

## Discrete Emotions and Persuasion

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Despite the pervasive use of emotional appeals in persuasive messages, this area of attitude change research is still relatively unexplored. To date, the study of emotion and persuasion has been largely defined by research on fear appeals (e.g., Leventhal, 1970; Witte, 1994). Although other approaches to affective influence have certainly been given their due, such as the effect of mood on social judgments (e.g., Forgas, 1991; Isen, 1987, 1993; Schwarz, Bless, & Bohner, 1991) and the role of emotional blends in advertising outcomes (e.g., Christ & Thorson, 1992; Holbrook & Batra, 1987), overlooked have been the persuasive effects of discrete emotions other than fear, such as anger, sadness, envy, and joy. Because of their unique adaptive functions, discrete emotions likely have particular implications for the process and direction of persuasive influence as well as appropriate application contexts, thus necessitating consideration of their persuasive impacts as separate phenomena, both from other approaches and from one another.

This chapter, then, has three objectives. First, it lays out the functional emotion perspective from which the notion of discrete emotions is derived. Second, it reviews the current state of our knowledge regarding the pervasive effects of several discrete negative emotions (fear, guilt, anger, sadness, disgust, and envy) and positive emotions (happiness/joy, pride, relief, hope, and compassion) in mediated contexts, interpreted from emotion's functional perspective. Finally, given our limited understanding of the persuasive role of most discrete emotions, the chapter concludes by considering the theoretical perspectives and questions that may effectively guide future research in this area.

### EMOTION THEORY

#### Emotion Defined

Emotions are generally viewed as internal mental states representing evaluative reac-

tions to events, agents, or objects that vary in intensity (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988). They are generally short-lived, intense, and directed at some external stimuli. Different theorists define emotion by emphasizing different *physiological features*, such as neural processes (e.g., Izard, 1977; Tomkins, 1962) or facial expression (e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1975), or more *psychological factors*, such as appraisal patterns (e.g., Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), adaptive functions (e.g., Plutchik, 1980a), action tendencies (e.g., Arnold, 1960; Frijda, 1986), or motivations and/or goals (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1984). However, general consensus suggests that emotion is a psychological construct consisting of five components: (a) cognitive appraisal or evaluation of a situation, (b) the physiological component of arousal, (c) motor expression, (d) a motivational component (including behavioral intentions or readiness), and (e) a subjective feeling state (Scherer, 1984; for reviews of emotion definitions, see Plutchik, 1980a, and Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

### Functional Emotion Theories

Functional emotion theories are based largely on Darwin's (1872/1965) seminal work, in which he argued that behaviors in response to emotional feelings serve adaptive functions developed through evolutionary processes. Although all functional theories are based on this premise, they maintain great variation in the emotion features emphasized. Still, the fundamental principles of such theories can be summarized in four statements. First, emotions have *inherent adaptive functions*. Second, emotions are based on events that are *personally relevant*. Third, each emotion has a distinctive goal or motivation represented in its *state of action readiness or tendency to action* designed to arouse, sustain, and direct cognitive and/or physical ac-

tivity. Fourth, emotions are *organizers and motivators of behavior*. (See Arnold, 1960; Buck, 1985; Frijda, 1986, 1988; Izard, 1977; Lang, 1995; Lazarus, 1991; Leeper, 1948; Ortony et al., 1988; Plutchik, 1980a, 1980b; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984; Tomkins, 1962.)

Based on these principles, the emotion process, as conceptualized by functional theorists, involves first perceiving an object or event in the environment and appraising its relevance for personal well-being. Particular patterns of appraisals then lead to certain states of action readiness, the awareness of which is the subjective emotional experience. These action tendencies are associated with physiological changes that together influence future perceptions, cognitions, and even behaviors in accordance with the goal set by the emotion's action tendency. It is these latter outcomes that support the relevance of emotion's functional approach to persuasion processes.

In accordance with this paradigm, several emotions—including fear, anger, sadness, disgust, guilt, and joy<sup>1</sup>—are commonly agreed to be discrete. That is, they have unique appraisal patterns, motivational functions, and behavioral associations. Although different theorists also recognize any of a number of other emotions as discrete, including envy, contempt, pride, love, relief, hope, compassion, surprise, interest, and anticipation (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Frijda, 1986; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Plutchik, 1980a; Tomkins, 1962, 1963). Lazarus's (1991) cognitive-motivational-relational theory, with its parsimonious approach to emotional appraisal and its inclusion of *core relational themes* that simply and reliably capture the essence of each emotion (see Table 15.1 and Smith & Lazarus, 1993), offers a particularly attractive paradigm through which to identify and study discrete emotions. Thus, with Lazarus as our guide, the following section introduces the reader to

TABLE 15.1 Core Relational Themes of Select Emotion According to Lazarus (1991)

Emotion	Core Relational Theme
Anger	"Demeaning offense against me and mine"
Fright	"Concrete and sudden danger of imminent physical harm"
Guilt/Shame	"Having transgressed a moral imperative"
Sadness	"Irrevocable loss"
Disgust	"Taking in or being too close to an indigestible object or idea"
Envy	"Wanting what someone else has"
Happiness/Joy	"Making reasonable progress toward the realization of our goals"

SOURCE: Adapted from Lazarus (1991).

a set of negative emotions (fear, guilt, anger, sadness, disgust, and envy) and positive emotions (happiness/joy, pride, compassion, relief, and hope), and the theoretical and empirical work relating each emotion to persuasive outcome.

### DISCRETE EMOTIONS AND ATTITUDE CHANGE: THEORY AND RESEARCH

As noted earlier, fear is the only discrete emotion that has been studied thoroughly in the persuasion context with theoretical models developed to articulate the process through which its effects occur (Breckler, 1993). By comparison, guilt has received sporadic attention, whereas anger, disgust, sadness, envy, and nearly all of the positive emotions have been virtually ignored as intentionally evoked, message-relevant discrete emotions. The subsections that follow include brief descriptions of several discrete emotions from a functional perspective and summaries of the extant theoretical and/or empirical understanding of their persuasive impact, paying particular

attention to how the findings comport with functional approach predictions. Given the often thin and disjointed nature of the study of each emotion, I conclude by attempting to summarize and integrate the disordered emotion-specific observations to suggest more general directions for future inquiry.

#### Negative Emotions

*Fear.* Fear is generally aroused when a situation is perceived as both threatening to one's physical or psychological self and out of one's control (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 1984). Threatening situations can be either innate or learned, and individuals' thresholds for fear are determined by biological factors and sociocultural context as well as individual differences and experiences (Izard, 1977). Based on the desire for protection, fear's action tendency is to escape from the threatening agent, and if realized, avoidance behavior results (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Plutchik, 1980a; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994).

The extensive fear appeal literature cannot be adequately addressed within the scope of this chapter (for detailed accounts, see Boster & Mongeau, 1984; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Leventhal, 1970; and other chapters in this volume). In sum, however, it suggests that, despite the evolution of fear appeal models from emphasis on affect (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Janis & Feshbach, 1953, 1954), to incorporation of and later emphasis on cognition (Leventhal, 1970; Rogers, 1975, 1983), and back to a focus on both emotion and cognition (Witte, 1992), no single fear appeal model appears to be well supported by empirical research (Boster & Mongeau, 1984; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Mongeau, 1998; Witte, 1994). However, meta-analyses of the empirical findings suggest that, in general, fear is positively correlated with both attitude and behavior change, although age and efficacy perceptions can moderate those relationships (Boster & Mongeau, 1984; Mongeau, 1998). Importantly, the totality of fear-related persuasion findings are compatible with the functional view of fear. That is, those experiencing fear desire protection. Subsequent message processing and acceptance are contingent on the level of fear experienced and perceived usefulness of the message-related information in offering the desired protection.

Recently, and also compatible with the functional perspective, fear appeal research has begun to explore the effects of fear on information processing depth and cognitive response (see Nabi, 1999). Although these studies do not reach consensus, in sum, they identify four variables that may interact to influence processing depth of a fear-inducing message: (a) type of fear (chronic vs. acute), (b) expectation of a message containing reassuring information, (c) type of behavior advocated (e.g., disease detection vs. health promotion), and (d) issue familiarity (Baron, Inman, Kao, & Logan, 1992; Baron, Logan, Lilly, Inman, & Brennan, 1994; Gleicher &

Petty, 1992; Hale, LeMieux, & Mongeau, 1995; Jepson & Chaiken, 1990; Millar & Millar, 1998; Nabi, 1998a). Further exploration into these moderators and how they relate to fear evocation and resolution will surely allow us to more accurately model the effects of fear on attitude change may be developed (see Nabi, 1999).

*Guilt.* Guilt arises from one's violation of an internalized moral, ethical, or religious code (Ausubel, 1955; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, & Mascolo, 1995). Although causes of guilt vary widely across religions and cultures, guilt is usually experienced in the context of an interpersonal relationship and serves a relationship-enhancing function (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heather-ton, 1994; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). Characterized by a gnawing feeling that one has done something wrong, guilt's associated action tendency is to atone or make reparation for the harm done and perhaps to seek punishment for one's wrongdoing (Barrett, 1995; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Lindsay-Hartz et al., 1995; Roseman et al., 1994).

Unlike fear appeals, there has been minimal theorizing regarding the effects of guilt on attitude change or information processing (for reviews of guilt and social influence, see O'Keefe, 2000, and other chapters in this volume). Although we have no working model of guilt appeals (but see Nabi, 1999), the literature suggests that guilt can enhance attainment of persuasive goals if evoked at moderate levels (Coulter & Pinto, 1995), even if unintentionally elicited (Dillard & Peck, 1998). However, messages designed to evoke high levels of guilt may instead arouse high levels of anger that may impede persuasive success (Coulter & Pinto, 1995; Pinto & Priest, 1991). Furthermore, guilt effects appear to be associated with and mediated by cognitions (Bozinoff & Ghingold, 1983), and

comparable message manipulations may evoke different levels of guilt, depending on the context in which they are used (e.g., Coulter & Pinto, 1995, found greater guilt evocation for messages about dental floss vs. bread). These latter findings are consistent with the functional view of guilt as motivating deliberative efforts to determine ways to atone for wrongdoing, largely in situations where a relational violation has occurred. If guilt, in these circumstances, does encourage close message processing, then persuasive outcome is likely dependent on the nature of those cognitions (see Nabi, 1999). Future research on guilt, then, may wish to consider factors that may influence direction and depth of guilt-driven information processing and thus moderate guilt appeal success (e.g., cues to relational transgressions and efficacy perceptions of reparative information).

*Anger.* Although specific causes of anger are a function of personal experience, cultural conditioning, and social learning, anger is generally elicited in the face of obstacles interfering with goal-oriented behavior or demeaning offenses against oneself or one's loved ones (Averill, 1982; Hampton, 1978; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Plutchik, 1980a). Anger is associated with highly focused attention and a desire to strike out at, attack, or in some way get back at the anger source (Arnold, 1960; Averill, 1982; Frijda, 1986; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman et al., 1994). Believed to mobilize and sustain high levels of energy, anger is often conducive to constructive problem solving, although the impulsiveness associated with extreme anger may be counterproductive (Averill, 1982).

Despite its prevalence in our daily lives and its association with many issues of political concern, the persuasive effect of anger has been virtually ignored in the literature. Two research efforts, however, combine to suggest that a positive relationship exists between

anger and attitude change. Butler, Koopman, and Zimbardo (1995) found that anger aroused in response to the film *JFK* was associated with acceptance of conspiracy theories regarding President Kennedy's assassination. Similarly, Nabi (1998a) found that anger evoked in response to issues of juvenile crime and domestic terrorism correlated with acceptance of legislative initiatives proposed to address those issues. In the latter study, Nabi found that the cognitive processes underlying anger's persuasive effects differed depending on level of issue familiarity and expectation of the message content. Specifically, anger arousal prompted closer information processing for an unfamiliar topic and under conditions of uncertainty regarding message content (i.e., a quick and easy retributive solution was not readily identified).<sup>2</sup> These findings are consistent with the functional view of anger as promoting attention to determine an effective means of retribution.

Of note, whereas intentionally induced anger appears to correlate positively with persuasive outcome, unintentionally induced anger in response to supposed guilt and fear appeals has been shown to correlate *negatively* with attitudes (Dillard & Peck, 1998; Dillard, Plotnick, Godbold, Freimuth, & Edgar, 1996; Pinto & Priest, 1991). Here we might logically assume that the unintentionally elicited anger was directed against the message creators in light of what the receivers considered unjust attempts to manipulate their emotional responses, and thus persuasive influence was undermined. If so, we might further suppose that the direction of anger's persuasive effect and the process through which such effects occur are contingent on the target and context of anger arousal—a position consistent with the functional view of anger as motivating either impulsive or deliberative attacks against the anger source. This promises to be a useful direction for future research on anger and persuasion.

*Sadness.* Sadness is elicited by physical or psychological loss or separation, either real or imagined, or by failure to achieve a goal (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Plutchik, 1980a; Tomkins, 1963). Those experiencing sadness feel isolated, wistful, and a sense of resignation, and their action tendency is really one of inaction or withdrawal into themselves to solicit comfort or dwell on that which was lost (Frijda, 1986; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman et al., 1994). Sadness motivates problem-solving activity by forcing people to focus inward for possible solutions and/or to passively invite help from others (Izard, 1977, 1993), which in turn strengthens social bonds and maintains social cohesion (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Plutchik, 1980a; Tomkins, 1963). However, chronic sadness, or depression, may invite maladaptive outcomes.

Sadness as an intentionally evoked, message- and topic-relevant discrete emotion has been overlooked in the persuasion literature. As an *unintentionally evoked*, message-relevant emotion, sadness has evidenced a positive correlation with attitude change in the context of AIDS, illicit drugs, and juvenile crime (Dillard & Peck, 1998; Dillard et al., 1996; Nabi, 1998a) and appeared to motivate careful information processing of a juvenile crime message (Nabi, 1998a). This latter finding is consistent with both the functional view of sadness as motivating contemplative behavior and empirical findings that sad moods motivate more systematic information processing (Bless, Bohner, Schwarz, & Strack, 1990; Bless, Mackie, & Schwarz, 1992; Bohner, Chaiken, & Hunyadi, 1994; Bohner, Crow, Erb, & Schwarz, 1992; Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Bless, 1991). Of note, Nabi (1998a), found that conceptually similar fear evocation techniques resulted in heightened fear arousal for domestic terrorism but elevated sadness for juvenile crime. Reminiscent of Coulter and Pinto's (1995) guilt research,

this finding suggests that some topics lend themselves more readily to certain emotional evocations. Because we are just beginning to understand the persuasive effects of sadness as a discrete emotion, researchers may wish to investigate contexts in which sadness is likely to be induced (e.g., focus on circumstances of loss) as well as moderators to its effects on information processing as this line of research inevitably progresses.

*Disgust.* Aroused by objects or ideas that are either organically or psychologically spoiled (e.g., certain foods, body products, sexual behaviors, moral offenses [Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 1993]), disgust is understood to result from the closeness to or ingestion of a noxious object or idea (Lazarus, 1991). Those experiencing disgust feel nauseous or queasy and, consequently, are motivated to turn away from or defend against the object of disgust (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman et al., 1994; Rozin et al., 1993; Tomkins, 1963). Although it may have a strong reflexive nature, the disgust response is largely steeped in learned cultural practices (Lazarus, 1991), and like other emotions (e.g., fear, anger), it serves as a protection mechanism for the body, the soul, and the social order itself (Izard, 1993; Rozin et al., 1993).

Although some persuasion studies have included measures of disgust (e.g., Christ & Thorson, 1992; Krishnamurthy, 1986; Leventhal & Trembly, 1968), and past fear appeal studies have operationalized fear with disgust-evoking images (e.g., rotting teeth, diseased lungs), disgust's unique contribution to the process and outcome of attitude change has been largely untested. Recently, however, Nabi (1998b) found that message-induced disgust toward animal experimentation correlated negatively with attitude change when associated with the message's advocated position—a finding consistent with the functional

emotion perspective that disgust evocation would lead to a rejection of its source. With so little known about the relationship between disgust and attitude change, future research might consider the emotion's target, the process of disgust's effects given its avoidant nature and protective function, and disgust's co-occurrence with other emotions, such as fear and anger, that might change the nature of the influence process.

*Envy.* Although envy and jealousy may be considered different emotions, with the former referring to wanting what someone else has and the latter referring to resenting another for loss or threat to another's affection or acquisition of a valued goal (Lazarus, 1991; Salovey & Rothman, 1991; Spielman, 1971), the two are often conflated in the English language (Smith, Kim, & Parrot, 1988). While recognizing their overlap, in this discussion I focus on the construct of envy. Envy is stimulated when we crave what another possesses; thus, its subjective feeling is one of yearning, and its action tendency mobilizes one to seek out what is coveted (Lazarus, 1991). Indirectly influenced by both social psychological and cultural factors (Salovey & Rothman, 1991), envy can promote positive outcomes if we are motivated to increase our own efforts to accomplish, but if we are thwarted from achievement, envy can lead to unhappiness, resentment, and ultimately rejection (Lazarus, 1991).

Surprisingly, one is hard-pressed to find a persuasion study with a focus on envy arousal. I say surprising because persuasive messages likely to evoke envy are prevalent, particularly in the form of product advertisements inviting social comparisons to beautiful, thin, wealthy, and/or happy people. Although Salovey and Rodin (1984) investigated envy as "social comparison jealousy," determining its poten-

tial consequences to include disparagement of the target of envy (see also Salovey, 1991), its relation to attitude change remains unexplored. By acknowledging that envy may be a significant motivator of consumer behavior, studying its effects on related attitudes becomes a prime area for future research. Important issues related to the process of envy's influence would likely include target or context appropriateness of envy arousal; information processing style, perhaps mediated by perceptions of goal attainment likelihood; and unintended consequences of envy arousal, including concomitant arousal of emotions that may compete against message goals (e.g., simultaneous anger elicitation could lead to source denigration) and promotion of unhealthy attitudes (e.g., poor body image and life dissatisfaction) and undesirable behaviors (e.g., those associated with bulimia and anorexia or with criminal activity).

### Positive Emotions

*Happiness/Joy.* Although happiness is often conceptualized as a state of being akin to a mood, whereas joy is generally viewed as an emotional response to a specific occurrence, for the purposes of this chapter, the two are used synonymously to reflect the latter adaptational perspective. In this light, happiness can be seen as the state of gaining or making progress toward what one desires (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991). Although personality and cultural factors, as well as our own perceptions and thought processes, can influence the circumstances and extent to which we experience happiness, some generally accepted joy elicitors include achievement, familiar objects, and the reduction of negative affect (Izard, 1977; Tomkins, 1962). An indicator that we are secure in our world and have

positive expectations of the future, happiness generates feelings of confidence, expansiveness, and openness, and it promotes trusting and sharing behavior. Because people tend to be attracted to those who exude happiness, its adaptive function can be seen as promoting and maintaining strong social bonds (Izard, 1977; Tomkins, 1962).

Research on happiness and social influence has been based almost entirely on the conceptualization of happiness as a mood rather than as a discrete emotion. In sum, that research suggests that happy moods are associated with more simplified, heuristic, and creative processing, characterized by little attention to detail (for reviews, see Isen, 1987, 1993, and Schwarz et al., 1991; see also Mackie & Worth, 1991). However, assuming that at the heart of humor in advertising is the desire to put receivers in a happy state, that literature is certainly relevant to understanding the influence of happiness as a discrete emotion in persuasion.

Consistent with the functional view of happiness, particularly that it is associated with a preference for limited cognitive effort, the most recent review of humor in advertising suggests that humor's persuasive influence is most likely found in the context of new, low-involvement, and/or feeling-oriented products (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). Whereas these findings imply that classical conditioning is the primary mechanism underlying humor's effects, Markiewicz (1974) and Sternthal and Craig (1973) offered an alternative view, arguing that humor can induce persuasion through its distracting influence. Regardless, both possibilities suggest a lack of in-depth information processing that would lead us to conclude that humor-generated persuasion is unlikely to be stable and long-lasting. Of note, humor attempts deemed by an audience to be offensive or inappropriate may be counterproductive to persuasive goals (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). In light of these

issues, future research should investigate if and when humor/happiness results in stable and long-lasting persuasion and the effects that different types of humor might have in this pursuit.

*Pride.* Pride is characterized by an increase in perceived self-worth as a consequence of taking credit for an achievement—either one's own or that of someone with whom one identifies (Lazarus, 1991; Lewis, 1993). The notion of ascribing personal credit for achievement, rather than simply enjoying positive outcomes, is the key distinguishing characteristic between pride and happiness. Phenomenologically, pride is experienced as a feeling of expansiveness or swelling, and it promotes expressive behaviors, such as public announcement of an achievement. An inherently ego-focused yet social emotion, the acceptance of its expression, and even the likelihood of its being experienced are culturally determined. Although the expression of pride may enhance self-esteem, it may also evoke resentment in those less fortunate or less recognized.

Little studied in the social influence context, the one clearly identifiable study of pride and persuasion considered the role of culture in response to advertising, finding that members of a collectivist culture (China) responded more favorably to a pride-based appeal, whereas members of an individualist culture (the United States) responded more favorably to an empathy-based appeal (Aaker & Williams, 1998). The results, the authors believed, were mediated by the nature of collectivist versus individualist thoughts generated in response to message exposure. Although no clear connection between the functional perspective on pride and this study is apparent, one may imagine that pride might operate very similarly to happiness in limiting cognitive expenditure, although its self-focused nature might promote contemplation of the pride-inducing event. Investigating the process through which pride effects occur,



determining whether or not it differs from that of happiness, and exploring the role of culture in the use and effect of emotional appeals generally are reasonable and interesting research topics to pursue in this context.

*Relief.* As Lazarus (1991) noted, relief has received little attention as a discrete positive emotion; however, its appraisal pattern and action tendency arguably qualify it as such. According to Lazarus, relief is unique as a positive emotion in that it occurs only after a goal-incongruent condition has been resolved. Thus, its eliciting condition may be considered the alleviation of emotional distress. Relief's subjective feeling is one of release of muscle tension, and its associated action tendency is one of inaction—a slumping of the body with the release of tension and cessation of vigilance.

Given its inevitable association with negative emotions, it is unsurprising that the one research program that has directly considered the persuasive effect of relief did so in the context of a negative affect—fear. Introducing the sequential-request, compliance-gaining strategy “fear-then-relief,” Dolinski and Nawrat (1998) argued that anxiety followed by anxiety relief leads to greater compliance to an unrelated request than does fear alone because fear-then-relief promotes a temporary state of *mindlessness* or disorientation, leaving the individual momentarily vulnerable to requests. Although the compliance requests were unrelated to the cause of the fear or its relief, this research suggests that, in general, relief-based persuasion is likely a function of less careful information processing. This view is consistent with the functional emotion perspective, which suggests that relief is characterized by an interruption of attentive processing. An area ripe for research, potential topics include issues related to information processing depth, the window of opportunity associated with relief-based persuasion, and

whether the types of relief from different negative affects follow the same influence processes; the role of relief in fear appeals, particularly as related to perceptions of response efficacy; and how the promise or expectation of relief from existing negative circumstances (e.g., emotional or physical pain) can be used to motivate changes in attitudes and behaviors as compared to creating and alleviating the negative affect in a single message.

*Hope.* Lazarus (1991) acknowledged hope as a problematic emotion because it is, on its face, a positive emotion, although, like relief, it stems from negative circumstances. Hope represents a desire for a better situation than what currently exists, often when the odds are against a positive outcome (Lazarus, 1991). Hope is sustained in light of uncertain future expectations and is associated with a feeling of yearning. Although its action tendency is unclear, hope is associated with an approach response, eyes cast up as though visualizing the desired outcome. Whereas hope often helps to mitigate (but not alleviate) emotional distress, taken to the extreme, it may prevent one from striving to achieve more realistic goals.

Although the evocation of hope to influence attitudes and behaviors is not uncommon (e.g., in the context of quick weight loss programs, lottery and gambling opportunities, and political campaign messages), very little research directly addresses hope's persuasive effect. An exception is Roseman, Abelson, and Ewing (1986), who considered how those predisposed to experiencing hope, fear, pity, and anger responded to related appeals from political organizations. Consistent with the functional conceptualization of hope as a salve to negative circumstances, the authors found that hope appeals were successful only for those with self-reported predispositions to experiencing fear. Future research on hope would do well to consider the prevalence and

context of such appeals, the direction and process of such effects (likely positive and unmediated by cognitions), individual affective predispositions to such appeals, the role of hope in negative affective appeals (e.g., fear appeals), and the potential unintended negative consequences of raising false hopes.

*Compassion.* Compassion is signified by an altruistic concern for another's suffering and the desire to relieve it (Lazarus, 1991). When experiencing compassion, one feels the desire to reach out and assist those in need; however, to become too close could lead to overwhelming feelings of distress. Compassion is generally viewed as a positive emotion, although it may arise in response to unpleasant circumstances, and those who demonstrate it genuinely are often admired because they provide important sources of social support.

Although pity (i.e., feeling sorry for one who is suffering) is often used synonymously with compassion, pity contains a nuance of condescension that distinguishes it from compassion (Lazarus, 1991). Similarly, some may lump compassion with empathy; however, the latter is perhaps better conceptualized as a capacity to vicariously experience any range of emotions rather than an emotion in itself (for more on empathy, see Hoffman, 1977). Because of the virtual equivalence of compassion and pity, research on both as they relate to persuasive outcome are reviewed, and studies examining empathy operationalized as compassion are also noted (e.g., Shelton & Rogers, 1981).

As it turns out, we know very little about the effect of compassion or pity on attitude change. Roseman et al. (1986) found that only those predisposed to feel pity tended to respond favorably to pity appeals on behalf of political organizations. Although researchers have generally assumed that promoting compassionate attitudes would have a positive effect on behavioral intentions and behavior

change (Shelton & Rogers, 1981; Warden & Koballa, 1995), others suggest that such efforts can backfire, with pity unintentionally reinforcing negative or outdated stereotypes (Sinson & Stainton, 1990). Such findings emphasize the danger of unintended outcomes when eliciting compassion, which in turn suggests the need to illuminate the message features and personality characteristics that may determine the extent and direction of compassion's influence. Although the functional approach to emotion implies that compassion may be associated with more in-depth processing, exploration into the conditions under which that may be true is surely needed.

#### THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF EMOTION AND PERSUASION RESEARCH

Any reader of the preceding review likely senses the unsettled and disjointed nature of the state of the study of discrete emotions and their persuasive influence. Although there are several interesting theoretical questions that seem applicable across each emotion (e.g., emotion's effects on information processing), there are a number of more specific, unresolved issues that seem to appear haphazardly, depending on the available research to date. Interestingly, a common observable theme is that the functional view of emotion fares rather well in explaining past research findings. Thus, its value as a guide in directing future persuasion research on discrete emotions is affirmed. This final section attempts to integrate the preceding reviews, first, by presenting general theoretical processes through which the effects of discrete emotions may be understood and, second, by identifying several, more specific issues regarding discrete emotions to be tackled. Where possible, ways in which the functional view of emotion can illuminate the still darkened corners of the

otherwise well-traveled field of persuasion are noted.

### Theoretical Processes of Emotion's Persuasive Effects

A central question only recently tackled in emotion and persuasion research involves the process through which emotions have their persuasive effect. Based on the functional emotion perspective, there are three processes we might consider, all of which revolve around depth or quality of information processing.<sup>3</sup>

First, emotions may serve as *heuristics*, or cognitive rules of thumb, guiding decisions with minimal information processing or thought (Cacioppo & Petty, 1989; Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Petty, Cacioppo, & Kasmer, 1988; Petty, Cacioppo, Sedikides, & Strathman, 1988; Petty, Gleicher, & Baker, 1991). Although theoretically each discrete emotion can serve this function, current evidence allows us to state with confidence only that positive emotions (e.g., happiness, relief) or extreme emotional arousal likely promotes heuristic decision making. Specifying the conditions under which each emotion might stimulate heuristic decision making and the extent, direction, and longevity of such effects is a challenge for future investigation.

Second, emotions can stimulate *careful information processing*. Researchers true to the cognitive response tradition of persuasion argue that under conditions of moderate or high elaboration, emotions influence the direction or depth of information processing, respectively (Cacioppo & Petty, 1989; Petty, Cacioppo, & Kasmer, 1988; Petty, Cacioppo, Sedikides, & Strathman, 1988; Petty et al., 1991). By slight contrast, the Cognitive-Functional Model (CFM) of negative emotions and persuasion (Nabi, 1999), developed from a functional emotion perspective, argues

that a key role of emotion resides in its influence over level of elaboration itself, characterized by selective information processing. According to the CFM, once a message-induced discrete emotion is experienced, depth and direction of information processing is determined by the type and intensity of the emotion experienced (i.e., motivated attention) in conjunction with the expectation of whether the message content will help to satisfy the emotion-induced goal. This approach suggests that under certain conditions, discrete emotions can themselves prompt careful information processing, which is likely to promote more enduring attitude change. Exploring the conditions under which emotions, particularly positive ones, might lead to attentive processing would most certainly be a worthy pursuit for persuasion scholars.

Third, emotions may promote *selective information processing*. Nabi (1998c) argued that emotions can be conceptualized as frames or perspectives infused into messages that promote the salience of selected pieces of information over others and thus encourage different problem definitions, causal interpretations, and/or treatment recommendations (Entman, 1993). More parsimonious than the CFM, the emotions-as-frames concept is consistent with the functional emotion approach, can account for different paths of emotion's persuasive influence, and is a more message-focused view of emotion than the previously presented perspectives. Early evidence suggests some validity to the idea, although future exploration would most certainly be welcome.

### Specific Issues to Consider in the Study of Discrete Emotions and Persuasion

Apart from the broad theoretical issues related to the processes of emotions' persua-

sive influence, the preceding review either directly or indirectly raised several interesting issues that, if studied, would meaningfully advance our understanding of the roles that emotions play in the persuasion process. With an eye toward space limitations, I have selected five general areas of inquiry that I believe may prove to be theoretically and/or practically important to pursue during the coming years: (a) defining and constructing emotional appeals, (b) specifying moderators to the process of emotional influence, (c) identifying the role of discrete emotions in existing models of persuasion, (d) examining emotional flow within and across persuasive messages, and (e) considering the persuasive effects of emotion avoidance or emotion seeking versus emotional arousal.

*Defining and Constructing Emotional Appeals.* Although on the surface, issues surrounding the definition of fear appeals (or anger appeals or compassion appeals) may appear uninteresting, such inquiry is not only legitimate but in fact necessary. That is, do we define emotional appeals based on message characteristics or the emotional responses that the messages engender? If a message intended to evoke fear stimulates more anger instead, how do we classify that message? Ideally, a successful fear appeal, for example, should both contain characteristics designed to elicit fear in a target audience and evoke the desired affect. However, understanding the message characteristics—both concrete and abstract, both textual and visual—that reliably evoke particular emotions in particular audiences (and minimize unintended emotional arousal) for various topics and behaviors is essential to eliminating the conflation between the stimulus and the response and, hence, is an important topic for future research. By using functional emotion theory as a guide to message construction and mea-

suring a range of emotional responses after message exposure, we may systematize both message development and outcome classification and thus provide insight into the evocation and effects of discrete emotions. Exploring the factors that predispose receivers to respond more or less favorably to different message characteristics (e.g., personality traits, culture) would certainly enhance this intellectual pursuit.

*Specifying Moderators to Emotions' Persuasive Effects.* Earlier, I noted three broad approaches to studying the process of emotions' persuasive effects. Central to that research, although more specific, is the need to identify the relevant moderators to those processes. Evidence suggests that level of emotional arousal, target of emotional arousal, and expectation of reassurance against negative emotions (desire for enhancement is the likely equivalent for positive emotions) can influence information processing depth, and future research in these areas would be beneficial. However, at least one likely influential factor overlooked in the emotion literature is the role of prior knowledge in the predisposition to and effect of emotional arousal. Prior knowledge has already been shown to affect persuasive outcome by promoting more systematic processing (Wood & Kallgren, 1988; Wood, Kallgren, & Preisler, 1985), stronger resistance to attitude change (Wood, 1982), and greater attitude-behavior consistency (Kallgren & Wood, 1986). In the context of an emotional message, three potential outcomes of prior knowledge are worth exploring. First, information coupled with emotion may be more likely to be attended to, encoded, and more accessible to respondents, thus promoting stronger attitudes and stronger attitude-behavior relationships. Second, emotional evocation may make accessible already-held information that, in turn, may guide or bias

information processing and thus likely alter persuasive effect. Third, prior knowledge about a topic may moderate emotional arousal itself. That is, it may be more or less difficult to evoke an emotion on a more familiar topic compared to a more novel one.

In addition to prior knowledge, other receiver factors that may moderate type and degree of emotional arousal include a host of personality variables, such as self-esteem, trait affectivity (e.g., trait anxiety, reactivity, empathy), extroversion, and psychoticism. Additional potential moderators may also be identified by considering the functional purpose of each emotion and its impact on receiver response. By exploring the receiver factors that influence and interact with emotional arousal, we will be better positioned to craft targeted and effective persuasive appeals.

*Emotions and Established Models Relevant to Persuasion.* Given that the majority of theories about attitudinal and behavioral response were developed during the age of rational imperialism without consideration for the role of discrete emotion, it would serve us well to reconsider established persuasion models in light of functional emotion theories and emotional arousal. Although other candidates likely exist, three theories that stand out as targets for reassessment include cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), reactance (Brehm, 1966, 1968), and social comparison (Festinger, 1954).

At the risk of mild redundancy with Harmon-Jones (Chapter 6 in this volume), allow me to briefly point out that the aversive consequences perspective of cognitive dissonance suggests that guilt is central to that phenomenon. In essence, the forced compliance paradigm for testing cognitive dissonance induces a respondent to lie (e.g., to tell a future participant how interesting the study task is when in fact it is unequivocally boring) to deter-

mine whether behaviors inconsistent with currently held attitudes will bring attitudes in line with behaviors. From a cognitive appraisal perspective, those circumstances are indicative of guilt induction, and in fact some early studies of guilt and interpersonal compliance gaining used comparable manipulations for emotional arousal (e.g., Freedman, Wallington, & Bless, 1967). Certainly, not all cognitive dissonance involves guilt (see Harmon-Jones's chapter in this volume); however, it is intuitively obvious that guilt plays some role in the dissonance phenomenon. Yet minimal research exploring this relationship exists (see Stice, 1992).

As cognitive dissonance is related to guilt, reactance theory is linked to anger (see also Dillard & Meijnders's chapter in this volume [Chapter 16]). Reactance theory suggests that when people perceive their attitudinal freedoms to be restricted, they reassert those freedoms by clinging to their attitudes, perhaps even more strongly than before (Brehm, 1968). From an appraisal theory perspective, freedom restriction is a prime anger elicitor. Thus, it is entirely likely that the fundamental mechanism underlying reactance findings is anger arousal. In fact, the research on unintentional anger arousal discussed previously suggests that it is the sense of being manipulated by a persuasive message that underlies the negative relationship between anger and attitude change. Yet no published study to date looks specifically at anger in a reactance-arousing situation.

Finally, Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory suggests that individuals compare themselves to others for information relevant to self-evaluation. Elaborations of the theory suggest that comparisons can be made to those better off or worse off, either of which can positively or negatively influence self-concept. As mentioned previously, at least two studies have suggested that envy can be

aroused in the process of social comparison (Salovey & Rodin, 1984; Tesser & Collins, 1988). However, Tesser (1991) argued not only that emotions other than envy can be evoked in this context but also, consistent with the functional emotion approach, that those emotions may, in turn, mediate behavior. For example, one could imagine how messages inviting upward social comparison (e.g., advertising with overly optimistic images of health, happiness, and beauty) could evoke hope to improve self-evaluation, envy of what others have, or anger or sadness if those goals seem out of reach. Conversely, messages inviting downward social comparison (e.g., pleas for donations) could evoke guilt for having what others do not, compassion for those suffering, or pride or relief for helping those in need. In each case, the emotion evoked is likely to moderate attitudinal and/or behavioral response (e.g., hope and envy could motivate purchase behavior, but anger might interfere). Comparable to the development of cognitive dissonance research, determining the situational factors that would ensure that the emotion evoked prompts the desired response (e.g., purchase behavior) rather than a maladaptive one (e.g., source denigration or minimization of the comparison person's assets) is critical to this line of investigation.

*Emotional Flow.* Implicit in much of the emotion and persuasion literature is the notion that either one emotion is driving persuasive effect or multiple emotions have influence but in no particular order. Yet, as we see in the fear-then-relief technique most directly but implicitly in compassion, hope, and even the desire for the alleviation of negative affect as noted in classic fear appeal work, persuasive messages might not only evoke multiple emotions but also do so in a particular order suggestive of success. Thus, I use the term *emotional flow* to indicate not only the movement from negative to positive emotion

(or visa versa) in reaction to an unfolding persuasive message but also the flow among negative or positive emotions (Kamp & MacInnis, 1995). By determining which patterns of emotions tend to work together and in what way, and by tying these emotional evocations back to message characteristics, we can develop a more sophisticated and complete view of the process of emotions' influence in persuasion. Relatedly, the notion of emotional flow can extend across messages throughout a campaign and thus prove useful to those engaged in ongoing persuasive efforts. That is, perhaps shifts in emotional appeals *across* messages over time can offer the type of issue reframing necessary to overcome resistance that might be incurred by (a) overexposure to a topic generally as well as to specific messages and (b) changes in an audience's topic-relevant knowledge base.

*Emotion Avoidance and Emotion Seeking.*

We have spent much time and effort exploring how to arouse discrete emotions and to what effect. But perhaps just as important is how to use the desire to *avoid* experiencing unpleasant emotions or the desire to experience positive emotions to promote attitude and behavior change. This potential avenue for research recognizes our propensity to experience emotions in certain situations, based either on the issue or on the type of behavior suggested. For example, many of us experience a little guilt when watching stories about those less fortunate than ourselves. However, rather than emphasizing our guilt to encourage donation behavior, perhaps a successful approach would be to tacitly acknowledge the propensity to feel guilt and offer the solution (e.g., donate to the Red Cross) to help one not only avoid future guilt but also enhance self-esteem. This approach is not so different from traditional emotional appeals. However, rather than evoking emotions, it acknowledges and takes advantage of our emotional predispositions

and thus may assist in minimizing reactance or defensive avoidance responses.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to outline the state of the literature regarding discrete emotions and persuasion and, relying heavily on the functional perspective of emotion, to identify potentially fruitful directions for future research. A critical reader, however, may be left with a fundamentally important question: Why do discrete emotions matter? If disgust, fear, anger, and joy each can positively influence attitudes, why does it matter which one is evoked? In response, let me offer several possibilities. First, the ability to accurately capture the process through which effects occur is a fundamental goal of scholarly inquiry. Second, if attitudes are formed through processes driven by specific emotional evocation, it is possible that those attitudes may be vulnerable, or conversely resistant, to attacks based on other emotions (e.g., Edwards, 1990; Millar & Millar, 1990). Third, if some emotions are, as it has been argued, better suited for promoting certain types of behaviors than others, it would certainly matter if one emotion were evoked over another in those contexts. Finally, as campaigns mature and the effect of one type of appeal begins to fade, the introduction of another type of emotional appeal may help draw new attention to the issue at hand. Although the different emotions may have generally similar effects in that context, the emotional shift may result in increasing persuasive success rather than declining campaign interest.

With half a century of persuasion research behind us, we have seen an overwhelming focus on rational approaches to attitude change, making the recent growing interest in emotional appeals as welcome as it is overdue. Assuming that this interest persists into the

new century, as well it should given the prevalence of emotional appeals in our personal, professional, and "consumer" lives, our field will be well poised to make great progress toward illuminating the influence of discrete emotions in the persuasion process.

## NOTES

1. Not all emotion theorists believe in the concept of discrete emotions (Buck, 1985; Russell, 1980, 1983; Spencer, 1890; Watson & Tellegen, 1985; Weiner, 1985; Wundt, 1897/1902), and not all of those who endorse the concept agree as to which set of emotions should be considered primary or basic (e.g., Arnold, 1960; Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987; Panksepp, 1982; Plutchik, 1980a; Tomkins, 1962, 1963). For example, whereas some theorists do not consider guilt to be a primary emotion (e.g., Plutchik, 1980a) and others do not consider guilt to be an emotion at all (see Ortony, 1987), its status as a uniquely human emotion is recognized by many others.

2. Bodenhausen, Sheppard, and Kramer (1994) suggested that angry moods promote a heuristic processing strategy "regardless of whether the task requiring a response is related to the source of the anger or irrelevant to it" (p. 59). However, logical assessment of their arguments and data suggest that, in fact, anger likely promotes quickened but careful information processing, an outcome proposed and found by Nabi (1998a, 1999) under conditions of low issue familiarity.

3. Not included in these three processes is classical conditioning because, given its more automatic nature, its fit with the more deliberative nature of the functional view of emotion is questionable.

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