



Guilt, anger, and pride about in-group environmental behaviour: Different emotions predict distinct intentions

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ABSTRACT

The present research compared the in-group-focused emotions of pride, guilt, and anger as predictors of three environmental intentions. In two scenario studies we manipulated the in-group's responsibility for environmental damage or protection. In-group responsibility for environmental damage increased participants' guilt and anger, whereas in-group responsibility for environmental protection increased participants' pride. The three emotions mediated the links between in-group responsibility for environmental behaviour and three behavioural intentions. In line with predictions, guilt predicted intentions to repair the damage and anger predicted intentions to punish wrongdoers. Pride predicted intentions for in-group favouring environmental protection. We discuss the role of group-based emotion in promoting different environmental behaviours.

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1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing humanity. This makes it important to understand what people make of damage to, and protection of, the environment. Why do some people get engaged in environmental protection, others ignore it, and others think that technology will provide a solution? Certainly, emotions play a major role here (Swim et al., 2009). For instance, environmental NGOs tend to make people feel guilty, highlighting humans' responsibility for climate change; the media tend to fuel anger about environmental disasters, whereas politicians often try to invoke pride in the ecological and technological achievements that suggest optimism about the future. Which of these emotional strategies works "best" in terms of promoting environmental awareness and accordingly, which of these emotions leads to which intention to act in ways that benefit the environment? We believe that it is of particular importance to ask how emotional reactions to climate change are associated with intentions for specific environmental behaviours.

Given that climate change results from collective behaviour and events, it is especially important to examine how individuals experience the environmental behaviour of their groups – cities, countries, and international bodies such as the United Nations. Although individuals may have their own sense of personal responsibility for

the environment, they also respond to their in-group's responsibility for environmental damage and protection (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009). This leads individuals to experience group-based emotions (see Iyer & Leach, 2008; Mackie & Smith, 2002; Parkinson, Fischer, & Manstead, 2005). In the present study, we investigate *guilt*, *anger*, and *pride* as emotional reactions to in-group damage or protection of the environment. We expect each emotion to best predict the specific environmental intentions of *repair* of damage, *punishment* of wrongdoers, and *in-group favouring* environmental protection.

1.1. The value of group-based emotions

For quite some time, rational-choice-based models, such as the theory of planned behaviour (e.g., Ajzen, 1991) dominated explanations of environmental behaviour. Perhaps as a result, little research has examined the role of emotions in environmental behaviour. However, there is increasing attention to the role that emotions play in people's responses to environmental issues (Kaiser, Schultz, Berenguer, Corral-Verdugo, & Tankha, 2008). So far, fear of environmental risks seems to attract the most attention (e.g., Böhm, 2003; Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2010). Apparently, fear about the consequences of climate change does not motivate people to conserve energy (Ferguson & Branscombe, 2010). Instead, fearful individuals seem to cope with the threat of climate change by relying on their group to engage in collective action (Van Zomeren et al., 2010). We suggest that, unlike fear, emotions focused on the

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in-group's *active* role in environmental outcomes may better motivate environmental behaviour.

Recent work has examined a wide variety of emotions that are relevant to what individuals intend to do about in-group and out-group behaviour (Mackie & Smith, 2002). Most of these studies examined a single emotion and a single intention (for reviews, see Iyer & Leach, 2008; Parkinson et al., 2005). For example, a good deal of research has examined guilt about in-group wrongdoing and its prediction of the intention to make restitution. Guilt has rarely been compared to other in-group directed emotions, such as anger or pride. In addition, as Ferguson and Branscombe (2010) suggested, more positive emotions such as pride should be examined in research on the role of group-based emotion in group-level behaviour. Therefore, in this study, we compared in-group focused guilt to anger and pride because we wished to explain intentions regarding three distinct intentions regarding the environment – repair, punishment, and in-group favouring environmental behaviour. Each emotion should have a special link to each behavioural intention.

2. Three emotions and three environmental intentions

Responsibility appraisals determine how people feel about events (Weiner, 1995). Thus, they influence what people are motivated to do on issues such as climate change (e.g., Kaiser & Shimoda, 1999; Nerb & Spada, 2001). Alternate framings of responsibility for environment outcomes should trigger different group-based emotions. For example, when one's country is framed as responsible for causing environmental damage, one should feel guilty and angry at the in-group. In contrast, in-group responsibility for environmental protection should evoke pride. As responsibility is a key appraisal in in-group-focused emotions (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002), we manipulated the degree to which participants' in-group is responsible for environmental outcomes to show its causal role in the three emotions. Whereas it is increasingly common to manipulate group-based appraisals (see Iyer & Leach, 2008 for an overview), few experiments have investigated the effects of appraisal manipulations on *multiple emotions* and subsequently, emotion specific effects on different *behavioural intentions*. Thus, the present studies were designed to extend previous research on emotion about social and political issues. As we discuss in more detail below, guilt should motivate intentions to *repair* environmental damage whereas anger at the in-group should motivate intentions to *punish* environmental sinners. Pride should motivate intentions to engage in support of environmental behaviour that favours the in-group exclusively.

2.1. Guilt and damage repair

Guilt is a response to in-group responsibility for wrongdoing, particularly in cases of a violation of social standards. People who experience guilt want to undo their actions, apologize, and be forgiven (see Parkinson et al., 2005). In the context of environmental issues, Ferguson and Branscombe (2010) showed that guilt about the in-group's role in climate change facilitated mitigating behaviour. Thus, in line with these authors, we expected that people would feel more guilt when their group is framed as responsible for climate change (Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006 for a review on guilt and responsibility). This guilt should be strongly linked to the goal of repairing the environmental damage. As shown in previous work, group-based guilt is an emotional response to the in-group's wrongful behaviour, focussing more on one's own misdeed than on others' suffering (for a review, see Iyer & Leach, 2008). As such, guilt calls for repairing the damage done by one's wrongdoing, instead of eliciting pro-social reactions in general (Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007). Repairing the damage done seems to most directly provide redemption from the unpleasant feeling of guilt. Thus, guilt should

not mediate the links between responsibility and punishment of environmental sinners or in-group favouring environmental protection. Guilt about in-group environmental damage should be narrowly focused on repairing this damage (Iyer & Leach, 2008; Leach et al., 2002).

2.2. Anger and in-group punishment

Typically, anger is directed at an agent appraised as responsible for wrongdoing. Hence, if the responsibility for the damage is ascribed to the in-group itself, anger will be in-group-directed (Iyer et al., 2007; Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006). In this way, in-group-focused anger is similar to guilt. However, anger is a state of agitation and thus has high "action potential," whereas guilt is a state of dejection and thus has low action potential (Leach et al., 2006). As a result, in-group-focused anger and guilt are tied to different behavioural intentions. Anger at the in-group results in confrontation of the in-group; actions are directed at the punishment of those who are responsible for the damage (Harth, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2011; for a discussion, see Thomas et al., 2009). This is consistent with the more general finding that group-based anger is linked to the impulse to move against the target of anger (e.g., Gordijn, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, & Dumont, 2006; Kessler & Mummendey, 2001; Mackie & Smith, 2002). Along these lines, we expected that in-group responsibility for environmental damage will elicit anger at the in-group as well as guilt. However, in contrast to guilt, anger directed at the in-group should predict the motivation to punish those in-group members most responsible for environmental damage. Thus, anger should not predict intentions to repair environmental damage or in-group favouring environmental protection.

2.3. Pride and in-group favouritism

Pride is a positive, in-group-focused emotion that arises from appraised responsibility for a legitimate achievement (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Group-based pride can be based in viewing the in-group as moral (e.g., Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007), as having a legitimate advantage over out-groups (e.g., Harth, Kessler, & Leach, 2008) or as succeeding in a competition (see Leach et al., 2002). Thus, in-group responsibility for environmental damage should lead to less pride, but greater guilt and anger. However, in-group responsibility for environmental protection should lead to greater pride and lesser guilt and anger. Pride in environmental achievement, such as through developing new technologies that benefit the environment, has rarely been studied. Nevertheless, pride may have important implications for intentions regarding environmental behaviour.

Consistent with the notion of pride as a rank-related emotion (Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010), recent work has found that individuals who are proud of their in-group's achievements are not willing to share resources with dissimilar others (Harth et al., 2008; Leach et al., 2007); on the contrary, they tend to favour their in-group over out-groups (Harth et al., 2008). For instance, Harth et al. (2008, Study 3) led university students to believe that they enjoyed a legitimate advantage in athletic facilities over immigrants of the same age. Pride in this advantage led students to be less willing to share their facilities with the relatively disadvantaged immigrant out-group. Extrapolating to the context of climate change, we expected that pride about the in-group's environmental protection behaviour would motivate intentions for further protection of the in-group exclusively. More specifically, we expected pride in the in-group's achievement of environmental protection to predict in-group favouring intentions for further environmental protection of the in-group, such as investing in environmental technologies for the in-group exclusively or wanting financial reward to the in-group. Pride should not predict doing

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