Collective Guilt

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Edited by
NYLA R. BRANSCOMBE
University of Kansas

BERTJAN DOOSJE
University of Amsterdam

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Collective Guilt in the United States

Predicting Support for Social Policies that Alleviate Social Injustice

Robyn K. Mallett and Janet K. Swim

In 1964, the United States government admitted the nation continued to have a problem with race relations. Although slavery had officially ended nearly a century before, a deep racial divide remained between Black and White Americans. In an effort to improve intergroup relations, the government created Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Title VII prohibited discriminatory practices toward applicants for employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Several other legislative acts have made discrimination illegal in different domains (e.g., school desegregation), and blatant acts of racism have diminished since 1964 (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1991; 1998). Yet these laws are being rapidly overturned and discrimination still remains, albeit in a subtler, more ambiguous form (Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Swim et al., 2001). Nearly every American has an opinion on issues of race and racism; some believe that racism still exists and others adamantly disagree (McConahay, 1986; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). Regardless of which side of the coin opinion is on, it is sure to be strongly held and accompanied by emotion (Smith, 1993; Zanna, 1994).

Perhaps because of the prevalence of these ambivalent opinions and controversy in policy, in 1997 President Clinton issued Executive Order No. 13050 that created the Initiative on Race and an advisory board to make recommendations on how to build a unified nation for the coming century. Board members spent over a year gathering information from around the country on how racism has affected lives. The board concluded, "race and ethnicity still have profound impacts on the extent to which a person is fully included in American society and provided the equal opportunity and equal protection promised to all Americans" (Advisory Board, 1998 p. 2) Further, the board recommended a "mend it, don't end it" policy on

affirmative action and called for more research on how to mend the practice of affirmative action and continue to level the playing field for all citizens. It also proposed to investigate several specific examples of discrimination, including police misconduct involving minorities (e.g., racial profiling in traffic stops) and stereotyping in the media.

Notably, the board pointed to a history of White privilege and discrimination against numerical minorities in America as partially responsible for the continuing disparity. It suggested that White privilege and racial discrimination that supports that privilege have ensured that minorities, including Blacks, gain limited acceptance in society. It said that White privilege appears in subtle, everyday advantages to Whites that other racially classified groups do not enjoy. These privileges include small benefits such as receiving better service at stores or restaurants and larger benefits such as being less likely to be suspected of criminal behavior. The cumulative effect of these unseen privileges for Whites sustains the current racial group disparity.

Acknowledging Whites' unquestioned privilege due to race and the presence of everyday forms of racial discrimination that uphold this privilege may be important steps on the road to alleviating racial inequity. Researchers have suggested that once Whites acknowledge group-based privilege, they may feel guilt due to this unearned package of benefits (McIntosh, 1998; Swim & Miller, 1999; Tatum, 1997). This guilt may then motivate them to take action to alleviate their privilege by supporting policies that reduce differences between racial groups. Indeed, Shelby Steele (1990) argued that White guilt was the primary motivation for the social policies of the 1960s and Martin Luther King Jr. (1969) suggested that by eliminating separatist policies, Whites might diminish their feelings of guilt over wrongs committed against Blacks.

Although researchers have theorized about such a connection between perceived inequity, emotion, and action, very few empirical tests of this association have actually been conducted. We believe that equity theory can serve as an organizing framework for understanding and testing this process. In this chapter, we propose a model that integrates principles of social justice with research on collective guilt and specifies how perceptions of inequity might motivate reparations. We review evidence to support the extension of equity theory and research on guilt from the individual to the collective level. We also summarize research that demonstrates the connection between feelings of collective guilt due to inequity and support for social policies that alleviate that inequity.

PERCEIVED INEQUITY LEADS TO PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE GUILT

Early equity theorists attempted to determine how people would react when they were treated unfairly (Walster et al., 1978). Of continued debate,

however, is how one determines when equity exists (cf. Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Walster and her colleagues suggest that in order for equity to exist, a person's ratio of inputs to outcomes should be equal to the ratio of inputs to outcomes that others receive (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973; Walster & Walster, 1975). If this comparative ratio is not equivalent (whether the person receives greater or fewer outcomes relative to others), distress should result (Hegtvedt, 1990; Walster et al., 1978). Moreover, the amount of distress experienced is likely to depend on the magnitude of the benefit or harm one has experienced with greater benefit or harm resulting in greater distress (Walster et al., 1978). Research has demonstrated that if a person is over-rewarded, the distress often takes the form of guilt and if a person is under-rewarded, the distress often takes the form of anger (Austin & Walster, 1974; Scher, 1997; Sprecher, 1986). It is possible that the distress is actually composed of more than one type of emotion (e.g., some guilt, anger, and shame), but research has mainly focused on these two types of emotional responses in isolation (for an exception, see Montada & Schneider, 1989).

Applying equity theory to the conflict that often occurs between social groups, one could posit that if Whites consider the ratio of inputs to outputs between Whites and Blacks in America, either in terms of how their ratios may be higher than Blacks' (e.g., White privilege/advantage) or in terms of how Blacks' ratios may be lower (e.g., Black disadvantage), they should feel distress. This distress should motivate Whites to act in a way that might restore equity. An example of how equity theory might be applied to considerations of group differences between Whites and Blacks is presented in Figure 1. We do not attempt to specify an exact calculus for the equity ratio because this has proven virtually impossible to identify (Harris, 1976; Walster et al., 1978). Instead, we present a general model that illustrates how considerations of equity can result in feelings of distress, which may then motivate reparation.

Inputs consist of qualifications or effort that are relevant to the particular domain under consideration (Lerner, 1981; Wenzel, 2001). One element of the input that differs depending on group membership is race/ethnicity. For Whites, race/ethnicity is a potentially undetected benefit, adding a positive weight to the ratio. For Blacks, race/ethnicity is an all too visible deficit that adds a negative weight to the ratio. Individuals might not consciously consider the inputs and outputs of their group or another group unless it is brought to their attention that a difference may exist (Lerner, 1981).

When this occurs, a comparative ratio is employed to determine whether the ratios of the two groups are equitable or whether each group is getting out about as much as they are putting in. One is likely to ask two types of questions when evaluating the group's ratios (Tyler et al., 1997). First, one might ask, "Is there a difference; and if so, how big is it?" Second,

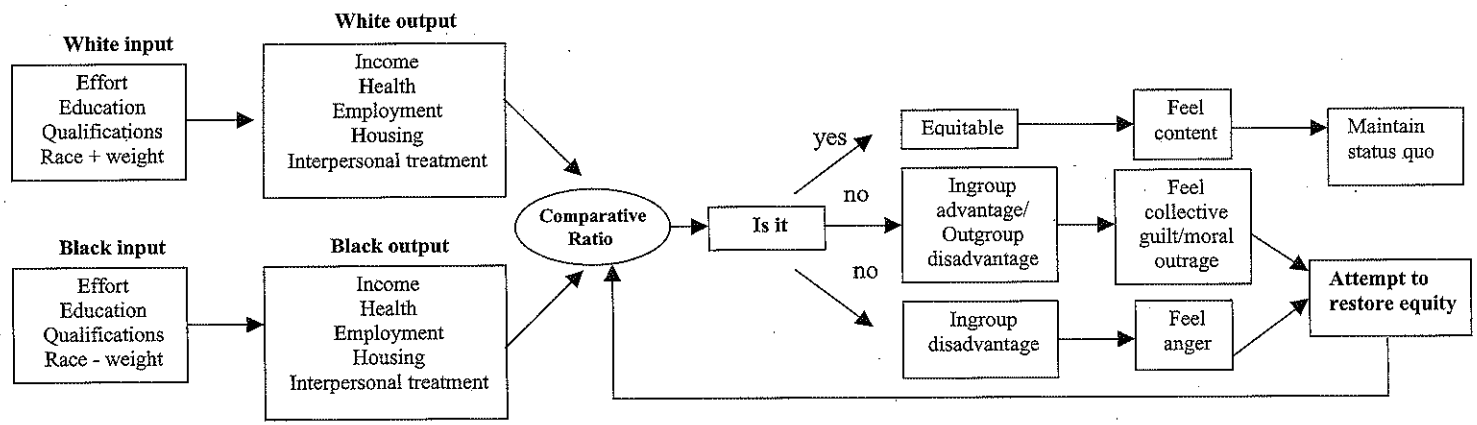

FIGURE 1. The influence of judgments of equity and fairness on emotional responses and subsequent reparations.

one might ask, "Is this difference fair?" Several variables might moderate the relationship between objective reality and determinations of justice. For example, one's level of social dominance, prejudice, or political orientation could alter the weight one assigns to a certain group's inputs and outputs, thereby changing the assessment of fairness. If a person or group decides that the ratio between the groups is fair, then there should be no feelings of distress and the status quo should be maintained. If the ratio is determined to be unfair, feelings of distress should result. This distress should motivate some form of psychological or behavioral reparation.

Assessment of the Comparative Ratio

One aspect of the model that has particular relevance for feelings of White guilt is the positive weight on White input. This positive weight appears because of White privilege or a package of unearned benefits that Whites are said to possess due to the nature of their group membership (McIntosh, 1998). It includes a wide range of assets – some that may seem trivial (e.g., being able to buy bandages that match one's skin color) and some that are likely perceived to be more important (e.g., being tried in court by a jury of one's racial peers). Although examples of White privilege permeate nearly every aspect of daily life, some Whites are unaware of their privilege (Fine et al., 1997; McIntosh, 1998). White privilege is easy to deny because Whites are rarely encouraged to take the perspective of or assume the status of other racially classified groups in society (McIntosh, 1998). Most Whites have never had to deal with a society that views them as second-class citizens, as criminals, or as guilty before proven innocent based solely on their racial background.

Yet if Whites become aware of White privilege, they may realize their group is over benefited in relation to Blacks – a realization that can result in distress. This distress should include feelings of collective guilt rather than individual guilt, because although Whites may not personally feel responsible for the inequity, they still acknowledge the privileged status of their group (Steele, 1990). Therefore, accepting the reality of group-based privilege and considering the injustice such unearned privilege creates in society may activate feelings of collective guilt and motivate Whites to reject White privilege (McIntosh, 1998; Swim & Miller, 1999; Tatum, 1994). Earlier work on guilt at the individual level theorized that individuals could feel guilty for acts they did not personally commit, but that were committed by a group to which they belonged (Hoffman, 1994). In a way, the individual would be feeling guilty by association with a group of others who had committed a wrong. In support of this notion of collective guilt, Bulka (1987) reports that some devout Jewish people feel guilt and ask for forgiveness for sins of other Jewish people on a daily basis although they did not personally commit the sins.

Branscombe (1998) found preliminary support for the link between recognition of group inequity and feelings of distress. When members of a high status group (men) thought about their group-based advantages, they reported distress; however, when they thought about group-based disadvantages, they reported psychological well-being. The opposite pattern was true for a low status group (women) where thoughts of group-based disadvantage resulted in reported distress, whereas thoughts of group-based advantage resulted in reports of well-being. The finding that thoughts of disadvantage for men and privilege for women result in increased well-being initially seems to contradict the predictions of distress due to inequity. Upon closer examination, it may be that group status influences perceived inputs and outputs such that thoughts of advantage for a low status individual and thoughts of disadvantage for a high status individual act to restore perceived equity. Those that are actually *over* benefited (i.e., high status men) perceive equity by focusing on disadvantages, whereas those that are actually *under* benefited (i.e., low status women) perceive equity by focusing on advantages. Similar results have been found for race/ethnicity, because recognition of White advantage can lead to feelings of White guilt (Mallett & Swim, 2004; Swim & Miller, 1999).

Assessment of Fairness and Feelings of Distress

In order to understand how equity theory can explain feelings of collective guilt, it is first useful to examine what circumstances result in guilt at the individual level. Hoffman (1998) delineates several types of "moral encounters" based on his bystander model. Each encounter presents a unique dilemma for the actor that typically results in feelings of guilt. These scenarios, based on individual dilemmas, provide insight into various situations in which people may feel collective guilt due to group-based inequity.

A *personal transgression* is the prototypical guilt-arousing situation, and occurs when one thinks about or actually inflicts harm upon another. At the individual level, personal guilt results when a person accepts personal responsibility for an action or inaction that results in the suffering of another (Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998; Hoffman, 1994) – especially when the act is thought to be controllable or avoidable (Hoffman, 1983). Applying this idea to the collective level, if one perceives that one's group is responsible for group-based inequity, feelings of collective guilt may arise (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2002).

It is also the case that the individual does not truly have to be responsible for an act to feel personal guilt (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994); he or she simply must decide to accept personal responsibility. With this type of *virtual transgression*, personal guilt can arise when it is unclear whether a person has done something to cause the distress of another; yet blame is ultimately accepted for the distress (Hoffman, 1998). This usually

happens in close interpersonal relationships when one partner witnesses distress of the other and cannot determine if he or she is personally responsible for the distress. Failure to attempt to alleviate the partner's distress would induce guilt, so blame is accepted and an attempt to comfort the partner occurs. Research has not yet differentiated between direct and virtual transgressions at the group level. Uncertainty about whether one's group is responsible for the distress of another group could lead to collective guilt if it is determined that the group should take responsibility for the transgression, regardless of actual responsibility.

In addition to feelings of responsibility, research indicates that personal guilt will also result if an indiscretion violates personal norms of justice or standards for moral behavior (Devine & Zuwerink, 1994; Fazio & Hilden, 2001; Harder & Greenwald, 1999; Higgins, 1987; Schott, 1979; Walster et al. 1978). For example, Monteith, Devine, and Zuwerink (1993) found that high prejudice individuals felt less guilt than low prejudice individuals when they thought they would engage in prejudicial behavior. The reason for the discrepancy is that low prejudice individuals hold a personal standard for nonprejudiced behavior, whereas high prejudice individuals believe they should not act on prejudice because others think they should not. Barkan (2000) suggests this type of emotional reaction to perceived injustice may also occur at the collective level because liberal societies expect justice and tend to feel guilt when unjust policies implemented by past generations come to light.

In an attempt to clarify how judgments of equity, justifiability, and responsibility might lead to feelings of distress, Mallett and Swim (2004) investigated the influence of various determinants of equity and fairness on feelings of collective guilt. Whites, women and men, considered a series of everyday group-based differences for how advantageous and important they were, how justifiable they were perceived to be, and how much their group was responsible for creating and maintaining the everyday privilege. Group differences ranged from examples that were relatively less important (e.g., Whites are more likely than Blacks to have historical holidays in the United States that celebrate the accomplishments and activities of White people) to those that were relatively more important (e.g., Whites are more likely than Blacks to be tried in court by a jury of their racial peers). Respondents also indicated the extent of collective guilt they felt for each example.

We found that perceived equity and fairness were significantly associated with evaluations of the group differences for their guilt-inducing properties. More specifically, a model representing the assessment of the comparative ratio, justifiability of and responsibility for the inequity, and feelings of collective guilt for these specific group differences showed a good fit to the data for each group. Although the strength of the paths between assessments of equity and feelings of collective guilt differed

between groups, the comparative ratio (i.e., how advantageous and important the difference was perceived to be) was related to perceived justifiability and responsibility for the difference (i.e., justifiability, whether their group was the source of the difference). These judgments of fairness were, in turn, related to feelings of group-based guilt for the specific group differences.

In summary, collective guilt arises from various circumstances. A group member does not need to accept personal responsibility for group-based inequity in order to feel collective guilt; however, when the member perceives more ingroup responsibility and a lack of justifiability for the inequity, feelings of collective guilt increase (Branscombe et al., 2002; Mallett & Swim, 2004). One might also feel collective guilt if one's group commits a justice violation (Mallett & Swim, 2004). This might be the case if Whites recognize the role they play in altering the value of Black inputs, which would systematically decrease Black outputs. If recognized, maintaining an unfair group-based advantage such as this should remind Whites that a justice violation is occurring – a reminder that should result in feelings of distress.

Additional Influences on Judgments of Fairness and Feelings of Distress

Equity theory points to other possible sources of guilt that may be worth investigating. Walster and colleagues (1978) propose that distress due to inequity may result from either fear of retaliation from the exploited party or a perceived threat to self-esteem in the inequitable situation. These considerations implicate a component of self-interest in judgments of fairness. Self-interest (in the form of protecting the group from retaliation or protecting the group's positive image) can influence perceived fairness of group-based inequity. One way of protecting the group would be to alter judgments of responsibility for and justifiability of the group difference. Construing the situation as justifiable or blaming the disadvantaged group for their position helps guard against feelings of collective guilt and restore a sense of perceived equity or fairness. In fact, Doosje et al. (1998) found that highly identified group members were the least likely to report feelings of group-based guilt. They suggest that those who are less identified with their group are less threatened by the idea that their group has done something wrong and are more willing to accept group responsibility.

Prejudice, social dominance orientation (Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996), and system justification (Jost & Burgess, 2000) can alter White Americans' perceptions of unjust group-based differences in order to protect the group's privileged position in the status hierarchy. Ideological justifications for inequity such as these protect perceptions of the social system as fair and legitimate and allow the comparative ratio to be perceived as

equitable. Indeed, Swim and Miller (1999) found that the higher one's level of prejudice, the lower reports of collective guilt. It may be that highly prejudiced individuals have a different interpretation of the fairness of group differences; therefore, they do not report feeling a sense of collective guilt. Future research should investigate whether the role of prejudice in predicting collective guilt is a function of perceiving the inequity as being justifiable.

In addition to considering the various antecedents of collective guilt, we should also consider the reasons why collective guilt may *not* occur (see Branscombe & Miron, 2004). Avoiding experiences or cognitions that might lead to feelings of guilt may circumvent feelings of collective guilt. Although empathy and guilt are two different responses, it is informative that research indicates people may act in ways that help them avoid feeling empathy. In one study, participants who were made aware that another person was in need and that helping that person would be costly were not likely to read an empathy-inducing vignette (Shaw, Batson, & Todd, 1994). These authors suggest that avoiding feelings of empathy for those in need may be used to avoid the accompanying motivation to help. It may be that individuals likewise avoid interactions or information that might lead them to feel collective guilt.

Feelings of Distress and Attempts at Reparation

Walster and colleagues (1978) suggest that people do not enjoy feeling distressed and take active measures to alleviate inequity in order to assuage the negative state. Indeed, the greater the magnitude of distress, the harder one will attempt to restore equity (Walster et al., 1978). Numerous studies have found that feelings of personal guilt follow personal transgressions (Barrett, Zahn-Waxler, & Cole, 1993; Williams & Bybee, 1994) and are associated with a need to make amends through reparations (Ferguson, Stegg, & Damhuis, 1991). One potential way to alleviate the distress would be to engage in an act of prosocial behavior. Acts of prosocial behavior are generally considered to be voluntary and result in benefits for another person (Jackson & Tisak, 2001). Estrada-Hollenbeck and Heatherton (1998) report that personal guilt and prosocial behavior occur most often in interpersonal relationships and are linked by empathy. They propose that people perform relationship-mending and relationship-enhancing acts in order to regulate feelings of guilt. Mending behaviors may include acts of reparation, an apology, or compensation and serve to diminish guilt. Enhancing behaviors may include being considerate, understanding, and reliable and serve to avoid feelings of guilt.

Personal guilt may also result in a person avoiding repetition of a past transgression by changing future behavior (Baumeister et al., 1995; Devine & Monteith, 1993). In fact, Zahn-Waxler and Robinson (1995) reported that

personal guilt helped young children inhibit and control behavior. Other studies have shown that adults improve the way they treat each other, avoid actions that may harm another person, and redistribute power in a relationship in order to reduce feelings of personal guilt (Baumeister et al., 1994; 1995; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998; Tangney, 1995).

Despite the apparent benefits of feeling guilty, it appears that guilt works best when it is felt in moderation. Chronic feelings of personal guilt at the individual level are actually associated with less prosocial behavior (Bybee, 1998; Quiles & Bybee, 1997). Persistent personal guilt may reduce prosocial behavior because it begins to seem as if the individual can never repair the wrong. There is some evidence that this is also true at the collective level. In Chapter 5, Schmitt and colleagues found a curvilinear relationship between feelings of collective guilt and the perceived costs of corrective action for intergroup inequity. Participants reported increasing feelings of collective guilt from the low to moderate cost conditions, but lower feelings of collective guilt in the condition where the cost of reparation was high. This research suggests that individuals may need to perceive that reparation of group inequity is actually feasible before they will attempt prosocial action to reduce feelings of collective guilt. Perceived feasibility may be decreased if there has been chronic inequity or when there is current intergroup conflict.

Although research has established links at the individual level between perceived inequity and distress and between distress and acts of prosocial behavior, it is only recently that researchers have attempted to extend this work to the group level (Branscombe, 1998; Doosje et al., 1998). Barkan (2000) provides theoretical support for this transition by summarizing various international examples of national reparations motivated by collective guilt (e.g., Switzerland's compensation of Holocaust victims that lost money in Swiss banks). One approach to equity restoration at the group level that has received some attention is White Americans' support of social policies that aim to simultaneously reduce White advantages and Black disadvantage. In general, the research tends to support the idea that collective guilt is a mediator between perceived injustice and an endorsement of social policies that might restore equity (Doosje et al., 1998; Mallett & Swim, 2004; Swim & Miller, 1999).

Swim and Miller (1999) found that White guilt mediated the relationship between recognition of privilege and attitudes toward affirmative action. Mallett and Swim (2002) also examined the influence of feelings of collective guilt on support for social policies designed to correct inequality. Participants were informed of various group differences and then asked to indicate how much they would support a policy designed to correct that specific group difference. For example, participants were told that Whites are more likely than Blacks to be over-represented in upper management positions. They were asked the extent to which they felt collective guilt for

these group differences and how much they would be in favor of a policy that increased representation of Blacks in upper management. Similar to past empirical research (Doosje et al., 1998; Swim & Miller, 1999) feelings of collective guilt mediated the relationship between feelings of group (but not personal) responsibility and attitudes toward specific social policies designed to eliminate the previously specified group differences. This research lends support to the idea that recognition of perceived inequity can result in feelings of collective guilt, and that these guilty feelings may then motivate acts of reparation.

Emotional Determinants of Reparative Behavior

Although the bulk of research derived from equity theory has focused on the motivational properties of feelings of personal guilt and anger, research on collective emotions has not given as much attention to feelings of anger as it has to feelings of guilt. It might be fruitful to investigate feelings of distress in the form of anger manifested as moral outrage or as blame against the other group for their disadvantage. Unlike feelings of guilt, moral outrage does not require perceived group responsibility (Montada & Schneider, 1989). Moreover, it is possible that anger is an equal or more powerful motivator than guilt or that one emotion may temper the influence of the other in decisions to act (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). Taking into account that some individuals may feel more than one emotion when considering the various components of inequity, it is necessary to understand how different emotional responses affect attempts to repair inequity.

Montada and Schneider (1989) conducted an early investigation of the relative influence of several types of what they called "social emotions" on attitudes toward various prosocial activities aimed at repairing inequitable group differences. They predicted that determining a group difference was unjust could result in various types of social emotions (e.g., existential guilt, sympathy, moral outrage, contentment, anger, fear, and hopelessness). These social emotions were then predicted to influence support for various prosocial actions. Several variables, including whether participants thought the disadvantage was unjust, whether that group was to blame for their disadvantage, and belief in a just world allowed assessment of perceived justice. In line with our proposed model, existential guilt and moral outrage were predicted by perceiving that the disadvantage was unjust. Moral outrage was a better predictor of attitudes toward prosocial action than existential guilt.

It may be that perceiving an unrelated party as responsible for the other group's disadvantage (as is the case with moral outrage) allows one to acknowledge the inequity and attempt to alleviate distress through prosocial action. More prosocial actions might be undertaken in response to moral outrage because individuals do not fear their own group would lose any

assets (e.g., financial, social) in the process of restoring equity. Indeed, they may perceive they will gain assets in the form of social self-esteem for helping another group in need or through social comparison with the offending group.

Attempts to Restore Equity

Although individuals may choose any number of routes for reparation, equity theory suggests the choice is usually based on restoring either *psychological* or *actual* equity to the relationship (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994; Walster et al., 1978). Psychological restoration of equity does not require an actual change in the input to output ratio, rather it requires one to cognitively alter the amount of inputs or outputs for the self or other. Branscombe et al. (2002) suggest that group members can avoid feeling collective guilt through various methods, including claiming their group was unfairly disadvantaged (e.g., Whites being hurt by affirmative action), justifying inequity by legitimizing the ingroup's actions or dehumanizing the outgroup, or by simply denying that the ingroup was involved in any moral violation. In Chapter 9, Zebel, Doosje, and Spears found that individuals who were highly identified with their ingroup failed to take the perspective of the outgroup and justified the behavior of their group. This allowed them to avoid feelings of collective guilt and the need for subsequent acts of reparation. In this way, psychological restoration could alleviate the individual's distress, but not necessarily restore equity in the real world.

Moreover, psychological restoration may result in perceived equity and maintenance of the status quo or even tip the balance to result in perceiving ingroup disadvantage. This could occur if psychological restoration included denying the value of Black inputs, blaming Blacks for their disadvantage, or believing that Whites were underbenefited in relation to Blacks. Such shifts might lead to feelings of anger at the outgroup or moral outrage in the form of resentment for being blamed for the other group's disadvantages. Adopting this perspective could motivate action to restore "actual" equity by attempting to increase White privilege or power (e.g., White power movements like the KKK or White Aryan Resistance).

In contrast to psychological attempts to restore equity, actual attempts at restoration of equity involve adjusting the inputs or outcomes of the parties involved so that the ratio actually becomes equivalent. Whites that feel collective guilt might attempt actual restoration of equity with Blacks through some form of financial or programmatic compensation. If this rather costly form of actual compensation does not seem viable, a partial attempt to restore equity may be made. One example of an attempt at partial reparation may be a group apology for a past wrong (Walster et al., 1978). An apology may not fully eliminate distress because it only partially restores equity.

Restoration is partial because a verbal apology cannot equate access to education, employment opportunities, and the balance of bank accounts between members of the exploiting and exploited groups. Partial attempts at restoration might do more to assuage White guilt than to minimize White privilege (Steele, 1990), but they would be a first step toward equity restoration. Why one chooses psychological restoration of equity or actual restoration of equity is not entirely clear. It may be that people prefer complete over partial restoration, or inexpensive rather than expensive restoration (Branscombe et al., 2002; Schmitt et al., this volume, Chapter 5; Walster et al., 1978).

It is important to consider how effective acts of reparation are in actually reducing group-based inequity versus how effective they are in reducing feelings of White guilt. Some efforts may be a step in the right direction, but only one of many efforts needed to affect social change. Indeed, Steele (1990) notes that affirmative action policies may be a quick fix that allows Whites to feel good about working for racial equality without investing in training programs that would truly result in Black and White equality. Relatively inexpensive efforts to mend the inequitable relationship, such as apologizing for past transgressions, might restore psychological equity for the individual or group as the wrongdoing was acknowledged and repented (Baumeister et al., 1994; 1995; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998; Tangney, 1995). Although an apology might help smooth intergroup relations and alleviate feelings of distress for the individual, such an act is probably too small to restore actual equity (Steele, 1990).

Along the same lines, people who feel guilty for an injustice created by their group may support social policies that attempt to reduce that injustice and, therefore, their guilt is diminished. (Mallett & Swim, 2004; Steele, 1990; Swim & Miller, 1999). Unless these individuals actually vote for such policies when they appear on a ballot or engage in behaviors to reduce group-based privilege on a daily basis, these undemanding acts of reparation might fall a step short of truly restoring equity. One interesting avenue for investigation into this type of attempt may be studies of this phenomenon within social movements. That venue would provide a good example of the real world implications of emotion translated into action.

CONCLUSIONS

If one determines that inequity exists and is unfair, feelings of distress will arise. The type of emotional response to inequity will likely differ depending on whether one assesses an equitable intergroup relationship, an ingroup advantage, or an outgroup advantage. Further, attempts at reparations likely differ depending on what types of emotions are felt. Attempts to diminish feelings of anger or resentment can generate avoidance of reparation through acts against the outgroup. People may also try

to avoid feeling collective guilt but this may not always be successful. If one does feel collective guilt, attempts to alleviate guilt due to inequity may produce relationship mending or enhancing behaviors such as apology, compensation, or future acts of consideration coupled with avoiding harmful acts and redistributing power in interpersonal relationships. Alternatively, guilt can be alleviated through more concrete routes, such as monetary compensation or changes in access to education and employment.

To date, only parts of the proposed model have been tested. Research has assessed group-based inequity by determining the extent of perceived group differences and assessment of the fairness of those differences, if they do exist. Some research has investigated the influence of self-interest in the form of group identification on these assessments. Others have determined antecedents of various types of emotional responses to inequity, including blaming the disadvantaged group, moral outrage, and collective guilt. Investigations have also considered how each of these emotions uniquely predicts attempts at equity restoration – both psychological and actual. Despite these tests of individual components of the model, research has not simultaneously tested all of these relationships. Moreover, the equity literature points to additional areas to consider, such as different reasons why people may feel responsible for group disadvantages and reasons why people may select psychological versus actual restoration. Finally, although this chapter focuses mainly on advantaged groups' analysis of equity and feelings of distress with a particular focus on White Americans, this model could also be applied to disadvantaged groups, including Black Americans. The latter groups' form of distress would likely manifest as anger or moral outrage, unless it was easier to distort cognitions and perceive the ratio as equivalent, thereby avoiding feelings of distress altogether.

Some people (such as the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America) argue that in order to truly establish racial equality in the United States, we would have to redistribute the wealth of Americans in the form of reparations paid to Blacks by the federal government. They highlight that reparations for past government wrongs have been paid to other groups (e.g., Japanese-Americans interned in camps within the United States). So, it is only fair that African-Americans receive the same type of compensation. Others suggest that this form of reparation is unreasonable and even racist. Horowitz (2001) argues that most claims of inequity between Blacks and Whites are unfounded, and that it is condescending to think Blacks cannot restore equity on their own. Therefore, there is no need for reparation. The majority of White Americans echo his point of view. In 1997, 67 percent of White Americans opposed legislation that "officially apologizes to American blacks for the fact that slavery was practiced before the Civil War in this country" (Newport, 1997, p. 1). Black Americans reported virtually the opposite pattern with 65 percent in support of such legislation

where White Americans first admit that slavery was wrong through an apology to Black Americans. Until opinions change on this matter, they are likely to remain steadfastly opposed to financial reparations.

In the end, either redistributing the nation's wealth or refusing to take any reparative action would probably fail to restore full equity between Whites and Blacks in America. Although some have suggested that all Black Americans descended from slaves be given forty acres of land and a mule (Oubre, 1978), it is difficult to imagine that this token or any sum of money could truly make up for the experience of slavery. Instead, we will have to find a method that falls somewhere in between these two propositions – one that can provide Black Americans with the means to achieve and maintain equity with White Americans. Martin Luther King Jr. (1963, p. 151) suggested that rather than money,

> The payment should be in the form of a massive program, by the government, of special compensatory measures which could be regarded as a settlement... The moral justification for special measures for Negroes is rooted in the robberies inherent in the institution of slavery... It is a simple matter of justice....

Equity theory would agree that it is indeed a simple matter of justice – or rather a matter of injustice. One thing that is clear is that further investigation into the causes and consequences of emotional reactions to inequity at the group level are necessary if we are to repair damaged intergroup relationships.

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