

Abstract

Collective guilt is a feeling that members of a perpetrator group experience for their group's harmful actions. Collective guilt feelings are known to induce conciliatory behaviors such as reparations and apologies. While members of a perpetrator group experience collective guilt feelings, members of a victim group also often expect perpetrator group members to experience collective guilt. This is called collective guilt assignment. Collective guilt assignment could inhibit victim group members from moving past their negative feelings and inhibit intergroup forgiveness. Thus, it is important for positive intergroup relations to consider what may increase collective guilt feelings and what may decrease collective guilt assignment.

The present research argues that a perception of psychological connections between perpetrators and members of a perpetrator group influences both feelings and assignment of collective guilt. Perpetrator group members may perceive psychological connections between themselves and perpetrators, which may result in collective guilt feelings. Victim group members similarly perceive psychological connections between perpetrators and other members of a perpetrator group, which may result in collective guilt assignment to other members of a perpetrator group.

Collective guilt can be not only experienced but expressed by perpetrator group

members. Thus, the present research also examines effects of expression of guilt and expression of preventing future harmful actions on collective guilt assignment.

Chapter 1 provides theoretical backgrounds and develops five propositions. Effects of psychological connections on collective guilt feelings are formulated as Propositions I and II. Proposition III discusses effects of perceiving psychological connections on collective guilt assignment. Effects of guilt expression on collective guilt assignment are formulated as Proposition IV. Proposition V is related to effects of expression of preventing future harmful actions on collective guilt assignment. Chapter 2 (Studies 1 and 2) provides empirical support for Propositions I and II. Chapter 3 begins with Study 3 which examines whether victim group members perceive perpetrator group members as capable of experiencing guilt and other complex emotions (i.e., secondary emotions) for their harmful actions. This provides a basis to examine any potential effects of guilt expression. Studies 4 through 6 provide empirical evidence for Propositions III and IV. Chapter 4 (Study 7) empirically examines Propositions IV and V. Finally, Chapter 5 is devoted to general discussion of the present research. Each proposition is evaluated, and future directions are discussed. This chapter is concluded by discussion on implications of predicting both feelings and assignment of collective guilt by the perception of psychological connections.