). Because the present research sampled citizens of the two countries primarily responsible for the invasion and occupation of Iraq, we expect participants’ feelings of anger to be (at least partly) ingroup-directed. This ingroup could include the citizens of the country as well as the government that represents and reflects the ingroup (see Leach et al., 2002, 2006).

Because anger often is characterized by a high level of arousal, it is usually associated with an approach orientation and intentions to take action (Averill, 1983). Anger is associated with the goal of actively challenging injustice and confronting the agents responsible, both at the interpersonal (Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman et al., 1994) and intergroup levels (Montada & Schneider, 1989). Because ingroup-directed anger suggests an acceptance of ingroup responsibility for harm done, those who experience this emotion also should wish to compensate those harmed (see Leach et al., 2006). Thus, we expect anger directed at the ingroup to predict political action intentions to support compensation and confrontation strategies, independent of any effects of related emotions (such as guilt and shame).

**Guilt**

Guilt experienced in an intergroup context is based in the appraisal that one’s ingroup is responsible for specific negative actions (Doosje et al., 1998; Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Lickel et al., 2005). Following previous work, we predict that American and British citizens will feel more guilt to the degree that they see their countries’ occupation of Iraq as creating negative conditions in that country.

The relationship between guilt and political action, however, might be somewhat ambiguous. On one hand, studies of interpersonal guilt suggest that guilt has a strong bivariate relationship with compensation actions, which serve to repair and sustain positive relationships (see Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Frijda et al., 1989). Similarly, research on guilt in the intergroup context has shown that people who feel guilt tend to focus on the ingroup’s harmful action (Iyer et al., 2003, Study 2) and often seek to repair harm that has been done by the transgression (Lickel et al., 2005). As such, previous research has shown guilt to predict support for the abstract goal of compensation to the disadvantaged group (Doosje et al., 1998; Iyer et al., 2003).

However, more recent research suggests that the relationship between guilt and compensatory action might be explained by other variables. Specifically, guilt in an intergroup context does not independently predict...
compensation action intentions after controlling for the effects of modern prejudice and anger (Iyer & Leach, 2006; Leach et al., 2006). This is consistent with the conceptualization of guilt as a self-reflective, passive emotion, especially relative to more action-oriented emotions such as anger (Frijda, 1986; Roseman et al., 1994). Thus, we might not expect guilt to independently predict political action intentions when studied in the context of other emotions such as shame and anger.

Shame

Similar to guilt, shame is based in appraisals of (ingroup) responsibility for an illegitimate transgression (Johns, Schmader, & Lickel, 2005; Niedenthal, Tangney, & Gavanski, 1994). However, shame differs from guilt in the type of attribution made for the wrong-doing. Guilt is focused on the action, such that people say “I did a bad thing.” In contrast, people who feel shame attribute the transgression to stable aspects of their character, saying “I am a bad person” (Niedenthal et al., 1994; Tracy & Robins, 2006). Thus, those who feel shame in an intergroup context blame their group for the transgression but also perceive a threat to their image in that the transgression is believed to reflect a flaw in their group’s identity (Lickel et al., 2005). Not surprisingly, then, shame in comparison to guilt involves a greater feeling of self-consciousness (Wicker, Payne, & Morgan, 1983) and a greater fear of rejection by others (R. H. Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002). In the present studies, we predict that American and British citizens should feel ashamed about the occupation of Iraq to the extent that they hold their country responsible and believe that this event poses a threat to their national character.

Shame’s unique concern with self-image means that it is associated with different goals and action intentions than are guilt and anger (Tangney et al., 1992). Shame tends to predict wanting to hide or withdraw from the shame-evoking situation (Johns et al., 2005; Lickel et al., 2005; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996; Wicker et al., 1983). Thus, in the context of American and British transgressions in Iraq, we would expect shame to predict action intentions to advocate a full withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

OVERVIEW OF PRESENT STUDIES

We presented American (Study 1) and British (Study 2) citizens with (fictional) news articles highlighting problems caused in postwar Iraq by their countries’ ongoing occupation. This focus on harmful consequences was a timely topic of debate during data collection and also allowed us to isolate how negative emotional responses to perceived ingroup transgressions predict specific forms of protest. To manipulate appraisals of image threat, the articles were written such that the negative consequences were blamed on the country’s character (high image threat) or actions (low image threat). After reading the article, participants completed a questionnaire assessing their appraisals and emotions as well as political action intentions to support three strategic responses: compensation, confrontation, and withdrawal. Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesized relationships among the manipulation, emotions, and action intentions.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants

One hundred and ninety-four American undergraduates (82 men, 112 women) ranging in age from 18 to 23 years (M = 18.68, SD = 0.94) participated in fulfillment of psychology course requirements. One hundred and forty-one participants self-identified as White/European American, 23 as Latino/Latina, 4 as Black/African American, 20 as Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 6 as Other. On a continuous measure of political orientation (1 = strongly left, 5 = strongly right), participants tended to be left-leaning (M = 1.84, SD = 1.00).

Procedure

Participants completed the questionnaire during the ongoing American occupation of Iraq (between February 1 and March 15, 2006), with no reliable differences (in mean scores or patterns of associations) between responses given on different dates. Participants were first given a (fictional) news article that described postwar conditions in Iraq and the response of Iraqi people to the American occupation. After reading the article, participants completed measures of appraisals, emotions, and willingness to participate in political action.

Materials

The news article was presented as if it had been downloaded from the Cable News Network (CNN) Web site. The first section focused on conditions in postwar Iraq, describing three problems caused by American occupation: (a) “the Americans had not handed over power or control to the Iraqi interim government”; (b) “poor planning by the Americans [had]
left Iraq with intermittent electricity, no phones, water shortages, and a nearly complete breakdown of public order”; and (c) “Americans [were] setting themselves up to profit from the postwar chaos in Iraq.”

The second section highlighted the negative responses from Iraqi citizens by providing quotations from (ostensible) interviews. Image threat was manipulated in these quotations by varying the type of attribution made for the problems caused by the occupation. In the low image threat condition, Iraqi people blamed Americans’ actions for the problems in postwar Iraq. Thus, the emphasis was on the “arrogant course of action [of the Americans]” and the fact that the Americans were “acting irresponsibly.” To minimize the possibility that participants in this condition would spontaneously view Americans’ negative actions to be indicative of their national character, the final quotation made a clear distinction between intentions and character, on one hand, and action: “Even if the Americans are generally good people and some of their good intentions have good consequences for Iraqi people, I believe that many of their specific actions in Iraq have been corrupt acts that now should be addressed.” The emphasis on transgressions as specific actions in this condition downplayed stable attributions to American character and thus was not expected to produce a pervasive threat to the group’s image.

In the high image threat condition, Iraqi people blamed the Americans’ character for problems in postwar Iraq. The focus was thus on the Americans as “really arrogant” and “irresponsible” people. To minimize differences between the two conditions, the final quotation followed an inverse parallel structure to the image threat condition’s distinction between character and action: “Even if some of their specific actions have good consequences for Iraqis, the Americans seem to be basically corrupt people—I don’t think they will change.” That Americans’ stable intentions and character were highlighted in this condition was expected to heighten ingroup members’ perception of a pervasive threat to the group image.

Measures

Appraisals

Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with all items using a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Illegitimacy. Three items (\( \alpha = .66 \)) measured the extent to which participants viewed postwar conditions in Iraq to be illegitimate: “I think postwar conditions are unjust to Iraqi people,” “I think postwar conditions are just fine the way they are” (reverse-scored), and “I think postwar conditions are fair to Iraqi people” (reverse-scored).

Ingroup responsibility. Two items (\( \alpha = .69 \)) assessed participants’ appraisals that Americans, as a group, were responsible for postwar conditions in Iraq: “Americans are primarily responsible for postwar conditions in Iraq” and “Postwar conditions in Iraq have been produced mostly by Americans.”

Image threat. Three items (\( \alpha = .80 \)) assessed participants’ appraisals of image threat, operationalized as the Iraqi people having a bad view of Americans. The items included, “I feel that postwar conditions in Iraq give Iraqis a negative impression of my country,” “I feel that postwar conditions in Iraq have led the Iraqi people to have a negative view of my country,” and “I am afraid that postwar conditions in Iraq reflect poorly on me because they lead Iraqis to have a tarnished image of all Americans.”

The latent structure underlying the appraisal items was assessed in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using EQS software. No error terms were allowed to correlate, and associations were specified between the two factors. We tested a three-factor model (where each item was allowed to load only on its designated factor) and an alternative model with one undifferentiated appraisals factor. The fit indices (see Hu & Bentler, 1999) revealed that the hypothesized model fit the data well and reliably better than the alternative (see Table 1). Moreover, the standardized factor loadings from the hypothesized model confirmed that each factor was well defined by its items.1

Emotion

To assess emotional reactions, participants were asked, “After reading the newspaper article, how do you now feel about the situation in Iraq?” They then rated how much they felt each of 24 emotion terms using a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). Following previous research (Leach et al., 2006; Lickel et al., 2005), three items assessed guilt (guilty, remorseful, regretful; \( \alpha = .87 \)), five items assessed shame (ashamed, disgraced, humiliated, embarrassed, shameful; \( \alpha = .88 \)), and four items assessed anger (furious, outraged, angry, incensed; \( \alpha = .80 \)).

The latent structure underlying the emotion items was assessed in a three-factor CFA model and compared to an alternative model specifying one undifferentiated emotions factor. The hypothesized model fit the data well and reliably better than the one-factor model (see Table 1). The standardized factor loadings confirmed that each of the three factors was well defined by its items.
Political Action Intentions

Participants were presented with descriptions of three groups formed by Americans to advocate different political solutions to the problems caused by the occupation. The compensation group was described as “calling for the United States to provide monetary compensation to the Iraqi people for the harm done after the war.” The confrontation group was described as working to “identify those responsible for postwar conditions in Iraq and to directly challenge them to fix the problems they have caused.” The withdrawal group was described as “advocating the Americans leaving Iraq completely.”

After reading each description, participants were asked to indicate how willing they would be “to engage in various activities to support this group and its strategy.” They were presented with eight political activities ranging from lower cost (e.g., “wear a button” and “sign a petition”) to higher cost (e.g., “attend a rally” and “volunteer”; Brady, 1993). Thus, three measures were developed to assess participants’ willingness to participate in action to support compensation (eight items, $\alpha = .91$), confrontation (eight items, $\alpha = .89$), and withdrawal (eight items, $\alpha = .92$). The full measure is presented in the appendix.

The latent structure underlying the action intention items was assessed in a CFA. Results demonstrated that a three-factor model fit the data well and reliably better than a one-factor model specifying an undifferentiated action intentions factor (see Table 1). The standardized factor loadings also confirmed that each of the three factors was well defined by its items.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary Analyses

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations. Overall, participants viewed the situation in Iraq as illegitimate, as caused by the ingroup, and as threatening to their national image. This suggests that the information in the article had the desired effect of directing participants’ perceptions to the illegitimate consequences of their country’s actions. Participants felt reliably more anger than either shame or guilt and more shame than guilt. Participants also reported moderate levels of willingness to participate in political action, with no reliable differences in willingness to advocate specific political strategies.

Manipulation Check

An initial series of one-way analyses of variance confirmed that the manipulation of image threat had a distinct effect on participants’ appraisals of how the situation in Iraq tarnishes their national image. As expected, participants appraised more threat to their country’s image in the high image threat condition ($M = 5.22, SD = 0.89$) than in the low image threat condition ($M = 4.71, SD = 1.11$), $F(1, 193) = 5.83, p = .02$. In addition, the manipulation did not influence appraised ingroup responsibility, $F(1, 193) = 1.14, p = .287$, or illegitimacy, $F(1, 193) = 1.10, p = .289$.

Emotions and Appraisals

To test our hypotheses about the appraisals associated with guilt, shame, and anger, we examined the patterns of correlations between these variables. Given that the appraisals are moderately correlated with each other (see bivariate correlations in Table 2), we examined the relationships between each appraisal and the emotions while controlling for associations with the other two appraisals.

As expected, all three emotions were associated with acceptance of collective ingroup responsibility for the illegitimate situation in Iraq. Appraised ingroup responsibility was positively correlated with guilt ($pr = .36,$
Political action intentions

NOTE: Felt emotions

TABLE 2: Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations, Study 1

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<th>M (SD)</th>
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<td>Appraisals¹</td>
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<td>1. Illegitimacy</td>
<td>6.36 (0.68)</td>
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<td>2. Ingroup responsibility</td>
<td>5.64 (0.89)</td>
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<td>3. Image threat</td>
<td>5.66 (0.99)</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.20*</td>
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<td>Felt emotions²</td>
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<td>4. Guilt</td>
<td>1.66, (1.79)</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
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<td>5. Shame</td>
<td>2.47, (1.34)</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
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<td>6. Anger</td>
<td>3.09, (1.14)</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.75**</td>
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<td>Political action intentions²</td>
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<td>7. Compensation</td>
<td>4.10, (1.51)</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
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<td>8. Withdrawal</td>
<td>3.99, (1.86)</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.59**</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Confrontation</td>
<td>4.65, (1.37)</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
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NOTE: Within each variable category, means with different subscripts are reliably different from one another, p < .01.
a. 1-7 response scale.
b. 0-5 response scale.
*p < .05. **p < .01.

p < .001, shame (pr = .25, p = .025), and anger (pr = .43, p < .001). Appraised illegitimacy also was positively correlated with guilt (pr = .33, p = .002), shame (pr = .30, p = .004), and anger (pr = .39, p < .001). Consistent with our hypotheses, only those who experienced shame felt that American actions in Iraq posed a threat to their national image. Appraised image threat was correlated with shame (pr = .42, p < .001) but not with guilt (pr = .13, p = .205) or anger (pr = .15, p = .153).

Taken together, the correlations provide initial evidence that although all three emotions are associated with acceptance of ingroup responsibility for an illegitimate transgression, only shame is associated with the perception that the group’s image is threatened. To provide additional evidence for this distinction between the emotions, we tested a structural model to assess the effect of the image threat manipulation on reported levels of emotion and political action intentions.

Structural Models

To examine the relationships between the image threat manipulation, emotions, and political action intentions, we tested a structural model with measured variables using EQS software. The image threat manipulation was specified as an exogenous variable predicting the three emotions. The emotions in turn were specified as predictors of action intentions in support of the three political strategies. Consistent with previous work (Gordijn, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, & Dumont, 2006; Leach et al., 2006), emotions were expected to fully account for any relationships between the manipulation and political action intentions.

The model fit the data well. The χ² statistic was marginally reliable ([3 df, N = 194] = 7.095, p = .06) and other indices showed excellent fit: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .971, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = .983, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = .979, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .041, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .080. Modification indices demonstrated that adding the three remaining paths (from the manipulation to action intentions) would not reliably improve the overall fit of the model (p > .10).

Parameter estimates are shown in Figure 1. The image threat manipulation was a reliable predictor of participants’ shame but not of their anger or guilt. Thus, as expected, participants in the high image threat condition were more likely to experience shame than were participants in the low image threat condition.

Although guilt had a significant bivariate relationship with political action intentions to support all three political strategies (see Table 2), none of these direct paths were reliable in the structural model that controlled for the predictive effects of shame and anger. These nonreliable relationships are consistent with previous research conceptualizing guilt as a relatively inactive emotion (Leach et al., 2006). Also as expected, shame was a reliable predictor solely of action intentions to support withdrawal from Iraq. Thus, those who felt ashamed about the occupation of Iraq were willing to take action aimed at withdrawing the group from the situation but were not motivated toward action that would promote compensation or direct confrontation of those responsible.

Anger directly predicted action intentions to support all three political strategies: compensation, confrontation, and withdrawal. These findings are consistent with previous work (e.g., Leach et al., 2006; Montada & Schneider, 1989) conceptualizing anger as an action-oriented emotion.
Because anger entails a focus on the ingroup as a perpetrator of harm, we had expected that it would predict both confrontation of the instigating ingroup members and compensation for those harmed. The surprising result was that anger also predicted action to advocate withdrawal. One explanation is that a call for withdrawal of troops may be interpreted in different ways. We assumed that withdrawal reflects a distancing strategy, but it also could be seen as a direct challenge of existing policy to continue the occupation. In this way, actions to advocate withdrawal may be intended as a confrontation of the country’s policy of occupation.

**Alternative Model**

Consistent with previous work on group-based emotions (Gordijn et al., 2006; Iyer & Leach, 2006), our model specifies emotions as predicted by manipulated appraisals and predictive of action intentions. Self-perception theory offers another conceptualization of these relationships, proposing that emotional reactions are inferred from action (intentions; Laird & Bresler, 1992). Thus, we tested an alternative model that reversed the positions of emotion and action intentions: manipulation \(\rightarrow\) action intentions \(\rightarrow\) emotions. This model did not meet the standards for good fit, \(\chi^2(3 \, df, N = 194) = 8.656, p = .03\) (CFI = .875, IFI = .876, GFI = .875, SRMR = .145, RMSEA = .143), thus indicating that the hypothesized model is superior to the alternative.

**STUDY 2**

Study 1 provided evidence that anger, guilt, and shame play distinct roles in citizens’ reactions to the perceived transgressions of their country. Most notably, a manipulation of image threat uniquely predicted feelings of shame, which then predicted action intentions calling for troop withdrawal. Anger predicted action intentions to confront current policy and to provide compensation for harm done. Guilt, in contrast, had little independent predictive relationship to political action intentions. To replicate these findings, Study 2 investigated these emotions as explanations of British students’ willingness to protest their country’s actions in postwar Iraq. From the planning stages of the invasion of Iraq, the United Kingdom has been an active member of the “coalition of the willing,” contributing to the military campaign and maintaining a presence in postwar-occupied Iraq (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2003). Thus, we expected British citizens to hold their country responsible for (at least some of) the problems in occupied Iraq and thus experience guilt, shame, and anger.

Reports suggest, however, that not all British citizens blame their government for the problems in postwar Iraq. Many have held the American government (i.e., a third-party agent) responsible for the invasion and the occupation (BBC, 2004). It is therefore possible that some British participants might direct their anger about the occupation at the American government rather than at their own country. We investigated this possibility by assessing participants’ anger at British and American targets.

The distinction between ingroup-directed anger and other-directed anger should have important political implications. We expected that anger directed at ingroup members similar to the self (i.e., British citizens) should be associated more with action intentions to advocate compensation rather than confrontation. Our reasoning is that a focus on ingroup blame should entail
a feeling of responsibility for making things right without necessarily attacking oneself and similar others. In contrast, anger directed at an outgroup agent should predict action intentions on behalf of confrontation rather than compensation. In this case, individuals feel no sense of collective responsibility for making up for the transgression but do feel motivated to blame and punish what is seen as a blameworthy outgroup. Finally, anger that is directed at a representative of the ingroup (such as one’s own government) should be associated with action intentions on behalf of both compensation and confrontation due to a sense of ingroup responsibility paired with a focus on placing most of the burden of punishment on the most powerful members of the ingroup.

Method

Participants

Participants were 185 undergraduates at a British university. Fifteen participants who were not British citizens were excluded from analyses. The final sample of 170 (68 men, 98 women, 4 unstated) ranged in age from 18 to 39 years ($M = 20.51, SD = 2.88$). One participant self-identified as Afro-Caribbean, 159 as White, and 7 as Other (3 unstated). Participants’ political attitudes were at the center of the scale ($1 = strongly left, 5 = strongly right; M = 2.83, SD = 0.85$).

Procedure and Materials

Students were approached on campus during the ongoing occupation of Iraq (between November 4 and November 24, 2004) and were asked if they would be willing to complete a questionnaire about the situation in Iraq. About 15% of those asked declined to participate. As in Study 1, there were no reliable differences (in mean scores or patterns of associations) between responses given on different dates.

Participants were given a questionnaire packet that included a (fictional) news article containing the manipulation of image threat and the measures of interest. The article was presented as if it had been downloaded from the BBC Web site. The content was similar to that used in Study 1 but worded to fit the British context. As in Study 1, the first section described postwar conditions focusing on the problems the country was facing under the British occupation (in Southern Iraq, where British troops have jurisdiction).

In the second section, the Iraqi quotations that served to manipulate image threat in Study 1 were adapted to illustrate Iraqi people’s unhappiness with the British occupation. In the high image threat condition, Iraqi people blamed British national character for the problems in postwar Iraq. The focus was thus on the British as “really arrogant” and “irresponsible” people. In the low image threat condition, Iraqi people blamed British actions for the problems in postwar Iraq. Thus, the emphasis was on the “arrogant course of action [of the British]” and the fact that the British were “acting irresponsibly.”

Measures

Appraisals and Felt Emotions

Participants completed the same appraisal and emotion measures used in Study 1. Each of the scales was reliable: illegitimacy ($\alpha = .71$), ingroup responsibility ($\alpha = .77$), image threat ($\alpha = .82$), guilt ($\alpha = .80$), shame ($\alpha = .91$), and anger ($\alpha = .90$). As in Study 1, confirmatory factor analyses provided evidence that our measures assessed three distinct appraisals and three distinct emotions.

Target of Anger

After completing the measure of felt emotion, participants were asked, “When you think about postwar conditions in Iraq, how angry do you feel at each of the following?” They were presented with three targets: British people (ingroup), the British government (representative of the ingroup), and the American government (outgroup). Participants indicated how angry they felt at each target using a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Political Action Intentions

Participants completed the measures of political action intentions used in Study 1. This provided us with a measure of British students’ willingness to take action to support compensation (eight items, $\alpha = .90$), confrontation (eight items, $\alpha = .93$), and withdrawal from Iraq (eight items, $\alpha = .91$). As in Study 1, confirmatory factor analysis showed that a three-factor model fit the data reliably better than a one-factor model.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary Analyses

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations. Overall, participants viewed the situation in Iraq as illegitimate and threatening to their image as British citizens. This pattern suggests that the article had the desired effect of directing perceptions to the negative aspects of British involvement in Iraq. They were ambivalent, however, about blaming the ingroup for postwar conditions in Iraq.

As in Study 1, participants reported feeling reliably more (general) anger than guilt or shame and reliably
more shame than guilt. Anger was most strongly directed at the American government compared to the British government and British people. There were no differences in action intentions to support the different political action strategies.

Participants’ reported level of general anger was moderately associated with anger at British people, anger at the British government, and anger at the American government (see Table 3). This suggests that our measure of general anger reflected emotion that could be directed at different specific targets. We consider this issue in more detail in testing the structural models.

### Manipulation Check

Analyses confirmed the effectiveness of the manipulation specifically on appraisals of image threat. As expected, participants appraised more image threat in the high image threat condition (M = 5.25, SD = 1.38) than in the low image threat control condition (M = 4.39, SD = 1.06), F(1, 182) = 7.18, p = .008. The manipulation did not influence participants’ appraisals of ingroup responsibility for the situation, F(1, 182) = 1.58, p = .210, or their appraisals of illegitimacy, F(1, 182) = 1.26, p = .263.

### Emotions and Appraisals

As in Study 1, we examined the relationships between each appraisal and the emotions while controlling for the effects of the other two appraisals.

### General emotions

Guilt, shame, and anger were again associated with acceptance of ingroup responsibility for the illegitimate situation in Iraq. Appraised ingroup responsibility was positively correlated with guilt (pr = .37, p < .001), shame (pr = .35, p < .001), and anger (pr = .25, p = .001). Appraisals of illegitimacy also were positively associated with guilt (pr = .29, p < .001), shame (pr = .26, p < .001), and anger (pr = .39, p < .001). Consistent with our hypotheses, appraised image threat was correlated with shame (pr = .38, p < .001) but not with guilt (pr = .09, p = .224). Somewhat surprisingly, appraised image threat also was correlated with anger (pr = .25, p = .001). We return to this issue in the structural model, which examines the effect of the image threat manipulation on emotions.

### Anger at different targets

We also examined the relationships between each appraisal and anger directed at different targets. Appraisals of illegitimacy were positively correlated with anger at British people (pr = .19, p = .009), anger at the British government (pr = .21, p = .006), and anger at the American government (pr = .24, p = .001). However, appraisals of ingroup responsibility and image threat differentiated between the subtypes of anger. As expected, appraised ingroup responsibility was correlated with anger at British people (pr = .19, p = .010) and anger at the British government (pr = .15, p = .040) but was not related to anger at the American government (pr = -.09, p = .199). Similarly, appraised image threat was associated with anger at British people (pr = .39, p < .001) and anger at the British government.
(pr = .30, p < .001) but was not related to anger at the American government (pr = .12, p = .112). These results provide preliminary evidence that anger about an illegitimate intergroup transgression may be ingroup-directed (at the entire ingroup and its representatives) or outgroup-directed (at a third-party agent). We examine the effect of the image threat manipulation on these subtypes of anger in the structural models.

Structural Models

Two structural models were tested in this study. The first mirrored that tested in Study 1, examining the relationships between the image threat manipulation, the general emotions, and action intentions. The second model examined the relationships between the manipulation, anger directed at different targets, and action intentions. Alternative models also were tested to provide additional support for the hypothesized models.

General Emotions

As in Study 1, the image threat manipulation was included as a categorical exogenous variable predicting emotions, which were specified as predictors of political action intentions. The χ² statistic was small and nonreliable (|3 df, N = 170| = 1.093, p = .778) and the other indices also suggested excellent fit: CFI = 1.000, IFI = 1.000, GFI = .998, SRMR = .010, RMSEA < .001. Modification indices indicated that adding any of the remaining three direct paths would not reliably improve the fit of the model (p > .10).

Parameter estimates are presented in Figure 2. The image threat manipulation was a reliable predictor of shame and anger but not guilt. Thus, as expected, participants in the high image threat condition were more likely to experience shame than were participants in the low image threat condition. In addition, contrary to Study 1, participants in the high image threat condition (compared to low image threat) were more likely to feel angry. We discuss possible explanations for this difference in the General Discussion.

As in Study 1, guilt did not directly predict action intentions on behalf of any political strategy. Although guilt’s strongest bivariate relationship was with compensation action intentions (see Table 3), this relationship was not reliable in the model that controlled for the effects of anger and shame. Shame was a reliable predictor solely of action intentions to support withdrawal of troops from Iraq (see Figure 2). Thus, consistent with the view of shame as an avoidance-based emotion, those who felt ashamed about the occupation of Iraq were willing to take action aimed at withdrawing the group from the situation but were not motivated toward action that would promote compensation or direct confrontation of those responsible.

Anger appeared to be a stronger predictor of political action intentions than were guilt and shame (see Figure 2). As in Study 1, anger directly predicted action intentions to support all three political strategies: compensation to Iraqi people, confrontation of agents responsible, and withdrawal from Iraq. This is consistent with previous work (Iyer & Leach, 2006) linking...
anger to compensation and confrontation strategies. That anger predicts action on behalf of withdrawal again suggests that this strategy reflects, in part, a direct challenge to existing national policy.

Alternative model. As in Study 1, we sought to provide additional support for our model by testing a theoretically viable alternative. The alternative model reversed the positions of emotion and action intentions: manipulation → action intentions → emotions. This model did not meet the standards for good fit, \( \chi^2(3 \, df, \, N = 170) = 10.418, \, p = .015 \) (CFI = .886, IFI = .886, GFI = .884, SRMR = .131, RMSEA = .118), suggesting that our hypothesized model is superior to the alternative.

Anger at Different Targets

Given that the present sample’s anger about the problems in postwar Iraq could be directed at different targets, we tested a model specifying the three subtypes of anger as predicted by the image threat manipulation and predicting the three measures of political action intentions. The model fit the data very well, \( \chi^2(3 \, df, \, N = 170) = 2.339, \, p = .505 \) (CFI = 1.000, IFI = 1.000, GFI = .996, SRMR = .026, RMSEA < .001). Inspection of the modification indices revealed that adding any of the remaining direct paths would not reliably improve the overall fit of the model (\( p > .10 \)).

Parameter estimates are presented in Figure 3. The image threat manipulation was a reliable predictor of anger directed at the British people and at representatives of the ingroup (British government) and at representatives of the ingroup (British people) and at representatives of the ingroup (the British government) compared to participants in the low image threat condition. As expected, manipulation of threat to the ingroup’s image did not influence the extent to which participants directed their anger at the (outgroup) American government.

The relationships between the subtypes of anger and political action intentions were consistent with our hypotheses. As expected of an emotion focused primarily on ingroup blame and responsibility, ingroup-directed anger was only predictive of action tendencies advocating compensation (see Figure 3). In contrast, anger at the American government was reliably related to action intentions aimed at confrontation of (external) agents responsible for the transgression but not compensation or withdrawal. Finally, anger at the British government predicted each of the three specific political action strategies: compensation, confrontation, and withdrawal.

Alternative model. We again tested an alternative model suggested by self-perception theory, which reversed the positions of emotion and action intentions: manipulation → action intentions → emotions. This model did not meet the standards for good fit, \( \chi^2(3 \, df, \, N = 170) = 9.487, \, p = .04 \) (CFI = .894, IFI = .899, GFI = .897, SRMR = .101, RMSEA = .090). This provides evidence that the hypothesized model is superior to the alternative.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present research examines individuals’ political opposition to a perceived injustice perpetrated by their
group. In the context of American and British actions in postwar Iraq, two studies demonstrate that a country’s perceived transgression can elicit distinct self-critical emotions in its citizens. American and British participants who perceived that their countries were responsible for illegitimate conditions in occupied Iraq reported greater guilt, shame, and anger (directed at the ingroup and its representatives) about the situation.

The present studies also provide some of the first evidence that shame is a distinct emotional response to the perceived transgressions of one’s country. In both studies, a manipulation designed to attribute the negative situation in Iraq to the ingroup’s intentions and character (as opposed to its discrete actions) increased appraisals of image threat and feelings of shame but not guilt. These results underscore the importance of distinguishing between shame and guilt when considering emotional reactions to the negative actions of one’s ingroup.

When comparing results for shame and anger, there were interesting differences between the American and British responses. Among American citizens (Study 1), the image threat manipulation predicted shame and not anger. However, British citizens (Study 2) were more likely to express anger (at their government and their fellow citizens) when they perceived the Iraqi people to have a negative view of the British national character. This link might reflect a general tendency for shame and anger to be strongly associated with one another (Tangney et al., 1992). Another (speculative) explanation may lie in the fact that the British participants were ambivalent about blaming their country for the illegitimate situation in Iraq (see Table 3). As such, their ingroup-directed anger may be based in the belief that their country allowed its reputation to be unfairly maligned, whereas real responsibility for the situation in Iraq rests with Americans.

Predicting Intentions to Advocate Specific Opposition Strategies

It is important to understand what factors elicit distinct emotional responses because discrete emotions are associated with different goals and action intentions. A second goal of the present research was to demonstrate that individuals’ emotional reactions to their country’s transgression have important implications for their political responses. Both studies provided support for the hypothesis that emotions can explain why individuals choose specific strategic responses when they take action to oppose their country’s transgressions.

Both studies clearly showed that guilt was not a reliable independent predictor of action intentions to advocate any political strategy. Although other research has linked guilt to compensation motivations (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1994; Doosje et al., 1998), the present data suggest that guilt is not the most powerful predictor of political action because its effects were not independent of the other emotions in the models (see also Iyer & Leach, 2006; Leach et al., 2006). In contrast to guilt, shame predicted action on behalf of withdrawal from Iraq but not any other political strategy. In this context, citizens of the perpetrating countries seem to respond to a heightened sense of threat to their national identity by endorsing action that would most quickly remove the group from the situation. This response may have conflicting implications for the outgroup that is harmed by the ingroup’s transgression. On one hand, the transgressing ingroup’s withdrawal prevents further harm being caused to the outgroup. On the other hand, the departure of the transgressing ingroup may limit the role it plays in solving the problems for which it is responsible.

Consistent with its conceptualization as an action-oriented emotion (Frijda, 1986), anger was an independent predictor of political action intentions on behalf of all three opposition strategies: compensation, confrontation, and withdrawal. Study 2 also demonstrated that anger directed at ingroup and outgroup national representatives (i.e., American and British governments) places responsibility in powerful agents and predicts intentions to confront them for their role in the transgression. Second, only anger directed at the ingroup and its representative predicted intentions to advocate withdrawal, suggesting that action calling for a change in national policy is undertaken only when the protester has legitimate standing (e.g., citizenship) to make such a demand. Last, only anger directed at the ingroup and its representative predicted intentions to advocate compensation. Thus, only when the target of anger was ingroup focused were individuals motivated to advocate the political strategy of compensation.

Implications and Future Directions

Emotion research has traditionally focused on individuals’ emotional reactions to interpersonal situations and interactions that directly affect them. Recent work has broadened this focus by acknowledging that individuals also can experience emotion in intergroup contexts, in response to the actions and experiences of others with whom they might have only a nominal association. As the present research highlights, many of the appraisal processes that predict individuals’ distinct emotional responses to their personal circumstances also predict their emotional responses to intergroup contexts. Although the experience of emotion might be
quite similar in interpersonal and intergroup contexts, it is important to acknowledge that additional group-level variables play a role in predicting emotion felt in an intergroup context. For instance, individuals may avoid or alter their emotional reactions to a group-level transgression based on their self-categorization and level of group identification, particularly when it is possible to reinterpret the severity and impact of the transgression (e.g., Doosje et al., 1998; Johns et al., 2005).

Although we assumed that individuals' reported emotions in the present studies were largely directed at the actions of their country, it is conceivable that their feelings of anger, guilt, and shame were based in appraisals of their personal actions and character. For example, participants may have felt personally guilty or angry because they had not previously taken action to halt their country's involvement in Iraq. To more clearly distinguish emotions about the self and the group, future research should directly assess these differences. For example, emotions could be assessed with specific measures that indicate their appraisal basis (e.g., "I feel guilty about what my country is doing in Iraq" vs. "I feel guilty that I didn't do enough to stop my country's involvement in Iraq"). Furthermore, although the present research focused on how emotions about the event in question predict behavior in response to that event, future research also might examine the degree to which incidental feelings of shame, guilt, and anger have generalized effects on behavior that extend to intergroup situations.

It should be noted that the present studies examined emotional responses to an ingroup's ongoing transgression, in contrast to other studies that have focused on past harm (e.g., Doosje et al., 1998). There are at least two ways in which individuals may make different appraisals of past and present transgressions. First, past group transgressions may allow group members to subtype the perpetrators as historical figures irrelevant to the contemporary group, thus reducing the group's current collective responsibility for the transgression (see Iyer & Leach, 2006). Second, group members may find it easier to distance the group from pervasive identity threat when the transgression has occurred in the past rather than the present. Future work should examine the bases of individuals' responses to historical and ongoing ingroup transgressions.

In addition to broadening our analysis of the role of emotion in predicting behavior in intergroup contexts, the present research also highlights the importance of taking a more nuanced approach to examining different forms of collective actions and political protest. Although the same eight political actions were used to assess intentions to endorse the three distinct strategies (see the appendix), confirmatory factor analyses suggested that participants did not respond to all the items uniformly. Rather, participants responded to an action (e.g., signing a petition) in different ways when it reflected support for different political strategies (i.e., compensation, withdrawal, confrontation). The present studies also showed that participants had different (emotional) reasons for their intentions to participate in the different strategies.

Our measures of political action intentions included some political activities that required only a low level of involvement (e.g., signing a petition) and some that demanded a higher level of involvement (e.g., volunteering with a group). Future research might explore the variables that predict whether participants take on more high-involving actions in the name of a given strategy. For example, recent research suggests that morally based attitudes have unique consequences for social perception and behavior (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). Emotions that stem from strong moral judgments, rather than other types of appraisals, also might be better predictors of involved political action for a specific strategy. Although shame, guilt, and anger (outrage) have been acknowledged as moral emotions, the role of moral attitudes should be more explicitly connected to the experience of emotion and participation in collective action.

The present research suggests that emotions offer a useful conceptual framework to explain intentions to protest group-level injustice such as national transgressions. However, emotions also are likely to be relevant to other political positions beyond opposition to one's country's perceived transgressions. For example, people's feelings of ingroup pride, or fear and anger against those who are perceived to threaten their nation, are likely to predict people's political activity in support of their country's aggression toward other groups (see Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006). As such, future research should examine emotions as predictors of political activities advocating a broad range of political messages.

APPENDIX

MEASURES OF POLITICAL ACTION INTENTIONS

Political Action Intentions to Advocate Compensation

Some Americans are taking action to express their opinions about what should be done about the problems in Iraq. One group has been formed to call for the U.S. to provide monetary compensation to the Iraqi people for the harm done after the war. Using the scale below, indicate how willing you would be to engage in various activities to support this group and its strategy:
Political Action Intentions to Advocate Confrontation

Other Americans have formed a group to identify those responsible for postwar conditions in Iraq and to directly challenge them to fix the problems they have created. Using the scale below, indicate how willing you would be to engage in various activities to support this group and its strategy:

01. Join the group's e-mail list
02. Vote for a candidate who agrees with this group
03. Attend a rally
04. Wear a badge supporting this group
05. Volunteer with this group
06. Go to a meeting of local representatives of this group
07. Sign a petition
08. Recruit others to become involved with this group

Political Action Intentions to Advocate Withdrawal

Other Americans have formed a group to advocate the U.S. leaving Iraq completely. Using the scale below, indicate how willing you would be to engage in various activities to support this group and its strategy:

01. Attend a rally
02. Wear a badge supporting this group
03. Go to a meeting of local representatives of this group
04. Vote for a candidate who agrees with this group
05. Sign a petition
06. Join the group’s e-mail list
07. Recruit others to become involved with this group
08. Go to a meeting of local representatives of this group

NOTE

1. Nearly all of the confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) and structural models reported in this article have moderately high associations between variables (ranging from .30 to .69). There was no evidence that these correlations produced problems of multicollinearity, however, because their magnitudes meet the accepted threshold for structural equation modeling (SEM; i.e., < .80) and the determinants of the covariance matrices were significantly different from 0 (see Kline, 1998; Maruyama, 1998).

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