



## For Immediate Release

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### **Emotions Influence Support for Reconstruction Efforts in Post-war Iraq**

*Guilt, Anger may Motivate Support for Aid to Iraqis*

**Los Angeles – May 25, 2007** - Emotions felt by Americans over the military actions in Iraq, including empathy, guilt and anger, shape their attitudes for specific political actions that the United States can take to assist Iraqi citizens affected by the Second Gulf War.

In a study recently published in *Political Psychology*, psychologists Sabrina Pagano and Yuen Huo of the University of California, Los Angeles found that Americans' emotional responses are a key factor shaping support for different approaches the United States can take to help Iraqis recover from the events of the war. The survey of 393 UCLA students was conducted shortly before the first anniversary of military action in Iraq. Empathy for the Iraqi people, an emotion that typically is associated with a desire to help others, predicted support for a range of political actions aiding in the reconstruction effort, but was particularly important in generating support for humanitarian assistance, such as providing food and medical aid.

More surprisingly, guilt and anger—traditionally considered destructive emotions—also can motivate support for assistance toward victims. Those who experienced guilt over the U.S. military's actions in Iraq were most likely to support efforts to repair damages inflicted by American troops, such as rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure. In contrast, those who experienced anger towards former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein were most likely to support changes in the political system that would prevent future political abuses in Iraq.

“As the United States moves toward withdrawal from Iraq, important decisions will be made that determine which specific actions will be taken to ensure effective reconstruction,” say the authors. “The present research suggests that the emotional experience of U.S. citizens may determine what level and kind of support Americans are likely to endorse.”

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**This study is published in the journal *Political Psychology*. Media wishing to receive a PDF of this article may contact [journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net](mailto:journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net).**

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Yuen J. Huo is an associate professor of psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research has been recognized by the Otto Klineberg Intercultural and International Relations Award, and she sits on the Board of Directors for the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. She can be contacted at [huo@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:huo@psych.ucla.edu)

## *Political Psychology*

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