



Guilt and Social Influence

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2 Guilt and Social Influence

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Research bearing on the role of guilt in social influence is reviewed in this chapter. Guilt is an emotion naturally suited to exploitation in the service of social influence, by virtue of its action-motivating aspects and its ability to be aroused by relationally significant others. Guilt can be a very powerful influence mechanism, as indicated by studies of guilt arousal in everyday life (where self-reports of behavioral change suggest that guilt commonly effects change), by studies of the relationship between transgressions and compliance (in which, a meta-analytic review reveals, relatively large effects of transgression on compliance are obtained under a variety of conditions), and by studies of hypocrisy-induction effects (which commonly are ascribed to dissonance but might equally well reflect guilt). However, guilt-based influence can fail quite dramatically; a meta-analysis of research on guilt-based appeals in persuasive messages reveals that, although more-explicit guilt appeals successfully arouse greater guilt than do less-explicit appeals, they are significantly less persuasive. Finally, recent research suggests that anticipated guilt feelings can play an important role in shaping conduct and hence may provide mechanisms of social influence.

THE study of communicative social influence has commonly been dominated by views focused on “rational” or “logical” aspects of social influence (e.g., the aptly named theory of reasoned action; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). But students of persuasion have become increasingly interested in emotional facets of these communication processes (see, e.g., Cho & Stout, 1993; Dillard, 1993; Dillard & Kinney, 1994; Jorgensen, 1998; Kinder, 1994). Among various emotions that might be implicated in social-influence processes, the one that has received the most empirical and conceptual attention is fear. Thus, for example, fear appeals are commonly discussed in broad-scale summaries of persuasion-effects research. By contrast, such summaries rarely mention guilt as potentially having a role in social influence. Indeed, despite the quiet accumulation of a number of studies of the role of guilt in social influence, no general review of this literature has been undertaken.

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This chapter summarizes and integrates several lines of research bearing on the role of guilt in social influence. First, the general nature of guilt is discussed, with particular attention to aspects of guilt relevant to social influence. Then four areas of social-influence research are reviewed, concerning guilt-based influence in interpersonal relationships, the impact of transgression on compliance, guilt appeals in persuasive messages, and hypocrisy induction. A final main section considers the role that anticipated feelings of guilt might play in social influence.

THE NATURE OF GUILT

Some background concerning the nature of guilt will be useful for understanding the roles that guilt might play in social influence. This section briefly discusses the nature of guilt, the experience of feeling guilty, and the interpersonal character of guilt.

The purpose of this initial section is to highlight some influence-relevant aspects of guilt. This review is specifically focused on research concerning guilt as a social-influence mechanism, and so I do not consider a variety of broader questions concerning guilt, such as the ontogenesis of guilt or details of guilt assessment procedures (for discussions of such aspects of guilt, see, e.g., Barrett, 1995; Ferguson & Crowley, 1997; Fischer & Tangney, 1995; Kugler & Jones, 1992; Tangney, 1995a). My interest here is less in providing a complete treatment of all aspects of guilt and more in identifying particular facets of guilt that are relevant to its roles in social-influence processes.

General Nature of Guilt

Guilt may be initially and briefly described as “an individual’s unpleasant emotional state associated with possible objections to his or her actions, inaction, circumstances, or intentions” (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994, p. 245).¹ As even this brief characterization makes clear, guilt—by virtue of being connected to possible objections to one’s conduct—is the sort of emotional state that might straightforwardly be aroused by another person (by another person’s raising objections). That is to say, arousing guilt is the sort of thing a person might do rather more easily than (say) arousing sadness, precisely because guilt is connected to potential objections to one’s conduct.

However, as Miceli (1992) has pointed out, there is something more involved in guilt than simply the recognition of possible objections to one’s conduct. Miceli’s analysis is cast in terms of the conditions under which guilt is likely to be aroused and identifies two initial “essential ingredients” for one person (A) to make someone else (B) feel guilty: “(1) To make B assume that he is responsible for a certain act or event x, i.e., that: (a) he caused x to happen either directly or indirectly; (b) his goal was to cause x, or at least (c) he had the power to avoid x but this was not

his goal” and “(2) To make B assume a negative evaluation of harmfulness with regard to *x* and, more or less indirectly, to B himself as the perpetrator” (p. 82).

But these two conditions are not sufficient for guilt induction, because “B can acknowledge responsibility without feeling guilty” (p. 97). Hence Miceli suggests a third “crucial constituent of the sense of guilt: the thwarting of B’s self-image” (p. 98). The reasoning here is that B can acknowledge responsibility, but experience no guilt, in circumstances in which the negative evaluation is not based on B’s own standards. “B can objectively acknowledge his guilt (as regards others’—some person’s, or group’s—standards of evaluation) . . . but if he does not share those standards (values, norms), he will not come to translate the negative evaluation(s) into negative self-evaluations(s). And, if this translation fails to occur, B will not feel guilty” (p. 99). Hence guilt is a “self-judgment based on internal standards” (p. 99). Because B falls short of meeting B’s own standards, B’s self-image is correspondingly threatened.

Consistent with this general image, the sorts of circumstances that persons recall as being especially associated with feelings of guilt involve failures at duties (e.g., not studying enough), lying, stealing, neglecting others (e.g., not calling a friend for a long time), failing to maintain a diet or exercise plan, or cheating (Keltner & Buswell, 1996; Tangney, 1992). In all these situations, persons can be seen as having fallen short of their own standards.

In sum, guilt can be broadly understood as a negative emotional state associated with possible objections to one’s conduct (action, inaction, and the like), where those objections are based in one’s own standards. Thus guilt may be seen to arise from some (potential) inconsistency between the actor’s conduct and the actor’s standards.

The Experience of Feeling Guilty

In trying to distinguish various emotions, several studies have sought to identify the beliefs and feelings associated with different emotional states (guilt, anger, sadness, and so forth). Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz (1994) found that among the reactions distinctively associated with feelings of guilt were “thinking that you were in the wrong,” “thinking that you shouldn’t have done what you did,” “feeling like undoing what you have done,” “wanting to make up for what you’ve done wrong,” and “wanting to be forgiven” (see p. 215). Tangney, Miller, Flicker, and Barlow (1996) found that persons asked to describe recalled guilt experiences commonly described themselves as wanting to make amends, feeling responsible, feeling as though they had violated some moral standard, and wishing they had acted differently. Niedenthal, Tangney, and Gavanski (1994), in focusing on shame and guilt particularly, found that persons “tended to undo shame situations by altering qualities of the self and to undo guilt situations by altering actions” (p. 585).

In the present context, what is notable about these findings is the apparent action-motivating force of guilt feelings. Whereas (for example) sadness seems not to evoke any particular motivations for conduct, guilt is plainly an emotion that motivates behavior. Making another person feel sad does not provide some manifest basis for shaping the person's conduct. But when a person is made to feel guilty, those guilt feelings do offer a basis for influencing the person's behavior. Thus the nature of guilt appears to make it an emotion particularly susceptible to being used in the service of social influence.

Interpersonal Character of Guilt

Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1994, 1995a) have argued that guilt is an essentially social phenomenon, arising especially from interpersonal transactions. In this view, the "prototypical cause" of guilt is "the infliction of harm, loss, or distress on a relationship partner" (Baumeister et al., 1994, p. 245). This view does not claim that guilt arises only in the context of close relationships, but does suggest that guilt is strongest in the context of such relationships (for related ideas, see Tangney, 1995b; Vangelisti, Daly, & Rudnick, 1991; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998).

In support of this emphasis, it might be noted that, compared to many other emotions (fear, frustration, etc.), guilt is especially likely to be experienced in interpersonal contexts, that is, in circumstances in which feelings of guilt are linked to one's relationship to or interaction with another person. For example, recalled guilt experiences are very commonly interpersonal ones (e.g., Baumeister, Reis, & Delespaul, 1995), and transgressions linked to interpersonal relationships are more closely tied to guilt than are nonrelational transgressions (Jones, Kugler, & Adams, 1995).

The point here is not that guilt arises only in interpersonal circumstances. People report feeling guilty for a variety of other reasons as well (e.g., failing to stick to a diet; see Baumeister, Reis, & Delespaul, 1995, p. 1264; Keltner & Buswell, 1996). What is of special interest for the present review is the attention that this interpersonal approach draws to the manifest ability that people—and particularly relational partners—have to make others feel guilty. Consider, by contrast, that people seem not to have quite such powers in the case of feelings such as frustration and anxiety. The relevant point is that such guilt-arousing capacity makes guilt a particularly suitable medium for the operation of social influence.

Guilt-Based Social Influence

The common general image of how guilt operates in social influence is easily stated: The influencing agent arouses guilt, which then motivates performance of the desired action. The sections that follow review four main lines of research that provide further illumination of this general process: the first concerns the use of guilt-based social influence in interpersonal relationships, the second examines the impact of committing transgressions on compliance, the third considers the use

of guilt appeals in persuasive messages, and the last concerns induction of feelings of hypocrisy.

INTERPERSONAL GUILT-BASED SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Personal relationships provide a natural potential arena for the use of guilt induction as a mechanism of social influence. Such relationships create webs of obligations and expectations that, if not satisfied, obviously have guilt-arousing potential. Several studies have investigated the everyday occurrence of guilt, commonly through asking participants to recall and describe incidents in which they made others feel guilty or in which they were made to feel guilty by others. It might initially be noted that, as Vangelisti et al. (1991, p. 34) point out, participants in these studies have little apparent difficulty in recalling such incidents. This suggests that such guilt induction is in fact reasonably commonplace.

In everyday life, attempts to arouse guilt occur primarily in the context of close relationships. Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1995b, Study 2) asked participants to describe either an incident in which they made someone feel guilty or an incident in which they were made to feel guilty by someone else; virtually all (93%) of the reported incidents involved close relationships. Similarly, Vangelisti et al. (1991) found that "attempts to inspire guilt happen predominantly among those who share some degree of intimacy" (p. 9; see also Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995b, Study 1).

Even when no purposeful guilt elicitation occurs, guilt feelings are often connected to circumstances involving others. Baumeister, Reis, and Delespaul (1995, Study 2) asked participants to recall and describe the most recent incidents in which they experienced various emotions (guilt, frustration, anxiety, and so on). Guilt stories were more likely than stories about other emotions to be episodes in which other persons were involved, and indeed more than half the guilt stories involved partners in close relationships (as opposed to less than a third of the stories about other emotions). Relatedly, Jones et al. (1995) have provided some evidence suggesting that "what people typically feel guilty about are behaviors (both symbolic and real) that harm their relational partners" (p. 317).

As might be expected, when persons seek to arouse guilt in others, the overwhelmingly most common reported purpose is persuasion (Vangelisti et al., 1991, p. 13): Persons attempt to evoke guilt as a means of inducing others to alter their behavior (to stop engaging in some action, to undertake some new action, to refrain from some contemplated action, and so forth). Secondarily, persons report using guilt for purposes such as "venting frustration and anger" (Vangelisti et al., 1991, p. 17). As Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1995a, p. 257) point out, guilt's use as a technique of social influence can serve to "equalize the balance of power" in a relationship, because it is a means of influence that is independent of formal or physical power (and hence is available to the otherwise less-powerful relationship partner).

There has been some limited work seeking to identify the means by which people try to make others feel guilt. Vangelisti et al. (1991, Studies 1 and 2) inductively derived a typology of linguistic guilt-eliciting techniques from respondents' descriptions of circumstances in which guilt was aroused and found this typology useful across varying samples of respondents (adults and college undergraduates). Among a dozen different guilt-eliciting techniques, the most commonly mentioned involved indicating that the other is not meeting some obligation that is part of the other's relationships, pointing out that the other's behavior does not reflect the other's knowledge of appropriate conduct, and displaying some sacrifice being made on the guilt inducer's part on behalf of the other (see p. 12). Vangelisti et al. (1991, Study 3) suggest that the different strategies can be seen to vary in the relative passivity of the guilt inducer (where the contrast is between active strategies, such as pointing out inequities, and passive ones, such as submissively acquiescing to the other's wishes), the directness of the technique (where the contrast is between direct techniques, such as explicitly pointing out a transgression, and indirect ones, such as hinting), and the focus of the technique (where the contrast is between techniques focused on the transgressor, such as emphasizing the transgressor's goals, and those focused on the guilt inducer, such as ones using the guilt inducer as a basis of comparison). (For related contrasts among guilt-induction methods, see Miceli, 1992.) In the context of interpersonal relations, each different technique "may generally be considered a variation on saying 'see how you are hurting me'" (Sommer & Baumeister, 1997, p. 43). More generally, all these strategies can be seen to involve drawing the person's attention to some way in which the person's conduct represents a transgression.

It is obviously difficult to obtain a realistic assessment of the persuasive success of guilt induction in interpersonal relationships. Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1995b, Study 1, pp. 179-180) did find that descriptions of interpersonal incidents in which the participant experienced guilt were (compared with descriptions of nonguilt incidents) much more likely to mention that some lesson had been learned from the incident and to indicate that the participant's behavior had changed. As these researchers acknowledge, however, such data can indicate only that participants perceived guilt to have had an impact on their behavior (as opposed to showing that guilt in fact influenced their conduct). With respect to the secondary purpose identified by Vangelisti et al. (1991), that of venting anger and frustration, it is notable that Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1995b, Study 2) found that persons describing incidents in which they induced guilt in others were more likely (than persons describing incidents in which another person made them feel guilty) to mention that the guilt inducer felt better afterward.

Interpersonal guilt-induction efforts appear to risk negative reactions from the target of influence. Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1995b, Study 2) found that persons writing descriptions of incidents in which they were the target of guilt induction were more likely (than persons describing incidents in which they sought to induce guilt in others) to mention the target's resentment of the use of guilt. Indications of such resentment also appeared in Rubin and Shaffer's (1987)

investigation, in which participants viewed a videotaped interpersonal conflict between two friends in which one person sought request compliance by evoking either guilt or altruism. Guilt-based influence attempts were judged more likely to evoke anger than were altruism-based attempts.

In sum, guilt arousal in everyday life appears to occur most commonly in the context of close relationships, with persuasion being its primary purpose. Such guilt-induction efforts give some sign of being effective means of influence (as indicated by self-reports of behavior change) but also commonly appear to create anger or resentment.

TRANSGRESSION AND COMPLIANCE

As noted earlier, guilt is an emotion with affiliated action motivations: Persons feeling guilty characteristically want to alter their actions, feel like wanting to make up for what they have done wrong, and so forth. The occurrence of such feelings leads quite naturally to a straightforward hypothesis: Persons who commit transgressions (and so presumably experience guilt) will be more likely (than persons who have not committed transgressions) to engage in helping behavior such as complying with requests.

This "transgression-compliance" hypothesis has been examined in a number of studies. For example, Konoske, Staple, and Graf (1979) had transgression-condition participants ostensibly upset a graduate student's carefully ordered computer cards. Subsequently, participants were asked by a confederate to make telephone calls to prospective participants. Participants who had committed the transgression volunteered to make significantly more calls than did participants in a nontransgression control condition.

This body of research has been discussed by a number of previous authors (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Brock, 1969; Freedman, 1970), but no prior treatment has reported a systematic literature search, and all were qualitative (narrative) reviews. For example, previous discussions have commonly treated nonsignificant effects as failures to replicate (e.g., Noel, 1973), but it remains to be seen whether a more careful quantitative review would underwrite such interpretations.

Thus a quantitative (meta-analytic) review of this research was undertaken to address the relationship of transgression to compliance (here understood specifically as helping behavior). The central question of interest was whether, as guilt-based reasoning would suggest, transgression produces dependably greater compliance than occurs in a nontransgression condition. Additionally, four potential moderating variables were considered: whether the transgression was accidental or purposeful, whether the compliance assessment involved presenting an explicit request or an opportunity for helping behavior, whether the request (or behavioral opportunity) was presented by the victim or by someone else, and whether the victim would benefit from compliance.

Methods

Identification of Relevant Investigations

Relevant research reports were located through personal knowledge of the literature, examination of previous review discussions, and inspection of reference lists in previously located reports. Additionally, searches were made through databases and document-retrieval services using such terms as "transgression and guilt," "transgression and compliance," "guilt and compliance," and "transgression and helping" as search bases; these searches covered material at least through June 1997 in PsycINFO, ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), H. H. Wilson, Current Contents, CARL/Uncover (Colorado Association of Research Libraries), Medline, and Dissertation Abstracts Online.

To be included, an investigation had to satisfy four criteria. First, the study had to contain an experimental condition in which participants committed some apparent transgression (e.g., accidental infliction of harm) and an appropriate control condition in which no transgression occurred; transgressions included such actions as lying (e.g., McMillen, 1970), spilling another person's papers (e.g., Konecni, 1972), breaking another person's equipment (e.g., Wallace & Sadalla, 1966), and administering electric shocks (e.g., Carlsmith & Gross, 1969). Second, the study had to provide a subsequent opportunity to assess participants' compliance (e.g., consenting to some request). Third, the study had to provide appropriate quantitative information yielding a comparison between the experimental (transgression) and control (nontransgression) conditions with respect to compliance. Finally, the participants had to be adults (guilt is a self-conscious emotion, hence children might not be expected to experience the same guilt feelings from transgressions).

These criteria thus excluded studies in which no participant committed a transgression (Harvey & Enzle, 1981; McGraw, 1987; Riordan, James, & Dunaway, 1985), studies lacking suitable control conditions (Berscheid & Walster, 1967; Brock & Becker, 1966; Gromski & Nawrat, 1984; Hymoff, 1971; Keating & Brock, 1976; Kidd & Berkowitz, 1976, Experiment 2; Schallow, 1972), studies lacking assessment of posttransgression compliance (Roy, 1974), studies of children's transgressions (Silverman, 1967), and studies lacking appropriate quantitative information (McMillen & Austin, 1971; Silverman, Rivera, & Tedeschi, 1979).

Effect Size Measure

The outcome variable of interest was compliance (as assessed through such measures as acceptance of a request); the key contrast of interest was relative compliance in the transgression and nontransgression conditions. This effect size was expressed as a correlation, with positive correlations indicating greater compli-

ance in the transgression condition. When multiple control conditions were available, the effect size was computed using the control condition that isolated the effects of the transgression. Whenever possible, multiple-factor designs were analyzed through reconstitution of the analyses such that individual-difference factors (but not, e.g., other experimental manipulations) were put back into the error term (following the suggestion of Johnson, 1989). Effect sizes were computed excluding conditions in which, between the transgression and the compliance assessment, some experimental manipulation was introduced with the prospect of altering the participants' guilt levels, moods, or the like; for example, the effect size for Riordan, Dunaway, Haas, James, and Kruger (1984) was based on the "inexcused" transgression condition, not the "excused" transgression condition, in which, following the transgression, the experimenter excused it as insignificant.

Some investigations provided multiple indices of compliance and hence multiple effect sizes. For example, Carlsmith and Gross's (1969, Experiment 1) research recorded both whether a participant was willing to make telephone calls for a requester and how many calls the participant volunteered to make. When multiple compliance indices were available, the separate effect sizes were averaged (using the *r*-to-*z*-to-*r* transformation procedure) to yield a single summary.

When a given investigation was reported in more than one outlet, it was treated as a single study and analyzed accordingly. The same research was reported (in whole or in part) in Noel (1971) and Noel (1973), recorded here under the latter; in Rawlings (1966), Rawlings (1968), and Rawlings (1970), recorded here under Rawlings (1968); and in Regan (1969) and Regan (1971), recorded here under the latter.

Independent (Moderator) Variables

Four variables were examined as possible moderators of the transgression-compliance effect. The first was whether the transgression was an (apparent) accident (for which the participant was seemingly responsible) or was some nonaccidental act. In some investigations, the transgression took the form of an apparent accident (such as upsetting a carefully arranged stack of cards; e.g., Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent, 1973); in others, the transgression was not an accident (as when participants were induced to lie; e.g., McMillen, 1970). The second variable was whether the compliance assessment involved the participant's responding to a direct request (such as being asked to volunteer for another experiment; e.g., Freedman, Wallington, & Bless, 1967) or involved the participant's being presented with an opportunity to help in the absence of an explicit request (such as encountering someone who has just spilled a stack of papers; e.g., Kidd & Berkowitz, 1976, Experiment 1). The third variable was the identity of the person making the request (or presenting the opportunity for helping); cases were distinguished on the basis of whether the request (or opportunity) was presented by the victim of the transgression or by someone else. The fourth variable concerned whether the victim would be a bene-

fiary of compliance. For example, where compliance with a request would amount to helping the victim do a task in which the victim was engaged (as when the victim asked for help in making phone calls; Carlsmith & Gross, 1969, Experiment 1), then the victim would qualify as a beneficiary of compliance.

The last two of these variables—whether the victim was the requester and whether the victim was a beneficiary—thus permitted distinguishing, for instance, cases in which compliance with a victim's request would directly help the victim (as when an experimenter who was the victim of the transgression asked the participant to volunteer for another study conducted by the experimenter; Wallace & Sadalla, 1966) from cases in which compliance with a victim's request would not so directly benefit the victim (as when an experimenter-victim asked the participant to volunteer for another study conducted by some other person; Riordan et al., 1984).

Analysis

The individual correlations (effect sizes) were initially transformed to Fisher's z s; the z s were analyzed using random-effects procedures described by Shadish and Haddock (1994), with results then transformed back to r . A random-effects analysis was employed in preference to a fixed-effects analysis because of an interest in generalizing across treatment implementations (for discussion, see Erez, Bloom, & Wells, 1996; Jackson, 1992, p. 123; Raudenbush, 1994; Shadish & Haddock, 1994). In a random-effects analysis, the confidence interval around an obtained mean effect size reflects not only the usual (human) sampling variation, but also between-studies variance. This has the effect of widening the confidence interval over what it would have been in a fixed-effects analysis (see Raudenbush, 1994, p. 306; Shadish & Haddock, 1994, p. 275).

Results

A total of 31 effect sizes were available, based on 1,342 participants. Details for each included case are contained in Table 2.1. Across these cases, the random-effects weighted mean correlation was .278 ($Q[30] = 35.4, ns$). The lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval for this mean were .215 and .342, indicating a significantly positive overall effect of transgression on compliance.

Table 2.2 provides a summary of the results concerning the effects of the four potential moderating variables: whether the transgression was accidental or nonaccidental, whether the compliance assessment involved an explicit request or simply a behavioral opportunity, whether the request (or behavioral opportunity) was presented by the victim of the transgression or by someone else, and whether the victim would be a beneficiary of compliance.² As indicated in Table 2.2, there is no evidence that any of these factors influences the size of transgression-compliance effects. Under all these conditions, there is a dependably positive effect of transgression on compliance, and each subset of effect sizes is apparently homogeneous.

TABLE 2.1
Transgression-Compliance Cases

<i>Study</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Codings</i>
Boster et al. (1998)	.272	60	2/1/2/2
Carlsmith & Gross (1969)			
Experiment 1	.404	40	2/1/1/1
Experiment 2, restitution	.311	20	2/1/1/1
Experiment 2, generalized guilt	.444	20	2/1/2/2
Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent (1973)	.219	15	1/1/2/2
Cunningham, Steinberg, & Grev (1980)			
Experiment 1	.346	30	1/2/2/2
Experiment 2	.180	80	1/1/2/2
Dietrich & Berkowitz (1997)	.467	30	2/2/2/2
Ellis (1979)	-.102	27	1/1/2/2
Freedman, Wallington, & Bless (1967)			
Experiment 1	.312	61	2/1/1/2
Experiment 2, relevant request	.100	32	1/1/2/1
Experiment 2, irrelevant request	.635	30	1/1/2/2
Experiment 3	.303	66	1/1/2/1
Kahwaty (1979)			
Experiment 1	.551	24	2/1/1/1
Experiment 2	.183	100	2/1/1/1
Katzev, Edelsack, Steinmetz, Walker, & Wright (1978)			
Experiment 1	.167	51	2/2/2/2
Experiment 2	.085	36	2/2/2/2
Kidd & Berkowitz (1976) Experiment 1	.474	20	2/2/2/2
Konecni (1972)			
restitution	.272	59	1/2/1/1
generalized guilt	.281	62	1/2/2/2
Konoske, Staple, & Graf (1979)	.257	60	1/1/2/2
McMillen (1970)	.191	32	2/1/1/1
McMillen (1971)	.548	22	2/1/1/1
McMillen, Jackson, & Austin (1974)	.437	50	2/1/1/1
Noel (1973)	.026	80	2/1/2/2
Rawlings (1968)	.444	20	2/2/2/2
Regan, Williams, & Sparling (1972)	.415	60	1/2/2/2
Regan (1971)	.237	27	2/1/2/2
Riordan, Dunaway, Haas, James, & Kruger (1984)	-.105	20	2/1/1/2
Shapiro (1991)	.187	69	2/1/2/2
Wallace & Sadalla (1966)	.387	39	2/1/1/1

NOTE: The coding judgments, in order, are as follows: nature of transgression (1 = accident, 2 = nonaccident), nature of compliance assessment (1 = request, 2 = behavioral opportunity), whether the request (behavioral opportunity) was presented by the victim (= 1) or by someone else (= 2), and whether the victim was (= 1) or was not (= 2) a beneficiary of compliance.

Discussion

General Effects

Plainly, transgressions can powerfully affect subsequent compliance. The observed mean effect ($r = .28$) is relatively large compared with other effect sizes in social-influence research. For example, the mean correlation between fear-appeal manipulations and behavior has been estimated as .10 (Boster & Mongeau, 1984) and .17 (Sutton, 1982), and that between fear-appeal manipulations and attitude as .21 (Boster & Mongeau, 1984) and .18 (Sutton, 1982). The mean compliance effect (expressed as a correlation) of the foot-in-the-door strategy has been reported as about .12 (Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984, p. 471; Fern, Monroe, & Avila, 1986, p. 147), and that for the door-in-the-face strategy as about .10 (Dillard et al., 1984, p. 471; Fern et al., 1986, p. 150; O'Keefe & Hale, 1998).

Moreover, this transgression-compliance effect is apparently quite robust: It obtains no matter whether the transgression is accidental or purposeful, no matter whether the subsequent compliance involves a direct request or simply an opportunity to help, no matter whether the request (or opportunity to help) is presented by the victim or by someone else, and no matter whether compliance benefits the victim or not.³ On its face, then, this research literature supports the expectation of a guilt-based analysis of transgression's effect on compliance: Transgression enhances compliance, presumably because of the guilt created by transgression.

Intervening Neutralizing Events

In some ways it may seem curious that transgression produces greater compliance independent of whether the person victimized by the transgression is helped by the act of compliance. What this might suggest is that dealing with feelings of guilt is most fundamentally not about some other-directed activity (e.g., restitution), but rather some self-directed activity.⁴

Some additional light may be shed on this aspect of the transgression-compliance effect if we consider those studies containing experimental variations in which some intervening event (between transgression and compliance) offers the prospect of alleviating or neutralizing negative feelings. For example, in the interval between the transgression and the compliance assessment in Kidd and Berkowitz's (1976, Experiment 1) investigation, some participants overheard (ostensibly accidentally) a humorous tape recording. The intervening event varies across these studies (as the event involves such things as bolstering the participant's self-esteem, having an opportunity to express one's feelings about one's conduct, having the victim excuse the transgression, and so on). But the common property of these intervening events is that each offers the possibility of reducing or nullifying any negative feelings engendered by transgression.

The comparison of interest in these studies is that between the usual no-transgression control condition (as above) and the transgression condition in which

TABLE 2.2
Transgression-Compliance: Summary of Results

	<i>k</i>	Mean <i>r</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>Q</i> (<i>df</i>)
All cases	31	.278	.215, .342	35.4 (30) <i>ns</i>
Accidental transgression	11	.279	.163, .396	12.9 (10) <i>ns</i>
Nonaccident	20	.274	.197, .352	22.4 (19) <i>ns</i>
Request made	22	.269	.185, .353	28.6 (21) <i>ns</i>
Behavioral opportunity presented	9	.309	.203, .415	6.0 (8) <i>ns</i>
Request/opportunity by victim	11	.318	.205, .431	10.7 (10) <i>ns</i>
Request/opportunity by nonvictim	20	.258	.179, .336	23.6 (19) <i>ns</i>
Victim benefits from compliance	11	.310	.218, .402	9.0 (10) <i>ns</i>
Victim does not benefit	20	.258	.172, .344	25.1 (19) <i>ns</i>

some such event intervened between the transgression and the compliance assessment. The question is whether the effect size under such conditions will be different from that observed previously (that is, in cases where no such event intervened).

Effect sizes are available for six such studies: Cialdini et al. (1973; $r = -.127$, $n = 16$), Dietrich and Berkowitz (1997; $r = -.467$, $n = 30$), Kidd and Berkowitz (1976, Experiment 1; $r = -.140$, $n = 20$), McMillen (1971; $r = .189$, $n = 22$), Regan (1971; $r = -.190$, $n = 28$), and Riordan et al. (1984; $r = .000$, $n = 20$). The random-effects weighted mean correlation across these cases is $-.159$ ($Q[5] = 6.1$, *ns*), which is not dependably different from zero (the 95% confidence interval is $-.339$, $.021$).

Plainly, the observed general effect of transgression on compliance is typically erased, and even potentially reversed, when an intervening event offers the prospect of neutralizing the negative feelings presumably engendered by transgression. Indeed, the observed general transgression-compliance effect (mean $r = .278$) is significantly different from that observed with an intervening positive event (mean $r = -.159$; the 95% confidence intervals do not overlap). This finding reinforces the idea that guilt feelings, even if stimulated by one's actions toward another, might be neutralized in ways other than compensatory action toward that other.

Guilt Assessment

One curious lacuna in the transgression-compliance literature is the lack of direct assessment of the putative intervening state of guilt. Although guilt has

commonly been supposed to be the operative mediating state, most investigators have examined the effects of transgression on compliance without directly assessing guilt. However, in three cases in which guilt was assessed following experimental transgressions (and in which quantitative information was available), guilt was (perhaps unsurprisingly) found to be significantly greater among transgression-condition participants than among no-transgression-condition participants: Boster et al. (1998; $r = .337$, $n = 58$), Kahwaty (1979, Experiment 2; $r = .648$, $n = 100$), and Silverman et al. (1979, Experiment 2; $r = .271$, $n = 53$). The random-effects weighted mean correlation across these cases is .446 (the 95% confidence interval is .148, .745).

Moreover, the observed effects do recommend guilt as a naturally plausible explanation. Transgressions commonly make people feel guilty, as evidenced by the studies just mentioned and by self-reports of guilt-inducing circumstances (failure at duties, lying, and so on; Keltner & Buswell, 1996). Among the reactions associated with guilt are feeling that one is in the wrong, wanting to undo what one has done, wanting to be forgiven, and wanting to change one's conduct (Niedenthal et al., 1994; Roseman et al., 1994; Tangney et al., 1996). Compliance-helping behaviors of the sort assessed in the literature under review naturally provide a means of addressing these guilt-related feelings (notably, a predisposition to feel guilty is associated with greater prosocial volunteering behavior; Quiles & Bybee, 1997). In short, given the empirical evidence in hand, the most plausible account for the transgression-compliance effect involves guilt. At the same time, it will plainly be useful for future transgression-compliance studies to assess guilt explicitly.⁵

GUILT APPEALS IN PERSUASIVE MESSAGES

A number of studies have examined the effectiveness of guilt-based persuasive appeals. A guilt-based persuasive appeal characteristically has two parts: One is material designed to evoke some degree of guilt in the message receiver, and the other is the message's recommended viewpoint or action, which presumably might offer the prospect of guilt reduction. Thus, for example, a guilt appeal in a consumer advertisement might seek to make working parents feel guilty about neglecting their children, with the advertised product or service presented as providing a means of assuaging that guilt.

This research experimentally compares the persuasive effectiveness of messages that vary in the explicitness—intensity or directness—with which the messages attempt to evoke guilt in the receiver. This contrast is often glossed as one between a “high” (or “strong”) guilt appeal and a “low” (or “weak”) guilt appeal.

This contrast takes several different forms. Sometimes the low guilt appeal is simply the least explicit of several messages. For example, Zemach (1966) compared three messages concerning violations of civil rights. The “low-arousal” version “did not mention the responsibility of the reader,” the “medium-arousal” ver-

sion “argued that every citizen of America shared responsibility for the violations,” and the “high-arousal” version addressed the reader personally with additional arguments aimed at arousing guilt (p. 9). In other studies, the low guilt appeal is a message that has something other than guilt as its explicit basis of justification. For example, Burnett (1989) compared a “guilt appeal” (a print advertisement clearly aimed at arousing guilt, headlined “Will you turn your back on the homeless?”) with an “informational advertisement” (one emphasizing factual information about homelessness, headlined “Do you know the facts about the homeless?”).

All these experimental realizations thus involve a common underlying dimension of message variation, namely, the explicitness with which the message attempts to create guilt. Hence the most useful general contrast—and a contrast available in all the studies reviewed here—is that between relatively more-explicit (“strong” or “high”) and relatively less-explicit (“weak” or “low”) guilt appeals, where this latter category includes appeals not apparently based on guilt.⁶

The general expectation is that these message variations will differ in persuasive effectiveness by virtue of their inducing differential levels of guilt. Thus in considering the research findings in this area, it will be important to distinguish (a) the relationship between guilt-appeal variations and persuasive outcomes from (b) the relationship between guilt-appeal variations and aroused guilt.

There has been no previous systematic review of this guilt-appeals research literature, and hence a meta-analytic review was undertaken. As tools for identifying and displaying the general structure of results among guilt-appeal studies, meta-analytic methods are especially helpful. Each investigation offers the prospect of contrasting the effect (on aroused guilt or on persuasive effectiveness) of some (relatively) inexplicit guilt appeal and that of some (relatively) more explicit guilt appeal. Even with a small number of studies, meta-analytic summaries can be useful because they minimize misinterpretations occasioned by an overemphasis on statistical significance.

Methods

Identification of Relevant Investigations

Relevant research reports were located through personal knowledge of the literature, examination of related papers, and inspection of reference lists in previously located reports. Additionally, searches were made through databases and document-retrieval services using terms such as “guilt appeal,” “guilt and persuasion,” and “guilt and compliance” as search bases; these searches covered material at least through May 1997 in PsycINFO, ERIC, H. H. Wilson, Current Contents, CARL/Uncover, Medline, and Dissertation Abstracts Online.

Two effects were of interest: the effect of variations in guilt-appeal explicitness on aroused guilt and the effect of variation in guilt-appeal explicitness on persuasive outcomes (e.g., attitude change, intention, behavior). Thus, to be included in

the meta-analysis, an investigation had to provide appropriate quantitative information concerning at least one of these effects.⁷

Effect Size Measure

Effect sizes were obtained through the formation of a contrast between the least-explicit guilt appeal and any other (more-explicit) guilt appeals. Thus, for example, in a design with three levels of guilt appeal (low, medium, and high) distinguished by explicitness, the effect size reflected the comparison between the least-explicit appeal and the combination of the two more-explicit appeals.

Every effect was summarized using r as the effect size measure. Where more-explicit messages produced greater aroused guilt or persuasion, the sign was positive; where less-explicit messages produced greater guilt or persuasion, the sign was negative. When a given study contained multiple indices of an effect of interest (e.g., multiple indices of persuasion), these were averaged to yield a single summary effect, using the r -to- z -to- r transformation procedure, weighted by n . Whenever possible, multiple-factor designs were analyzed through the reconstitution of the analyses such that individual-difference factors (but not, e.g., other experimental manipulations) were put back into the error term (following the suggestion of Johnson, 1989).

Analysis

The individual correlations (effect sizes) were initially transformed to Fisher's z s; the z s were analyzed using random-effects procedures described by Shadish and Haddock (1994), with results then transformed back to r . A random-effects analysis was employed in preference to a fixed-effects analysis because of an interest in generalizing across messages.

Results

Guilt Appeals and Guilt Arousal

Concerning the relationship of guilt-appeal explicitness to aroused guilt, effect sizes were available for 9 cases, based on a total of 630 participants. The relevant cases (with r and n in parentheses) were Burnett (1989; .209, 74); Coulter and Pinto (1995; .719, 60); Dembroski and Pennebaker (1972, Study 1; .531, 41; and Study 2; .398, 27); Pinto and Priest (1991; .402, 46); Pinto and Worobetz (1992; .320, 57); Ruth and Faber (1988; .143, 154); Yinon, Bizman, Cohen, and Segev (1976; .797, 14); and Zemach (1966; .335, 157).⁸

Across these cases, the random-effects weighted mean correlation was .428 ($Q[8] = 33.8, p < .001$). The 95% confidence interval for this mean was .227, .628, indicating a significantly positive overall effect: More-explicit guilt appeals do indeed dependably arouse greater guilt than do less-explicit guilt appeals. Notably, despite the relatively small number of cases, and despite the use of a conservative

analytic procedure that is very much influenced by the number of effect sizes available (the random-effects analysis), there is nevertheless a significantly positive mean effect.

Guilt Appeals and Persuasive Effects

Concerning the relationship of guilt-appeal explicitness to persuasive outcomes, effect sizes were available for 5 cases, based on a total of 323 participants. The relevant cases (with r and n in parentheses) were Coulter and Pinto (1995; $-.294, 60$), Dembroski and Pennebaker (1972, Study 1; $-.138, 41$; and Study 2; $-.332, 27$), Yinon et al. (1976; $-.451, 90$), and Zemach (1966; $-.074, 105$).⁹

Across these cases, the random-effects weighted mean correlation was $-.259$ ($Q[4] = 8.8, ns$). The 95% confidence interval for this mean was $-.126, -.392$, indicating a significantly negative overall effect: More-explicit guilt appeals were dependably less persuasive than were less-explicit guilt appeals. As with the effect of guilt-appeal variations on aroused guilt, the results are notable for the dependability of the observed mean effect, even given the small number of cases and the use of a random-effects analysis.

Discussion

More-explicit guilt appeals do arouse significantly more guilt than do less-explicit appeals (and do so rather powerfully), but are significantly less persuasive than their less-explicit counterparts. The observed effects on persuasive outcomes raise a natural question: Why are more-explicit guilt appeals not more persuasive, given that they arouse more guilt? This question becomes especially significant against the backdrop of two previously discussed findings. One is the finding that guilt is distinctively associated with feelings of wanting to change one's actions. The other is the previously discussed strong and general transgression-compliance effect. Taken together, these two findings suggest some powerfulness to guilt as a motivating force. And yet more-explicit guilt appeals, which do arouse greater guilt, do not produce correspondingly enhanced persuasive effects; in fact, those more-explicit appeals backfire.

One possible explanation is that the course of action advocated by the guilt-appeal messages is not seen as guilt reducing, and so is not accepted. In such a circumstance, a message might arouse considerable guilt but nevertheless fail to be persuasive concerning the advocated action. (The parallel with fear appeals might be instructive: A message could arouse fear but fail to be persuasive if the recommended course of action is insufficiently fear reducing.)

However, this account does not explain the consistently greater persuasive superiority of less-explicit guilt appeals. If this explanation were sound, one might expect that, on average, more-explicit guilt appeals would be neither more nor less persuasive than their less-explicit counterparts, because both sorts of appeal are accompanied by the same (putatively inadequate) recommendations. But in fact more-explicit guilt appeals are dependably less persuasive than less-explicit ones.

A second possible explanation is that more-explicit guilt appeals, even though successful in creating guilt, might also evoke other emotions that interfere with acceptance of the advocate's viewpoint. Specifically, more-explicit guilt appeals might evoke irritation, anger, annoyance, or similar negative reactions. Indeed, several studies have found that guilt-based appeals are capable of arousing emotions such as anger (Coulter, Cotte, & Moore, 1997; Coulter & Pinto, 1995; Englis, 1990; Pinto & Priest, 1991).

This explanation receives encouragement from studies of reactions to interpersonal guilt-based influence attempts. Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1995b, Study 2) found that targets of guilt manipulation techniques often reported feelings of resentment about such manipulation. In Rubin and Shaffer's (1987) research, participants watched videotapes of influence attempts (requests) based on the elicitation of altruism or on the imposition of guilt. With altruism-based influence attempts (compared to guilt-based attempts), participants liked the influencing agents more, judged them less likely to evoke anger, and judged themselves more likely to comply with the request.

Thus one plausible account of why explicit guilt appeals backfire (with respect to persuasive effects) is that, although such appeals do create greater guilt, they also arouse other negative emotions. Receivers may resent comparatively explicit attempts at arousing guilt, perhaps believing that (for example) advertisers are not entitled to lodge such objections to their conduct (see, e.g., Coulter, Cotte, & Moore, 1999). Future research on guilt appeals might usefully be directed at clarifying the processes underlying the apparent persuasive failure of explicit guilt appeals.

A Curvilinear Relationship?

Some researchers have raised the possibility that there is a curvilinear relationship between the explicitness of guilt appeals and aroused guilt or persuasiveness (e.g., Pinto & Priest, 1991). The suggestion is that moderately explicit guilt appeals might successfully arouse greater guilt and be more persuasive than either more- or less-explicit appeals.

Empirical evidence concerning this hypothesis is limited. There are not many studies containing at least three levels of explicitness of guilt appeals, and of these, several do not provide sufficiently detailed quantitative information about effects (Bozinoff & Ghingold, 1983; Pinto & Worobetz, 1992). Nevertheless, it may be illuminating to examine the available contrasts between moderately explicit guilt appeals and the combination of higher- and lower-level appeals. If a curvilinear relationship obtains such that aroused guilt or persuasive success is greatest at intermediate levels of explicitness, such contrasts would presumably reveal it. In the following analyses, where moderately explicit messages produced greater aroused guilt or persuasion (compared with the combination of less- and more-explicit appeals), the correlation was given a positive sign.

Concerning the relationship of guilt-appeal explicitness to aroused guilt, effect sizes were available for 4 cases, based on a total of 277 participants. The relevant cases (with r and n in parentheses) were Coulter and Pinto (1995; .639, 60), Pinto and Priest (1991; .425, 46), Yinon et al. (1976; -.411, 14), and Zemach (1966; .010, 157). Across these cases, the random-effects weighted mean correlation was .225 ($Q[3] = 30.3, p < .001$). The 95% confidence interval for this mean was $-.271, .722$.

Concerning the relationship of guilt-appeal explicitness to persuasive outcomes, effect sizes were available for 3 cases, based on a total of 255 participants. The relevant cases (with r and n in parentheses) were Coulter and Pinto (1995; $-.085, 60$), Yinon et al. (1976; .425, 90), and Zemach (1966; .278, 105). Across these cases, the random-effects weighted mean correlation was .223 ($Q[2] = 10.1, p < .01$). The 95% confidence interval for this mean was $-.087, .532$.

Neither mean is significantly different from zero; even so, given the small number of cases, these means might lead one to entertain the possibility that in fact aroused guilt and persuasiveness are both greatest with moderately explicit guilt appeals. However, inspection of the individual cases suggests some complications for so simple a picture. Specifically, there is no study in which, compared to other appeals, a moderately explicit appeal both arouses substantially more guilt and is substantially more persuasive. Where the moderately explicit appeal arouses substantially greater guilt, it is, if anything, less persuasive than other appeals (Coulter & Pinto, 1995). In cases where the moderately explicit appeal is substantially more persuasive, it arouses guilt in amounts that are either indistinguishable from (Zemach, 1966) or substantially smaller than (Yinon et al., 1976) that aroused by other appeals; thus even when moderately explicit appeals are more persuasive, that greater persuasiveness appears not to derive from any enhanced guilt-arousing properties of the appeals.

In short, the supposition that moderately explicit appeals will yield both greater guilt and greater persuasion than other appeals remains to be supported. The extant evidence is sparse, and the question is surely worthy of further examination, but the research in hand does not appear encouraging. Indeed, taken together, the results from these two analyses (one comparing the least-explicit guilt appeal against all other appeals, the other contrasting moderately explicit appeals against all others) are consistent with the belief that guilt appeals—of whatever degree of explicitness—that successfully arouse guilt are unlikely also to enjoy persuasive success.¹⁰

HYPOCRISY INDUCTION

Hypocrisy, Dissonance, and Guilt

The research reviewed thus far has been work easily recognizable as concerning guilt-based social influence. But another line of research—not commonly treated

as related to guilt-based processes—appears amenable to a guilt-based interpretation, namely, research on hypocrisy induction.

A number of recent studies have explored inducing hypocrisy as a means of influencing behavior. In these studies, hypocrisy-condition participants are led to advocate some position they already support but are reminded of their failure to act accordingly; this manipulation is expected to lead participants to alter their behaviors so as to be more consistent with their beliefs. For example, in Aronson, Fried, and Stone's (1991) study, hypocrisy-condition participants were reminded of (by being asked to describe fully) situations in which they had failed to use condoms; they then composed (and were videotaped delivering) short speeches advocating condom use (with the understanding that the tapes would be used as part of a high school-level AIDS prevention program). Such participants subsequently expressed significantly greater intentions to increase their use of condoms than did participants in a variety of control conditions (reminder only, speech only, and neither reminder nor speech). Similar effects have been obtained in a number of studies (Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller, 1992; Fried & Aronson, 1995; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994).

This research is commonly treated as representing an application of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). "Dissonance is predicted in the condition that combines advocacy and saliency (hypocrisy condition), in which inconsistency between advocated personal standards and past inconsistent behaviors is strongest" (Fried & Aronson, 1995, p. 926). That is, the hypocrisy induction creates dissonance, which subsequently is reduced by the individual's altering behavior to make it more consonant with the relevant beliefs.

But an alternative guilt-based interpretation is presumably also plausible.¹¹ That is, hypocrisy-condition participants might well experience guilt as a result of having their inconsistency made so apparent to them. Indeed, inconsistency with one's own standards is a prototypical case of a guilt-inducing circumstance. A guilt-based analysis, like the dissonance-based interpretation, expects the greatest effects in a condition combining salience and advocacy (e.g., reminder plus speech) as opposed to conditions with only one of these manipulations, because the combination is likely to create the greatest guilt.¹²

Moreover, it is easy to see how Aronson et al.'s (1991) hypocrisy-condition participants could plausibly have had many of the beliefs and feelings characteristically associated with guilt: "I was wrong not to use condoms more often in the past," "I wish I had used condoms more often," "I shouldn't have failed to use condoms," and so forth. In fact, this is not entirely speculative: Aronson et al.'s hypocrisy-condition participants were more likely (than participants in other conditions) to judge their past use of condoms as insufficiently frequent (see p. 1637, esp. Fig. 1).

Plainly, given guilt feelings induced by awareness of one's hypocrisy, one natural avenue to guilt reduction is to alter one's behavior in ways that make one less hypocritical; that is precisely the effect observed in these studies.¹³ Thus this

hypocrisy-induction research might be understood as displaying the effects of guilt arousal and reduction, not dissonance arousal and reduction.

Other Dissonance Phenomena

Other aspects of dissonance-based research might also be amenable to guilt-based interpretation.¹⁴ Consider, for example, classic dissonance research on induced (“forced”) compliance—that is, a person’s being led to act in ways contrary to his or her own beliefs (e.g., Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). The common research concretization of induced compliance is counterattitudinal advocacy, in which a person is induced to advocate some viewpoint contrary to his or her own position. Such conduct is theorized to produce dissonance, which the person can reduce by changing his or her views to come into alignment with the advocated view.

The research findings attendant to counterattitudinal-advocacy situations are complex, and a number of limiting conditions appear to attach to the appearance of the effects predicted by dissonance theory. One common way of characterizing these conditions is to say that for dissonance effects to occur, persons must believe that some foreseeable, irrevocable aversive event will result from their advocacy, and that they freely chose to engage in the advocacy and hence are responsible for the aversive outcome (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; compare, e.g., Johnson, Kelly, & LeBlanc, 1995). But these seem also to identify circumstances under which feelings of guilt might well be aroused: If I am responsible for committing some act that I know in advance will produce some irreversible harm, I might well feel guilty about having done so (because such actions are presumably inconsistent with my beliefs about proper conduct). Such guilt feelings might be reduced by my coming to believe in the position advocated (thereby minimizing the inconsistency between belief and action). That is to say, one might wonder whether perhaps the attitudinal changes attendant to induced compliance reflect guilt-reduction efforts rather than dissonance-reduction efforts.

It is implausible to suppose that dissonance is nothing but guilt. For example, there appear to be at least some phenomena commonly treated as dissonance related that are difficult to encompass as guilt-based phenomena, such as selective exposure to information (e.g., Cotton, 1985; Frey, 1986). However, closer consideration of the relationship of dissonance and guilt does seem warranted. Surprisingly little attention has been given to this relationship: “Guilt” does not appear in the indices to Festinger’s (1957) or other broad-scale treatments of dissonance (e.g., Abelson et al., 1968; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976), and general discussions of guilt do not mention dissonance (e.g., Fischer & Tangney, 1995; Lewis, 1993).¹⁵

Plainly, however, guilt and dissonance appear conceptually rather similar. One possible account of the relationship might be that dissonance is the actual motivating psychological state and guilt is a folk-psychological term applied to certain species of dissonance. In any event, the connections between phenomena appar-

ently based in guilt (e.g., transgression-compliance) and phenomena apparently based in dissonance (e.g., hypocrisy induction) ought not be overlooked.¹⁶

More generally, it may be useful to consider that guilt-related processes may play some hitherto unnoticed roles in social influence. The general neglect of the role of emotion in social-influence research has in recent years been often remarked upon; we should not be surprised if familiar theoretical processes and research findings display new facets when reexamined with an eye attentive to emotion (see, e.g., O'Keefe & Figgé, 1997).

ANTICIPATED GUILT

The research reviewed thus far has emphasized the role of the experience of guilt feelings in shaping conduct. The underlying picture has been a guilt-arousal-and-reduction image in which aroused guilt leads to behavior that reduces guilt feelings. Approached from such a perspective, guilt-based social influence requires the creation of guilt—through the person's committing a transgression (as in transgression-compliance studies), through persuasive appeals that evoke guilt (as in guilt-appeals research), or through the person's being reminded of a past shortcoming/transgression (as in hypocrisy-induction studies). That is, the focus has been on the behavioral effects of aroused guilt.

This parallels the emphasis in studies of the behavioral impact of other emotions. Broadly speaking, the focus has been on how a given experienced emotion (fear, sadness, and so on) might influence behavior. For instance, studies of fear-appeal persuasive messages (which contain fear-arousing material and a recommended course of action meant to reduce the fear) address how message-induced feelings of fear might shape receptivity to the communicator's recommendations (see, e.g., Boster & Mongeau, 1984; Sutton, 1982).

But emotions might play a role in social influence in another way—namely, through anticipation of the emotional consequences of behavior. Indeed, a number of diverse studies suggest that conduct can be shaped by expectations about the feelings that will result from that conduct. One straightforward illustration is afforded by research on the relationship between media choices and mood. For example, there is evidence that people choose among entertainment offerings in ways suggestive of (perhaps not always conscious) expectations about likely emotional effects: Bored persons prefer arousing materials, whereas stressed persons prefer calming materials (for reviews and discussion, see Zillmann & Bryant, 1985, 1994). More broadly, uses-and-gratifications approaches to mass media (see, e.g., Rubin, 1994) happily accommodate the idea that one of the expected gratifications from media exposure might be the control of affective states (persons may expect to be put in a good mood by a comedy show, to be frightened by a horror movie, and so on).

As another example, anticipated regret appears to be capable of influencing decision making. Lechner, de Vries, and Offermans (1997) found that anticipated regret was the best predictor of mammography participation intentions among pre-

vious nonparticipants. Richard, van der Pligt, and de Vries (1995, 1996a; Richard, de Vries, & van der Pligt, 1998) found that prediction of intentions by the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) could be significantly improved through the addition of assessments of anticipated regret and worry. Relatedly, Richard, van der Pligt, and de Vries (1996b) found significant increases in safe-sex intentions and behaviors as a result of interventions aimed at focusing attention on the negative postbehavioral feelings (such as regret) likely to result from unsafe sex. (For general discussions, see van der Pligt & de Vries, 1998; van der Pligt & Richard, 1994. For related research, see Bakker, Buunk, & Manstead, 1997; Janis & Mann, 1977, pp. 219-242; Josephs, Larrick, Steele, & Nisbett, 1992; Simonson, 1992.)¹⁷

Only recently has research on emotions come to attend at all closely to the role that anticipated feelings might play in shaping conduct. As Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Pieters (1998) have pointed out, "Existing theories [of emotion] have not specified fully how anticipated emotions initiate volitional activities and goal directed behaviors" (p. 20).¹⁸ Bagozzi et al. have sketched a model in which (inter alia) appraisals of the consequences of anticipated goal achievement (or failure) are hypothesized to lead to anticipated emotions, which in turn guide intentions, plans, and decisions. This model has received encouraging support in longitudinal studies of body weight regulation through diet and exercise (Bagozzi et al., 1998) and of salesperson behavior (Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1997). The relevant general point is that an emerging body of research suggests that anticipated emotions can play a role in shaping behavior.

Turning to guilt specifically, it is easy enough to imagine how one's behavior might be influenced by expected feelings of guilt: "If I eat that piece of chocolate cake, I'll feel really guilty—so I guess I'll stick to my diet." Perhaps it is unsurprising that persons' estimates of how guilty they would feel if they were to engage in various health-risk behaviors are related to avoidance of those behaviors; people avoid the actions that they expect would make them feel guilty (Birkimer, Johnston, & Berry, 1993).

This invites reconsideration of how guilt-based social influence might operate. For example, guilt-based persuasive appeals need not actually arouse guilt; they could instead try to draw people's attention to the future feelings of guilt to be expected if the recommended course of action is not followed. In fact, guilt-based consumer advertising uses both advertisements that try to arouse guilt and advertisements drawing attention to anticipated guilt. Huhmann and Brotherton (1997) studied guilt-based appeals in a sampling of 48 issues of 24 popular magazines over a 2-year period. Most (62%) of the guilt appeals were "anticipatory" appeals, ones that "offer consumers an opportunity to avoid a transgression" (p. 37), as opposed to appeals meant to arouse actual guilt (either "reactive" appeals, which draw attention to some previous guilt-inducing conduct, or "existential" appeals, which draw attention to discrepancies between one's well-being and that of others).

Future work might usefully be directed at providing a careful explication of alternative means by which anticipated guilt might be aroused. Broadly speaking,

however, one plausible general mechanism for evoking anticipated guilt might be to remind persons of their commitments or obligations. Such reminders may elicit thoughts of the guilt that would occur if the obligations went unfulfilled, and hence may spur obligation-consistent action. There is evidence that reminding people of a commitment they have made to perform a prosocial behavior (such as donating blood) can increase performance of that behavior (Ferrari, Barone, Jason, & Rose, 1985); anticipated guilt feelings provide one possible explanation for such effects.

Feelings of anticipated guilt do appear to be malleable for purposes of social influence. Surveys conducted before and after an antilittering media campaign in Oklahoma revealed a substantial increase in the proportion of respondents who agreed that they would feel guilty if they littered—and respondents were correspondingly less inclined to litter. Independent assessments confirmed that the campaign produced a large reduction in the amount of litter (Grasmick, Bursik, & Kinsey, 1991).

It may be worth emphasizing that anticipated guilt and actual guilt are distinct states. Indeed, in general, the anticipation of a given feeling and the experience of that feeling are distinguishable. A person who is feeling low and so (in the expectation of a brighter mood) is looking for a comedy on the video-rental shelves may be anticipating feelings of happiness from the contemplated action, but is not yet experiencing happiness. Similarly, a person anticipating feelings of guilt from a contemplated action is not yet experiencing guilt.

Thus it would seem to be unwise to treat anticipated feelings of guilt as identical to actual feelings of guilt, as some previous discussions have done. For example, Rawlings (1970, p. 164) treated “anticipatory guilt” and “reactive guilt” as otherwise identical uncomfortable states, distinguished only by the precipitating event (anticipated versus actual transgression). But the realization that guilt would be aroused by a contemplated transgression (i.e., the anticipation of possible guilt feelings) is plainly different from actual (aroused) guilt. Both states (the state of anticipating possible guilt if a given action is performed and the state of feeling guilty following a particular action) have the capacity to shape future behavior, but they clearly differ in other ways. For example, feeling guilty is associated with thoughts such as “I wish I hadn’t done what I did” and “I wish I could make up for what I did” (Roseman et al., 1994; Tangney et al., 1996), but such thoughts could not be associated with contemplated future action (instead, the thoughts associated with anticipated guilt might be ones such as “If I do X I will wish I hadn’t” and “If I do X I will feel guilty about having done so”).¹⁹

Anticipated guilt and experienced (aroused) guilt might be related in complex ways. For example, the anticipation of future guilt might arouse current guilt feelings by serving as a reminder of past transgressions; a person who thinks, “I’ll feel really guilty if I don’t follow my diet” might also be led to think of past occasions on which he or she failed to follow the diet—and so be led to feel guilty about those past transgressions.²⁰ Conversely, reminders of past transgressions might both elicit actual guilt (about those transgressions) and encourage anticipatory guilt (when appropriate circumstances arise in the future). And the experience of guilt

obviously provides a basis for the subsequent anticipation of guilt: A person who experiences guilt as a result of his or her behavior in a given circumstance might, when that circumstance arises again, be more likely to anticipate that certain behaviors will lead to guilt feelings.

In sum, anticipated feelings of guilt appear to be capable of playing important roles in shaping behavior and, correspondingly, may serve as mechanisms of social influence. Research and theorizing about the role of guilt in social influence have largely been dominated by a guilt-arousal-and-reduction model, in which social-influence efforts are seen as based on the creation of guilt feelings. It will be useful for future work to explore the social-influence potential of anticipated guilt as well; little is known about how anticipated guilt might be aroused or about the particulars of its effects (e.g., whether efforts at creating anticipated guilt can evoke the same negative reactions as are sometimes associated with guilt-arousal efforts).

CONCLUSION

The emotion of guilt might figure in behavior—and thereby be a focus of social-influence efforts—in two broad ways: through the actual arousal of guilt or through anticipation of possible guilt feelings. The arousal of guilt can naturally be used in the service of social influence, because guilt is a state with built-in action-motivating aspects. There appear to be two abstract ways in which guilt can be aroused: by a person's committing some transgression or by a person's attention being drawn to some (past or ongoing) transgression. Although the experimental manipulations in transgression-compliance research and hypocrisy-induction research clearly involve such guilt-arousal mechanisms, neither line of work has yet given much systematic attention to assessing the guilt (or other emotions) that might arise from such manipulations.

Guilt arousal can apparently be a very powerful tool of social influence, as indicated by self-reports of behavioral change in interpersonal guilt-based influence attempts, by the large and robust transgression-compliance effect, and by the effects of hypocrisy inductions. But guilt arousal can also backfire quite dramatically, as indicated by research on guilt appeals in persuasive messages.

What is not yet clear is exactly how and why guilt arousal can boomerang in these ways. Guilt-arousal strategies apparently can sometimes also arouse anger and resentment (as indicated by studies of persuasive guilt appeals and by self-reports of interpersonal guilt-based influence events), but evidence is meager concerning the nature of the underlying mechanism, the particular circumstances or message features that might trigger negative reactions, and so on. Future research will want to devote attention to clarifying exactly how and why such effects arise.

One possibility worthy of exploration is that guilt can be aroused without accompanying anger (or resentment, reactance, and the like) only in circum-

stances in which guilt arousal appears unconnected with another person's purposeful social-influence efforts. That is, if one feels guilt because of an actual transgression (as in transgression-compliance research) or because one happens to be reminded of past transgressions (as in, *ex hypothesi*, hypocrisy-induction research), then perhaps the aroused guilt will be unlikely to be accompanied by anger and so will be more likely to make for behavioral change. But if one is led to feel guilty by virtue of another person's intentionally setting out to make one feel guilty as a means of influencing one's conduct (as in guilt-based consumer advertising or unobtrusive interpersonal-relationship guilt-arousal techniques), then anger or reactance may overwhelm any behavioral effects of the aroused guilt.

The second broad way in which guilt might figure in behavior is through the anticipation of guilt. Broadly speaking, guilt anticipation would seem to be encouraged simply by the drawing of persons' attention to how they will feel if they pursue a given course of action. Anticipated guilt does appear to be malleable and capable of exerting some influence on behavior. But research evidence is sparse concerning the nature and effects of anticipated guilt. For example, there is little information about situations or factors that enhance the likelihood of such anticipated-guilt effects. There is also little evidence concerning how social-influence efforts might be constructed so as to make effective use of such anticipated feelings. And it is not clear whether, or under what circumstances, social-influence efforts based on anticipated guilt can evoke the same negative reactions that efforts based on aroused guilt apparently do.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that so many aspects of guilt-based social influence remain relatively unexplored. General theoretical treatments of social-influence processes have for many years emphasized "logical" or "rational" aspects of social influence; only recently has much attention been devoted to emotional facets of social influence, and even this attention has largely been focused on the emotion of fear. But the apparent power of the emotion of guilt recommends continuing research and theoretical attention.

NOTES

1. The kind of guilt that is of interest here is what might be thought of as ordinary guilt, as opposed to psychopathological guilt; as with many emotional states, guilt can develop in ways that threaten everyday functioning, but it is commonplace guilt that is the focus of this chapter (for a useful discussion, see Quiles & Bybee, 1997). Similarly, it is guilt feelings, not legal guilt (culpability), that is of concern here.

2. The nonsignificant value for Q in the overall analysis, indicating a failure to reject the null hypothesis of homogeneity among these effect sizes, might be taken to mean that examination of potential moderator variables would inevitably be fruitless. But, as Cook et al. (1992, pp. 313-314) and Hall and Rosenthal (1991, p. 440) point out, a nonsignificant heterogeneity test does not guarantee the absence of significant moderators at work with a set of effect sizes.

3. These conclusions must be tempered somewhat by the recognition that there may have been insufficient power to detect such moderator effects; on the other hand, the observed differences between the means are quite small. The largest observed difference between levels of a mod-

erator is that between requests (or behavioral opportunities) presented by the victim (mean $r = .318$) and those presented by a nonvictim (mean $r = .258$). These are mean r s, not r s, but a sense of the magnitude of this difference may be obtained using Cohen's (1988) q , an effect-size index for differences between correlations. This difference—the largest obtained—corresponds to $q = .065$; the other differences correspond to q s of .005, .044, and .057. Cohen labels a q of .10 a “small” difference, which suggests that the observed differences are quite small indeed. The point is that this is not a case in which large effects were nonsignificant because of low power.

4. Although space does not permit its careful exploration here, a similar view appears to be offered by Steele's (1988) work on self-affirmation processes, which suggests that threats to one's self-system can lead to acts of self-affirmation aimed not necessarily at coping with the particular threat at hand but rather at maintaining one's overall self-integrity. If guilt is taken to be one possible outcome of a challenge to self-integrity, the observed lack of effect for whether the victim of transgression is helped by compliance can be seen as consistent with Steele's analysis.

5. Actually, it will be useful for investigators to cast a broader net—to assess not only guilt but also other emotions that might compete with, or provide an explanation different from, guilt (e.g., anger, shame, embarrassment). Studies of fear appeals in persuasive messages have found it useful to examine not only fear but also other emotional reactions (see Dillard, Plotnick, Godbold, Freimuth, & Edgar, 1996; Stout & Sego, 1994); in general, examination of the roles played by emotion in communication might profitably consider multiple emotions simultaneously.

6. Because the topics used in this research area are (naturally enough) ones on which plausible guilt appeals might be constructed, any persuasive message (even one like Burnett's [1989] “informational” message) might be thought of as having the capacity to evoke guilt feelings. For present purposes, however, what is relevant is that the messages vary in the explicitness of the guilt appeal.

7. A third effect would naturally be of interest, namely, the relationship between aroused guilt and persuasive outcomes. But (somewhat surprisingly) research reports in this area rarely contain information concerning this relationship, thus preventing useful meta-analytic treatment.

8. Ruth and Faber's (1988) study was also reported in Ruth (1987). Bozinoff and Ghingold's (1983) research, also reported in Ghingold and Bozinoff (1981), was not included because of insufficient quantitative information. Haefner's (1956) dissertation was unavailable (through either interlibrary borrowing or UMI).

9. Insufficient quantitative information was available concerning Bozinoff and Ghingold's (1983) research, also reported in Ghingold and Bozinoff (1981); Burnett's (1989) study; and Ruth and Faber's (1988) study, also reported in Ruth (1987). Haefner's (1956) dissertation was unavailable (through either interlibrary borrowing or UMI). Pinto and Priest (1991) and Pinto and Worobetz (1992) did not include persuasion-outcome measures.

10. Indeed, only recently has there been any indication that greater message-evoked guilt might be associated with greater persuasiveness (Basil, Ridgway, Nakamoto, & Basil, 1998), although unhappily this research does not shed light on the message properties that might be associated with such effects.

11. Fried and Aronson (1995) claim to provide “independent evidence that hypocrisy is a form of cognitive dissonance arousal” (p. 925) by showing that when participants are given the opportunity to misattribute their arousal to plausible external factors, the effects of hypocrisy induction are reduced (paralleling the reduction of dissonance effects in induced-compliance studies when such misattribution is available, as in Zanna & Cooper, 1974). But such evidence can show only that there is some motivational state at work that is subject to attributional processes; this evidence cannot show that the relevant state is distinctively dissonance as opposed to guilt (or any other candidate).

12. Fried (1998, p. 146n1) suggests that the reminder alone can be sufficient to arouse the necessary dissonance. Notably, O'Malley and Andrews (1983) found that having persons recall and describe a situation in which they felt guilty—a manipulation akin to the “reminder” conditions in

hypocrisy-induction studies—can be sufficient to induce greater helping (compared to a neutral-mood induction condition).

13. An alternative means of dealing with such guilt feelings might be to denigrate the violated standards (e.g., by deciding that the standards are not important). Fried (1998) observed just such effects: Under conditions in which participants were identified with their transgressions (as opposed to being anonymous), participants reminded of past recycling transgressions did not adopt pro-recycling behaviors, but rather came to have less positive attitudes about the importance of recycling. For a general discussion of the cognitive devices available for mitigating guilt, see Miceli and Castelfranchi (1998).

14. Stice (1992) noted similarities between dissonance and guilt, but interprets these as suggesting that “dissonance is analogous to the feeling of guilt” (p. 75) and hence as underwriting a hypothesis that dissonance will be reduced by any methods effective in reducing guilt. The suggestion under consideration here is a stronger one.

15. One exception is Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton’s (1995b, pp. 190-191) brief discussion of the relationship of guilt and dissonance. The discussion notes some similarities between these authors’ interpersonal view of guilt and some versions of dissonance theory, but is primarily focused on defending guilt-based explanations against possible dissonance-based alternatives. The suggestion here runs rather a different direction, as it contemplates reinterpreting dissonance phenomena as guilt based.

16. These connections might usefully be explored in the framework of Steele’s (1988) self-affirmation model. Although Steele mentions guilt only briefly (see p. 283), guilt clearly can be one outcome of challenges to self-integrity. It remains to be seen whether Steele’s analysis can successfully explain the accumulated findings of dissonance theory (for some discussion, see, e.g., Aronson, 1992; Steele & Liu, 1983; Steele & Spencer, 1992), but self-affirmation processes are plainly potentially relevant to a larger understanding of how guilt and dissonance might be related.

17. The relationship between regret and guilt deserves closer scrutiny. Much like guilt, regret is linked to perceived responsibility for the regretted outcome (e.g., Zeelenberg, van Dijk, & Manstead, 1998). When persons are asked to imagine “undoing” a regret-inducing event, they predominantly change their own actions (as opposed to changing aspects of the situation, which is more characteristic of disappointment-inducing events; Zeelenberg, van Dijk, van der Pligt, et al., 1998); a similar impulse is associated with undoing guilt-evoking circumstances (Niedenthal et al., 1994). Regret and guilt both appear to be associated with feelings of wanting to correct a mistake, wanting a second chance, and the like (Roseman et al., 1994; Zeelenberg, van Dijk, Manstead, & van der Pligt, 1998). If, as Zeelenberg, van Dijk, Manstead, and van der Pligt (1998) say, regret requires that “one not only has to perceive the outcome as negative, but one also has to realise that the unwanted outcome resulted from (or could have been prevented by) one’s own behavior” (pp. 228-229), then perhaps guilt is a special case of regret in which the actor’s personal standards are somehow violated (see Miceli, 1992).

18. Although existing theories of emotions have generally not attended to anticipated emotions, at least some work on decision making has recognized the role of anticipated feelings (e.g., Baron, 1992; Bell, 1982; Josephs et al., 1992; Loomes & Sugden, 1982, 1987).

19. Correspondingly, whereas Coulter et al. (1999) explicitly treat Huhmann and Brotherton’s (1997) three kinds of guilt-related ads as all meant to “make the reader feel guilty” and to lead the reader to take action “to relieve the guilt feelings,” the present analysis would underscore the difference between ads aimed at encouraging avoidance of future guilt (Huhmann & Brotherton’s “anticipatory” appeals) and ads aimed at arousing guilt (“reactive” and “existential” appeals).

20. The anticipation of future guilt (from the contemplation of a possible future transgression) might be connected with current guilt feelings in another way: A person who contemplates a transgression might feel guilty about having done so—that is, about having even considered committing the transgression.

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