

Elisabeth Vanderheiden  
Claude-Hélène Mayer *Editors*

# The Value of Shame

Exploring a Health Resource in Cultural  
Contexts

 Springer

# The Value of Shame

Elisabeth Vanderheiden · Claude-Hélène Mayer  
Editors

# The Value of Shame

Exploring a Health Resource in Cultural  
Contexts

 Springer

*Editors*

Elisabeth Vanderheiden  
Katholische Erwachsenenbildung  
Mainz  
Germany

Claude-Hélène Mayer  
Institut für therapeutische Kommunikation  
und Sprachgebrauch  
European University Viadrina  
Frankfurt (Oder)  
Germany

and

Department of Management  
Rhodes University  
Grahamstown  
South Africa

ISBN 978-3-319-53099-4

ISBN 978-3-319-53100-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-53100-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017930139

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature  
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Foreword

## A Cultural Perspective on Shame

In times when books promise their readers that they can overcome shame once and for all (Allyn 2004; Nelson 2016) and when shame has all but disappeared from (American) public discourse (Cohen 2003), it is time to stop and reconsider if we may have thrown the baby out with the bath water. Why is shame feared and dismissed in some parts of the world? How do other parts of the world feel about shame? Is it even justified to speak of one shame or are people actually engaging in many “shames”? And have potential benefits of shame for both individual and social well-being been overlooked?

At their core, shameful feelings involve a negative evaluation of the self and signal outcomes that are incongruent with identity goals (Mascolo and Fischer 1995; Tangney 1991; Tracy and Robins 2008). Shame acknowledges the importance of other people’s norms and expectations, highlights a person’s own shortcomings in meeting these norms and expectations, and communicates the willingness to live up to them in the future. Experiencing shame means to experience oneself at odds with the larger social context—by doing so, shame may motivate people to align themselves and thus remain connected to others. But there is clearly room for ambivalence when thinking about shame: To the extent that shame is helpful for social coherence, it also constitutes a means of social control. Where there is opportunity for self-awareness and reflection, rumination and self-deprecation are lurking in the dark. So, when it comes to shame, are we talking about a moral compass or a moral cage?

The way people have answered this question appears to depend to a large extent on the ideas they have about themselves and the kinds of relationships they strive for. Although emotions often feel personal and idiosyncratic, they are deeply intertwined with cultural meanings (Mesquita et al. 2016; Shweder 2003). Take the following example from a North American (Christian) self-help book about healing shame: “Shame has two conflicting instincts. It needs to isolate and hide, and it needs a community in which to be transparent. Hiding, of course, usually wins. It is the easier and more natural of the two” (Nelson 2016, p. 11). In contemporary

(White, middle class) North American contexts, people highly value independence and personal autonomy, freedom from other's judgment, and positive self-regard (Heine et al. 1999; Kim et al. 2010; Markus and Kitayama 1994). Shame undermines these values: A self that should be unaffected by social judgment and feel good about itself becomes the object of social scrutiny; a self that aims for autonomy in relationships is confronted with the painful consequences of not living up to social expectations. It may seem only logical that hiding from the unpleasant consequences of shame is the "natural" response in this context; this is even evident in the meanings that shame has taken on in American English (Boiger et al. 2013a).

Shame can have very different moral connotations in places where people's ideas about self and others differ from those of the USA. In contexts where cultural mandates underline social connection, interdependence, and mutual adjustment, shame is a condoned experience—be it in terms of a Belgian pursuit of egalitarianism, a Japanese concern with keeping face or a Turkish focus on protecting honor (Boiger et al. 2013a, b, 2014). Shame is promoted in these cultures through the daily ecology of interpersonal interactions but also through cultural products, such as the books parents read to their children (Boiger et al. 2013a). In these contexts, shame is seen as a valuable means of self-improvement for the benefit of keeping relationships smooth and harmonious. For example, Japanese do not show signs of what has been coined "humiliated fury" in interpersonal situations—an experience found in US Americans who transform the (unbearable) experience of shame into anger (Kirchner et al. 2016). In the Japanese context, shame is neither unbearable nor does it need transforming. It is then not surprising that, in Japan, shameful experiences connect people with the concerns of others, whereas they are primarily appraised as a threat to self-esteem in the USA (Boiger et al. 2013b, 2016).

A cultural perspective is thus helpful in understanding how past and present ideas about shame emerge from culturally shared meaning systems, practices, and values. At the same time, a cultural perspective can also limit one's perspective to the world as it has been or is right now. This is where the present book takes an imaginative and daring step forward: The authors not only describe the different ways shame *is* experienced and judged across cultural contexts but also explore the role shame *could* play as a universal health resource in today's world. In doing so, the essays in this book fill an important gap between anthropological, sociological, and cultural psychological accounts of diversity in shame and the pathologizing discourse on shame as an (unnecessary) evil. In a unique collection that reaches from overarching theory and local accounts on people's "shames" to practical guidelines for working with shame in constructive ways, this book proposes new ways of thinking about the question if shame is a compass or a cage. Starting from a positive psychology perspective, the contributors to this volume show how shame can constitute a resource for both personal and social development: When appropriately acknowledged and not only dismissed as a threat to feeling good about oneself, shame can reveal one's moral cages and, at the same time, be a guide to navigate them.

## References

- Allyn, D. (2004). *I can't believe I just did that: How embarrassment can wreak havoc in your life—And what you can do to conquer it*. New York, NY: Tarcher.
- Boiger, M., De Deyne, S., & Mesquita, B. (2013a). Emotions in “the world”: Cultural practices, products, and meanings of anger and shame in two individualist cultures. *Frontiers in Psychology, 4*, 1–14.
- Boiger, M., Güngör, D., Karasawa, M., & Mesquita, B. (2014). Defending honour, keeping face: Interpersonal affordances of anger and shame in Turkey and Japan. *Cognition & Emotion, 28*, 1255–1269.
- Boiger, M., Mesquita, B., Uchida, Y., & Barrett, L. F. (2013b). Condoned or condemned: The situational affordance of anger and shame in the United States and Japan. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 39*, 540–553.
- Boiger, M., Uchida, Y., Norasakkunkit, V., & Mesquita, B. (2016). Protecting autonomy, protecting relatedness: Appraisal patterns of daily anger and shame in the United States and Japan. *Japanese Psychological Research, 58*, 28–41.
- Cohen, D. (2003). The American national conversation about (everything but) shame. *Social Research: An International Quarterly, 70*, 1075–1108.
- Heine, S. J., Lehman, D. R., Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1999). Is there a universal need for positive self-regard? *Psychological Review, 106*, 766–794.
- Kim, Y.-H., Cohen, D., & Au, W.-T. (2010). The jury and abjurer of my peers: The self in face and dignity cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*, 904–916.
- Kirchner, A., Boiger, M., Uchida, Y., Norasakkunkit, V., Verduyn, P., & Mesquita, B. (2016). Humiliated fury is not universal: The co-occurrence of anger and shame in the U.S. and Japan. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1994). The cultural construction of self and emotion: Implications for social behavior. In S. Kitayama & H. R. Markus (Eds.), *Emotion and culture: Empirical studies of mutual influence* (pp. 89–130). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Mascolo, M. F., & Fischer, K. W. (1995). Developmental transformations in appraisals for pride, shame, and guilt. In J. P. Tangney & K. W. Fischer (Eds.), *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride* (pp. 64–113). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Mesquita, B., Boiger, M., & De Leersnyder, J. (2016). The cultural construction of emotions. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 8*, 31–36.
- Nelson, H. D. (2016). *Unshamed: Healing our brokenness and finding freedom from shame*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Shweder, R. (2003). Toward a deep cultural psychology of shame. *Social Research, 70*, 1109–1130.
- Tangney, J. P. (1991). Moral affect: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 598–607.
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2008). The automaticity of emotion recognition. *Emotion, 8*, 81–95.

**Michael Boiger** is a faculty of psychology and educational sciences, University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium. Preparation of this manuscript was supported by a postdoctoral research fellowship from the Research Foundation—Flanders (FWO) to Michael Boiger

# **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the authors for their valuable contributions and their efforts to move the work on culture and health from a positive psychology perspective forward.



# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>An Introduction to the Value of Shame—Exploring a Health Resource in Cultural Contexts</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
	Elisabeth Vanderheiden and Claude-Hélène Mayer	
<b>Part I Theoretical Perspectives on Shame and Culture</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Shame! A System Psychodynamic Perspective</b> . . . . .	<b>43</b>
	Michelle May	
<b>3</b>	<b>Shame as a Functional and Adaptive Emotion: A Biopsychosocial Perspective</b> . . . . .	<b>61</b>
	Markus van Alphen	
<b>4</b>	<b>The Positive Function of Shame: Moral and Spiritual Perspectives</b> . . . . .	<b>87</b>
	Thomas Ryan	
<b>Part II Culture-Specific Perspectives on Shame</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b><i>lajjA</i> in Indian Psychology: Spiritual, Social, and Literary Perspectives</b> . . . . .	<b>109</b>
	Dharm P.S. Bhawuk	
<b>6</b>	<b>“Dream on—There is no Salvation!”: Transforming Shame in the South African Workplace Through Personal and Organisational Strategies</b> . . . . .	<b>135</b>
	Claude-Hélène Mayer and Louise Tonelli	
<b>7</b>	<b>Canada/North America: Shame Between Indigenous Nature-Connectedness, Colonialism and Cultural Disconnection</b> . . . . .	<b>157</b>
	Barbara Buch	

**8 Indigenous Australians: Shame and Respect** . . . . . 187  
Sharon Louth

**9 Shame and Resilience: A New Zealand Based Exploration  
of Resilient Responses to Shame** . . . . . 201  
Samantha Brennan, Neville Robertson and Cate Curtis

**10 From Shame to Guilt: The Remediation of Bullying Across  
Cultures and the US** . . . . . 223  
Rebecca S. Merkin

**Part III The Application of Shame and Culture in Therapeutic  
and Counseling Practices**

**11 Shame and Psychotherapy: Theory, Method and Practice** . . . . . 251  
Mrigaya Sinha

**12 Shame—“A Soul Feeding Emotion”: Archetypal Work  
and the Transformation of the Shadow of Shame  
in a Group Development Process** . . . . . 277  
Claude-Hélène Mayer

# Editors and Contributors

## About the Editors

**Elisabeth Vanderheiden** is a pedagogue, theologian, intercultural mediator, managing director of the Catholic Adult Education Rhineland-Palatinate, and the federal chairman of the Catholic Adult Education Germany. She has published articles in the context of vocational qualifications, in particular qualification of teachers and trainers, as well as current topics of general, vocational, and civic education, and intercultural opening processes.

**Claude-Hélène Mayer** is a Senior research Associate at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. She holds a Ph.D. in psychology (University of Pretoria, South Africa), a Ph.D. in management (Rhodes University, South Africa), a doctorate (Georg-August University, Germany) in political sciences (sociocultural anthropology), and a habilitation (European University Viadrina, Germany) in psychology with focus on work, organizational, and cultural psychology. She has published several monographs, text collections, accredited journal articles, and special issues on transcultural mental health, sense of coherence and well-being, transcultural conflict management and mediation, women in leadership in culturally diverse work contexts, constellation work, coaching, and psychobiography.

## Contributors

**Dharm P.S. Bhawuk** (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), is a professor of Management and Culture and Community Psychology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He brings with him the experience of living and growing in a developing economy, Nepal. He started his intercultural journey with a month at international children's camp in Artek, USSR, in 1972. His interdisciplinary training includes a Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech., Honors) from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, in mechanical engineering, a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Hawaii at Manoa with a Fellowship from the East-West Center, where he did research with Prof. Richard W. Brislin in the area of intercultural training, and a Ph.D. in industrial relations with specialization in human resource management and cross-cultural psychology under the guidance of Prof. Harry C. Triandis at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Samantha Brennan** (Ph.D., B.Sc.(Hons I), B.Sc.) is an American immigrant, who has lived in New Zealand for the past 12 years. Noticing the effects of shame to be powerful and potentially damaging, Samantha set about the journey of researching shame and resilience. This research ultimately formed the basis for her Ph.D. thesis, the results of which have been presented at conferences across New Zealand and Australia. Samantha now works as an intern psychologist at Shine (Safer Homes in New Zealand Everyday, Inc.) applying her research to work with domestic violence victims and offenders.

**Barbara Buch** holds a master's degree in health education (Faculty of Psychology, University Flensburg, Germany) and a master's degree in biology (Georg-August-University Göttingen, Germany). She offers workshops and courses in health-related subjects. Prior to her dedication to health promotion, she worked for years as a biologist primarily in nature conservation. She lives with her family on a Canadian wilderness farm and focuses on further research about health, nature, and traditional ways. E-mail: [barbara@salutogenesis-shamanism.com](mailto:barbara@salutogenesis-shamanism.com), Homepage: [www.salutogenesis-shamanism.com](http://www.salutogenesis-shamanism.com)

**Cate Curtis** (Ph.D., BSocSc(Hons I), BA) was born in New Zealand to Dutch immigrants. She is a senior lecturer in psychology at the University of Waikato, where she teaches social psychology. Building on previous work in the social service sector, Cate's research interests are broadly in the area of youth and women's well-being. She has published on suicidal behavior, non-suicidal self-injury, sexual abuse, antisocial behavior, and forensic use of DNA and research methods. She is currently researching constructions of risk and resilience in young women.

**Sharon Louth** graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Human Movement Studies Education and has spent over 20 years teaching health and physical education in secondary schools and colleges, both in Australia and the UK. She gained a master's degree in work-based learning from the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) and a Ph.D. from USQ which focused on embedding Indigenous perspectives, encouraging physical activity and well-being, enabling cooperation and collaboration, and enhancing self-efficacy, in children and their teachers. Increasing educational outcomes for children in schools by formulating education intervention programs to assist teachers to break down sociodemographic barriers to success such as race and gender is both a strength and a passion of mine. She has won the annual VC's Community Engagement Award at USQ in 2011 and 2012 for her work with the Indigenous and low socioeconomic communities within the Fraser Coast District. Future directions for her research involve in the creation of teaching strategies which support both teachers and learners, both face to face and online, to aspire to and achieve improved educational outcomes.

**Prof. Dr. Michelle May** (D Litt Et Phil, University of South Africa) is a professor at the Department of Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). She is a registered clinical psychologist. Michelle received extensive training in the field of group consultation, under which from ISLA and the Tavistock Institute (UK), and has also consulted in various programs of this nature—nationally and internationally. She has been part of the team who has designed and planned the Robben Island diversity experience (RIDE) and has been taken up the role of director, director of the training group, and associate director from 2000 until 2014. She has also been part of the Group Relations workshops at UNISA since 2000. For the last 10 years, Michelle have also contributed to the field of diversity management in South Africa as lecturer, researcher, and consultant in several organizations—her contributions have included publications in accredited journals, book chapters, as well as presentations at national and international conferences. She has chaired, consulted in, and designed many workshops in the areas of diversity management and leadership development for organizations in the public and private sectors.

**Rebecca S. Merkin** (Ph.D., Kent State University) conducts research focused on communication in organizations; intercultural communication; sexual harassment in the workplace; job satisfaction; and social interaction processes such as impression management, identity, and facework communication. She has published articles in numerous journals including the *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, *International Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, and *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. Professor Merkin has also given presentations on communication at conferences of the Academy of Management, Eastern Communication Association, National Communication Association, International Communication Association, and the International Academy of Intercultural Research.

**Neville Robertson** (Ph.D., MSocSc, BA, DipPsych(Com)) is a Pākehā of Scottish descent. He is a senior lecturer in Psychology at the University of Waikato where he is co-convenor of the graduate program in community psychology. Much of Neville’s research and professional work focuses on family violence. For many years, he has facilitated stopping violence programmes, he has served on various local and national family violence committees and conducted workshops and seminars, and he has an extensive portfolio of family violence-related research, particularly studies of institutional responses to men’s violence against women and children. Other aspects of Neville’s work include anti-racism and Treaty of Waitangi education and the evaluation of health and social service programmes. Neville is a registered community psychologist.

**Thomas Ryan** is a Marist Catholic priest who lives in Brisbane, Australia. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the Australian Catholic University and an adjunct associate professor of the School of Philosophy and Theology of the University of Notre Dame Australia. Apart from chapters in books, he has had numerous articles published in theological journals both national and international.

**Mrigaya Sinha** has received Ph.D. and M.Phil. in clinical psychology from NIMHANS which is recognized as an institute of national importance by the Government of India for its contributions to mental health treatment, training, and research. She has been working with individuals and couples for the past 12 yrs helping them enhance their mental health through counseling and therapy. Her research interests have been diverse ranging from exploring various dimensions of shyness in college students in India to discovering psychosocial issues in women undergoing infertility treatment. She has taught and trained postgraduates in psychology and is deeply passionate about training and capacity building of mental health workers. More recently, she has been engaged in advancing telemental health and expanding the reach of mental health services to remote areas, especially in the Indian subcontinent. After her recent move to the USA, she joined the Staunton Clinic in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as a postdoctoral intern as is working toward her licensure as an independent clinical psychologist. Contact: mrigayasinha@gmail.com

**Louise Tonelli** is an industrial and organizational psychologist and lecturer within the Department of Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the University of South Africa (UNISA) one of the largest distance education institutions in the world. As a member of the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology of South Africa's (SIOPSA) Interest Group in Systems Psychodynamics of Organizations (IGSPO), her research interests lie in the unconscious/conscious processes within individuals, organizations, and society as a whole.

**Markus van Alphen** was born 1960 in Pretoria, South Africa. He received his school education in Pretoria and later moved to Cape Town, where he received his degree in electrical and electronic engineering at the University of Cape Town and studied two years toward a commerce degree. He worked several years as a consulting electrical engineer and partner of a firm of consulting engineers before moving to the Netherlands. His focus shifted to software development and from there toward the human component, leading him to complete a master's degree in clinical psychology at the University of Amsterdam.

He currently lives in Slovenia and works as a worldwide therapist for individuals, couples, and families using webcam technology. He is a trainer, lecturer, and curriculum developer for undergraduate and postgraduate psychology and counseling students at various colleges and universities in the Netherlands. He writes educational books in the field of psychology for the Dutch publisher Boom and is

also a contributing author for various textbooks. As a restorative practitioner, he works both hands-on, being called in to resolve incidents and to lead the process of conflict resolution, as well as training others to implement the restorative approach. As a researcher, he is currently associated with the Open Universiteit in Heerlen as a Ph.D. candidate, where he is researching the development of empathy at various stages of education in the field of clinical psychology.

# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to the Value of Shame—Exploring a Health Resource in Cultural Contexts

Elisabeth Vanderheiden and Claude-Hélène Mayer

### 1.1 Introduction

Scientists from various theoretical and disciplinary stances have described, researched, studied and commented on the phenomenon of shame from various perspectives, e.g. from the perspectives of psychology, social sciences, clinical sociology, neurosciences and other disciplines (Andrieux 2012, 4). According to an overview by Werden (2015, 14–15), detailed research in the various scientific disciplines typically explore shame and its implications with reference to psychoanalysis (Freud 1961/1933; Hilgers 2013; Wurmser 2010), sociology (Elias 1976; Scheff and Retzinger 1997; Marks 2010, 2011), psychology (Lewis 1971a, b, 1992, 2011; Tangney and Fischer 1995; Tangney and Dearing 2002), philosophy (Deonna et al. 2012; Landweer 1999), ethnology (Lotter 2012), anthropology (Lietzmann 2007), and neuroscience (Highfield et al. 2009; Mendez 2009).

Within these various disciplines, both quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted, and statistical measures for shame, such as the Internalized Shame Scale, ISS which is based on the trait–approach, have been developed. This means that it is a measure of shame-proneness or internalised shame, rather than of the effect of shame, as described in the ISS Technical Manual. The Compass of Shame Scale, CoSS measures the use of the four shame-coping styles, namely Attack Self, Withdrawal, Attack Other, and Avoidance (Harper 2011, 5). Other scales include,

---

E. Vanderheiden (✉)  
Rietburgstrasse 19a, 67354 Römerberg, Germany  
e-mail: ev@keb-rheinland-pfalz.de

C.-H. Mayer  
Institut für Therapeutische Kommunikation und Sprachgebrauch,  
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany  
e-mail: claudemayer@gmx.net

C.-H. Mayer  
Department of Management, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa



for example, the Adapted Shame and Guilt Scale, ASGS, which consists of series of adjectival expressions that are considered to be typical shame and guilt words, and the Self-Conscious Affect and Attribution Inventory, SCAAI, which presents a series of scenarios, some of which are negative and some which are positive. The difference between the SCAAI and the ASGS is that the scenarios for the SCAAI were generated by participants across different research studies, while the ASGS was not (Harper 2011, 7). Obviously, most of these quantitative measures have been developed in Western contexts, and several of them reproduced the shame-guilt paradigm that has been promoted in the context of cultural research on shame over the past decades since Benedict (1946) (see Bhawuk, Sinha, Louth, Brennan, Robertson and Curtis as well as Mayer in this book).

Qualitative research on shame has also been conducted, exploring emic perspectives and the reasons for shame. However, Wong and Tsai (2007), argue that most of the research is still Western-based and does not seem to view shame from the viewpoint of emic and culture-specific perspectives. Mason, as well as Mayer et al. (2017, in print) stress that in the past, shame has often been overlooked in cultural research, or has only been explored somewhat superficially. Accordingly, shame needs to be understood in the context of the embedding cultural framework, with regard to its impact on social ranks, and in terms of identity goals. Besides the often dominant Western discourse on shame, albeit in the context of anthropological and cultural research, Westermann emphasises the need for a more in-depth approach in culture-specific research on shame. The importance of studying shame in relation to culture is likewise argued for by Casmir and Schnegg (2002).

This book contains various chapters with theoretical discourses (May, van Alphen and Ryan), culture-specific insights based on a literature review and analysis, empirical quantitative and qualitative studies (Bhawuk, Mayer and Ley, Buch, Louth, Brennan, Robertson and Curtis and Merkin), and practical applications in therapy and counselling (Sinha, van Alphen and Mayer). All of these perspectives contribute to the overall aim of the book as described in the following section.

### ***1.1.1 Objectives***

The aim of this book is to synthesise empirical research-based and theoretical perspectives on shame in various cultural contexts and from socio-cultural different perspectives, to provide new insights and a more comprehensive cultural base for contemporary research and practice in the context of shame. It therefore recommends viewing shame, not only as an intimate and negatively experienced emotion (Brown 2008, 2012; Freud 1961/1933; Tangney and Dearing 2002), but rather, to

explore it from the perspective of positive psychology, thus emphasising the positive potential of shame in selected contexts, such as those described in Wurmser (2010), Deonna Rodogno and Teroni (2012) or Hilgers (2013). Thus, shame is not limited to its challenging aspects and negative short- and long-term implications, but is explored with regard to its positive impact as a potential health resource.

The aim of this introductory chapter is to define shame, culture and positive psychology, and to explore the interrelationships holding between these topics and disciplines with regard to shame. An in-depth discussion of shame as a potential health resource in different contexts, is provided. This book will present the reader with theoretical perspectives of shame and culture, as well as culture-specific perceptions of shame, and includes chapters on the application of shame and culture in therapeutic and counseling practices. Throughout the various chapters, shame is presented as a culturally embedded concept and as a resource which can support the personal and collective growth of individuals and cultural groups, thereby creating mental health and well-being.

Traditionally, shame has been the subject of research primarily in the fields of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (Freud 1961/1933). The first attempts to create an understanding of shame as a resource, were undertaken in the field of psychology, as described in Wurmser (2010). In this book, the theoretical considerations will focus on the psychological (see Sinha in this book) and psycho-social dynamics perspectives respectively (c.f. May in this book). The theoretical perspectives will be followed by observations from selected cultural and national domains, such as South Africa, India, New Zealand, Australia, and Northern America. Additionally, we will explore the application of shame and culture in therapeutical and counselling practices.

### ***1.1.2 The Positive Psychology Framework***

Emotions have significant meaning in the life of an individual as well as in collective groups (Lewis 1992, 2011). Emotions are strongly connected to an individual's health and well-being. Additionally, health and functional capacity, in terms of an individual's physical, mental and social abilities, form the basis of the quality of life and the ability of the individual to function optimally within a particular socio-cultural context. Health depends on individual perceptions, including the emotions, as well as on the capacity to deal with health challenges and stress. Thus, health is not only a physical phenomenon, but is a vital social and individual construct within a particular socio-cultural context. It is inter-related with "the subjective well-being and the health-oriented behaviour of a person" (Bengel et al. 2001, 15), and is regarded as a protective factor against trauma reactions.

Shame has been identified as a very complex and powerful emotion and has been researched from various standpoints and within the context of different health-related paradigms. In this book, it is argued that, in order to use shame in a

healthy and development-oriented way that will contribute towards a healthy self-image, a paradigm shift is needed in the research of this emotion. This argument is based on the notion that, over the past several years, health research has undergone major paradigm shifts, and health itself has been (re-)defined as a “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely [as] the absence of disease or infirmity”. Since this definition also includes the physical and psychological dimensions of health, the importance of emotions as (cognitive) psychological constructs, need to be considered as health-relevant concepts. Although, in Western medical discourses in particular, health is often still viewed purely from the physical health perspective, this book focuses on one specific emotion, i.e. shame, as an important psychological factor and potential health resource which, in the past, has often been neglected, ignored or avoided in the context of health sciences.

Scientific approaches to exploring health and well-being relate to different health paradigms, such as the biomedical, the salutogenic and the fortigenic paradigms, all of which form part of the broader framework of positive psychology. These three paradigms will be referred to in the following sections, and we will explain why a shift in paradigms is needed in research on, and in terms of the work being done with regard to shame. In the context of creating healthy lives, various risk and social factors have long been identified and include, for example, areas such as culture, education, nutrition, health behaviour and emotions. The individual’s health and the health of the community, depend on the collective ability to manage these health factors, including the individual’s personal lifestyle.

The biomedical paradigm is usually referred to as a traditional concept in health research and practice, which, in turn, is based on the concept of pathogenesis, which focuses primarily on the origins of illness and disease (e.g. Wells and Ashizawa 2006). Within the biomedical paradigm, terms such as disease, disorder, morbidity and illness are commonly used to define abnormal, and often negatively-judged health conditions, but based purely on physical dysfunctions that are usually associated with specific malfunctioning symptoms. Disease is therefore assumed to be caused exclusively by deviations from the norm in terms of physical, or even psychological, dysfunctions.

In the past, medical, as well as social and behavioural sciences, have studied health by focusing on pathologies, i.e. on health issues with regard to unhappiness, dissatisfaction, distress and illness (Nelson and Simmons 2003; for further discussion see Sinha, in this book). Traditionally, shame has been studied mainly from a pathological and biomedical research paradigm. This model, however, no longer offers an adequate approach for the study of shame in the context of health or the promotion of health.

Over the past few decades, however, the positive psychology framework has become a growing field of interest in health-related research (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000), including theoretical approaches such as salutogenesis, which is defined as the study of the development and maintenance of health

(Antonovsky 1979, 1987), and fortigenesis, defined as the study of strength and positive health.

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), and Sheldon and King (2001), positive psychology is the scientific study of ordinary, positive, subjective human strengths, virtues, experiences and functions. It emphasises the change from a function of healing to a function of building “positive qualities” (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000, 5). This change in perspective in the health sciences has resulted in an increased interest in both the measurement and the improvement of health.

Shame, as an intimate, often negatively experienced emotion, is seldom related to health concepts which are based on the positive psychology framework. Only in recent research and practice has the focus shifted to include this particular perspective. This shift from viewing shame merely as a construct of the pathogenic and biomedical paradigms, to viewing it within framework of positive psychology, will be described in the following section.

### ***1.1.3 From a Pathological to a Health-Related Concept of Shame***

From various interdisciplinary and cultural perspectives, shame has often been associated with psychopathology and psychopathological concepts (Gilbert et al. 2004; Jaffe et al. 2014). Thus, it has frequently been associated with concepts such as addiction (O’Connor et al. 1994), narcissism (Morrison 1989), depression (Andrews et al. 2002), neurosis (Lewis 1971a, b), external or social anxiety (Li et al. 2003) or other immune-related problems (Mills 2005). Moreover, research (Qian et al. 2001) has shown that shame is associated with emotions of intense self-denial, a dependence on external appraisal, feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness, and has resulted in behaviours such as concealing deficiencies and resorting to escape-mechanisms in difficult situations.

In the literature, shame has been reported as being a type of negative emotion, frequently accompanied by negative introspection and self-evaluation (Qian et al. 2001). Proneness to shame is seen as playing an important role in psychopathology (Lewis 1971a, b), as well as in physical health, and various meta-analytical studies have been undertaken on shame and depressive symptoms. Shame has also been classified as an affective component of subjective well-being with negative affect.

From a psychopathological perspective, individuals often resort to different kinds of behaviour in response to shame, such as hypersexual behaviour, eating disorders, withdrawing in relationships, and even attacking others or self (Hilgers 2013; Wurmser 2010).

A study by Mosquera et al. (1995) indicated that the experience of shame led to verbal disapproval of the wrongdoer’s behaviour in honour-oriented participants,

and to withdrawal among non-honour-oriented participants, in order to protect the social image.

According to Scheff (2013), shame is also connected to feelings of rejection, and research on shame often highlights topics such as fear of rejection, disrespect, stigma, honour cultures, and revenge, due to the fact that shame is a taboo topic in many cultures.

Shame is constitutive and has been described as “*the crippling burden of a thousand pitiless eyes*” (Wurmser 2015, 165). Additionally, shame, as an emotion, leads to questioning of the self within the context of self and others. According to Tracy and Robins (2004), shame is described as an important intimate emotion that involves the negative evaluation of the self in the context of others. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Wurmser (2015) identifies two relevant aspects of shame. He highlights the following with regard to both of these points:

Shame is, first, the fear of disgrace. It is the anxiety one has in fearing to be looked at with contempt for having dishonored oneself — a danger looming: “I am afraid that exposure is imminent and hence terrible humiliation”. Second, it is the feeling one has when one is looked at with scorn — the feared event having happened. In its second form, it is the affect of contempt directed against the self — by others or by one’s own conscience (Wurmser 2015, 6).

From this perspective, shame is viewed in the context of dishonour, fear and contempt for an individual by the collective conscience. However, in conjunction with shame being viewed in the context of fear and other negatively-judged concepts, shame also appears to include a protecting element, which is a common human trait. Thus shame may also be seen in the context of respect, as described in the following excerpt:

Third, shame is almost the antithesis of the second concept, as in: “Don’t you know any shame?” It is an overall character trait preventing disgraceful exposure, a shield of humanity and civility. It is an attitude of respect toward others and toward oneself, a stance of reverence ... This third form of shame as attitude, as reaction formation, can be viewed as a much more general protection mechanism against broad-based wishes for expression and perception, thus guarding the privacy and intimacy of the self. Therefore, being treated with contempt for one’s identity, for one’s needs, will, and judgment, is profoundly shaming (Wurmser 2015, 7).

With regard to this third notion of shame, it may be viewed as a protecting attitude, guarding the privacy and intimacy of the self, thereby balancing the expression and perception of wishes. In this way, shame acts as a boundary marker, as an identity-defining concept (Mascolo and Fischer 1985) which predominantly relates to the self, but is embedded in the surrounding cultural framework and social ranks (Clark and Nichols 2016).

From a clinical, organisational and counselling perspective, Andrieux (2012), highlights the challenging aspects of shame, and anchors the concept within “the self” and “the other”, due to the fact that the individual is considered as inadequate and unable to create a positive image in the eyes of others. Andrieux characterizes shame as a universal emotion, affecting all spheres of life, i.e. body, sexuality, morality, social life, and identity in its personal as well as in its social aspects

(Andrieux 2012, 4). She concludes that shame is a painful, intense and holistic concept that is often experienced as a burden and as a mainly negative connotated sensation. Reactions to shame include predominantly avoidance and overcompensation, competition or self-centeredness. At the same time, shame and shame reactions typically display physical markers and expressions, as described in the following section.

Given the ubiquity of shame as a bodily, emotional and social reality, studies across different disciplines indicate that there is ‘something terribly important in shame—it is human to feel and to do it well’ (Ryan 2016, in this book). All humans blush. If the gagging reflex is an instinctual function to save the species from poisoning itself, why not shame? Its innateness in our bodies and its organising impact on social relations suggest that we are, by nature, social beings (Ryan 2016, in this book). Of course, she acknowledges, we cannot disregard cultural differences or the risk of promoting a Western model of affect. ‘Essentialist or ethnocentric epithets hover in the air’ (Ryan and Buch 2016, in this book).

Probyn and Aquinas (Ryan 2016, in this book) agree that ‘blushing is the body calling out its interest’. The body is a register of the whole person, not just spatially, psychologically, and socially, but also morally. There is a convergence between shame, values, and well-being, both personal and social. It is summed up by Gerald Coleman who states: ‘Since our capacity to know what we are feeling and to experience those feelings, is rooted in bodily experience, to be ambivalent about or alienated from our bodies is to be estranged from ourselves’ (Ryan 2016, in this book).

The fact that shame finds an expression, particularly in external—and not readily manipulable—features, may be an important reason why shame is usually connotated negatively (Lewis 1992, 2011). Research has focused on shame in the context of its physical expression. Already Darwin (1872), the English naturalist and geologist of the 19th century, regarded blushing as a characteristic that distinguishes humans from other animals. He described blushing as “the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions” (Darwin 1872, 328), and thereby understood blushing from an universalistic viewpoint. Darwin defined blushing as ‘not too manipulable’ (Darwin 1872, 328).

In the tradition of this argument, the American pediatricist and psychiatrist Michael Lewis, emphasised that shame is reflected in physical symptoms like “a shrinking of the body as though to disappear from the eye of the self or the other”. Additionally, external symptoms like casting down the eyes or dropping the eyelids or the head, and sometimes even lowering the entire upper body, are described by Tomkins (2008, 352). Kaufman (1989) highlights staring at the floor and averting eye contact as further nonverbal shame indicators.

Greiner (2014) places the physical aspects of shame in a wider context, by stating:

Shame therefore is an involuntary reflex and has to do with the ability to perceive oneself as a moral subject. However, shame does not spring from an act of will, it is not the result of a balanced rationally-accompanied self-criticism, but is a sudden and forceful outcome that is beyond my power and penetrates deep into my soul. This manifests itself, for example, in blushing (Greiner 2014, 24; translated by the authors).

Since shame is often still researched within the context of a pathological paradigm, the related concepts, i.e. the physical experiences which accompany shame, are commonly described as negative experiences.

At the same time, shame is frequently confused with other similar concepts, such as embarrassment and guilt, which are commonly associated with, referred to and delimited with regard to shame, these notions also need to be considered as important emotional and psychological constructs which are equally based within the realms of different health paradigms and frameworks.

## **1.2 Shame, Embarrassment and Guilt in the Context of Health Paradigms**

### ***1.2.1 The Origin of the Word Shame***

The origin of the word shame remains somewhat unclear. It can be traced back, however, to the Old English expressions “sc(e)amu (noun), and sc(e)amian ‘feel shame’.” It is of Germanic origin and is related to the Dutch word schamen (verb) and the German expressions Scham (noun), and schämen (verb) (Oxford Dictionary).

Some reference works trace the root of the word, from an etymological perspective, to the Indo-European word “skam”, and even the pre-Teutonic root “skem”, which both mean “covering” or “covering oneself” (Harper 2011, 1 and Buch, in this book).

### ***1.2.2 Shame and Embarrassment***

Although some researchers have suggested that there is essentially no difference between shame and embarrassment (Kaufman 1989; Lewis 1971a, b in Robbins and Parlavecchio 2006, 330), many others define the aspect of publicity as a major difference between shame and embarrassment. This emphasises the fact that shame is associated with the contravention of norms and values with which the person concerned identifies personally. Embarrassment, however, means that only generally accepted rules of behaviour have been violated (Döring 2015, 35).

Against the background of European history, sociologist Elias (1939, 1978) proposes that shame and related concepts, such as embarrassment and humiliation are dominant emotions in modern societies. At the same time, they seem to be taboo

subject. Scheff and Retzinger (1997) regard humiliation as a shame variant. They recommend a wider definition and are opposed to the idea that shame is only about a serious crisis, dishonour or the loss of honour. Shame, according to Scheff and Retzinger (1997), usually does not stem from crises and does not implicitly include dishonour, but rather embarrassment. The broad definition of shame suggested by these authors, views shame as a continuum of shame-intensity ranging between the daily, less intense, short-lived feelings of shame such as awkwardness, and the type of shame that is painful and enduring. It usually gives rise to general indignation and constitutes a type that can be labelled dishonouring or humiliating shame. Scheff and Retzinger (1997), suggest that a first step towards a scientific definition of shame would be to use shame as a collective name for a large family of emotions that appear when regarding oneself negatively, even if only slightly negatively, through the eyes of another, or even simply the expectation of such a reaction. Such a step would include less intense forms of shame, as well as more intense ones. Forms and related concepts of shame include embarrassment and guilt, but within the context of shame, and this leads to a better understanding of shame as a contextualised concept, as will be elaborated in the following section.

Authors, such as Miller and Tangney (1994), point out that the dimension of intensity is the most significant distinction between shame and embarrassment. Robbins and Parlavocchio (2006) highlight several distinguishing characteristics between shame and embarrassment, but refer to both concepts within the context of general pathology:

Shame was reported to be more intense and enduring, and was regarded as more immoral and lead to feelings such as disgust and anger toward the self, whereas embarrassing situations were felt to be more surprising, were about relatively more trivial events, and were more related to humorous feelings (Robbins and Parlavocchio 2006, 300–332).

Referring to Tangney et al. (1996), the two psychologists Robbins and Palarvecchio, highlight some additional distinctions between shame and embarrassment, not unlike the distinction holding between shame and guilt, by underlining that embarrassment more often occurs before larger audiences who were likely to be either acquaintances or strangers, if not peers or equals (Robbins and Parlavocchio 2006, 330). Unlike guilt, shame is more commonly associated with the immediate emotional environment. In this context they consider embarrassment as less negative, more fleeting, and more likely to involve physiological reactions such as blushing due to the fact that it has fewer moral implications (Robbins and Parlavocchio 2006, 330). Therefore, embarrassment is regarded as less likely to give rise to reactions such as taking responsibility for reparations, concern with other's negative evaluations, or attempts to hide, and may even be experienced as surprising, accidental, and amusing (Robbins and Parlavocchio 2006, 331).

For Michael Lewis, embarrassment is but one element of the “set of the four self-conscious emotions” (Lewis 2011, 2). These self-conscious emotions, i.e. shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride, are defined as emotions which are directly related to our sense of self and our consciousness of others' reactions to us. According to Lewis, embarrassment, as a complex emotion, first emerges when a



child's sense of self-awareness starts to focus on the idea of "me" (Lewis 2011, 2), and this is due to the fact that at this point, the child comes to understand that it is the object of another's attention. The attention of others acts as a trigger of embarrassment.

From a communication-scientific view, Döring (2015) prefers another approach and introduces several new elements to the debate on embarrassment. Based on her research on stag parties, she branded embarrassment mainly as a communicative phenomenon. She believes that a distinction should be made between the external and internal event level. Her theory contains three major elements of embarrassment, namely self-exposure, discrepancy in regard to the self-image, and an awareness of exposure (Döring 2015, 227). Additionally, she suggests that embarrassment can be associated with a conscious staging of a wilful causation and celebration (Döring 2015, 220–221).

### 1.2.3 *Shame and Guilt*

According to Korczak (2013, 11–39), the delimitation between shame and guilt has been the subject of philosophical discourses as far back as the classical antiquity. This debate, however, has gained momentum over the last century.

In parallel with the discourses on shame and embarrassment, including their various distinctions and similarities, Tangney and Dearing (2002) conducted various empirical studies on the dichotomic concepts of shame and guilt, thus following in the tradition of Benedict (1946). They contrast shame, which they define as a destructive and immobilising emotion (since it can be paralysing and may cause an individual to withdraw from society), with guilt, which, from their perspective, is more positive since it is related much closer to a need for reparation, compensation or good intentions. They regard guilt in a positive light because it can contribute in a positive manner to successful human interaction, whereas shame, particularly if it results in punishment, could have catastrophic consequences for a child's development (Tangney and Dearing 2002).

In his reflections, Sigmund Freud focuses primarily on guilt, rather than on shame, which he understood as strongly connected with sexuality. According to Freud, the ego ideal is made up of ideal representations, grandiose fantasies, and parental representations, and shame occurs when people perceive that they have failed to approximate their ego ideal. He defines guilt as tension that results from crossing the barrier of the super-ego (Freud 1930, 496 in Werden 2015, 50). As a major difference between shame and guilt, Freud describes guilt as based on internalisation values in contrast to shame, which is based on disapproval coming from the outside, i.e. from another person.

In terms of Freud's definitions, Piers and Singer (1971) developed their particular view of the contradistinction between shame and guilt in the 1950s. Following Freud's definition on the connection of guilt to the super-ego, Piers similarly defined guilt as a negative emotion in referring to the "painful internal

tension generated whenever the emotionally highly-charged barrier erected by the Super-Ego is being touched or transgressed” (Piers and Singer 1971, 16).

However, in contrast to Freud, Piers describes shame as representing a tension between the ego and the super-ego. For Piers, shame and guilt are both intrapersonal tensions, but, while guilt is explained as conflict between the ego and the super-ego, shame results from a conflict between the ego and the ego-ideal (Werden 2015, 69). Furthermore, from Piers’ perspective, the main distinction between shame and guilt is the fact that guilt is connected to transgressions, whereas shame is related to unattained goals and the failure to live up to expectations (Werden 2015, 69).

Piers identified one primary commonality between shame and guilt—both enable individual social adjustment insofar as both can be seen as highly important mechanisms to ensure socialisation of the individual (Piers and Singer 1971, 53).

Helen Block Lewis agrees with Piers’ and Singer’s approach but prefers a distinct perspective—her main focus is the object of shame and guilt. Building on Piers’ approach, Block Lewis thus suggests a stronger relationship between the super-ego and the ego-ideal:

The ‘sense’ of guilt’ and the ‘ego-ideal’ are two categories of attitudes which are commonly described as the content of what is internalized as a result of identification, and constitute the super-ego (Lewis 1971a, b, 21).

As major difference between shame and guilt, Block Lewis defines the focus of guilt or shame experiences in more detail. She stresses the importance of the concept of self, while differentiating shame from guilt. While shame focuses on the self as the central object, but simultaneously on the self as the subject of the shame experience, guilt is only related to a single executed or non-executed action (Lewis 1971a, b, 30). This approach was subsequently expressed as follows by Tangney and Dearing as:

“I did a horrible thing” (shame) versus behavior “I **did** a horrible **thing**” (guilt)“ (Tangney and Dearing 2002, 18).

In contrast to Freud, Piers and Singer, Block Lewis understands shame much more as a resource: the super-ego is seen not only as a restrictive instance, but as a regulative from which restrictive as well as strengthening and encouraging impulses arise.

Michael Lewis agrees with some of Block Lewis’ definitions but adds his own specific developmental psychological approach in defining both shame and guilt as self-conscious emotions which appear in the second half of the second year of life when the emergence of self awareness gives rise to such emotions as embarrassment, empathy and jealousy (Lewis 2011, 1). Lewis summarises this as follows in a cognitive-attributional model (Lewis 2011, 1) (Table 1.1).

In terms of this model, Lewis classifies shame as a predominantly negative and painful emotion. He stresses the connection between the evaluation of the individual’s actions in regard to the own SRGs (standards, rules and goals) and the global evaluation of the self. Feeling shame creates a desire to hide, disappear or die. In contrast to guilt, shame is not produced by any specific situation, but rather by a person’s personal interpretation of an event (Lewis 2011, 2). Additionally,

**Table 1.1** Michael Lewis—  
cognitive-attributional model  
(Lewis 2011, 65)

<b>A. Standards and rules</b>		
<b>B. Evaluation</b>		
Success	Failure	<b>C. Attribution of self</b>
Hubris	Shame	Global
Pride	Guilt/Regret	Specific

guilt arises when a particular behaviour is evaluated as a failure, but with the focus on the specific features of the self, or on a specific action that led to the failure. By contrast, shame arises when the global self, i.e. the individual, focuses on the self's subsequent actions and behaviours which are likely to repair the failure. Because this cognitive-attributional process focuses on the action of the self rather than on the totality of the self, the feeling that is produced, namely guilt, is not as intensely negative as shame, and does not lead to confusion (Lewis 2011, 2).

Lewis develops the following complete phenomenology of shame and guilt (Table 1.2).

Tangney and Dearing's (2002) specific approach to shame and guilt focuses on the importance they ascribe to interpersonal relationships, as well as on the fact that they include the aspect of moral emotions, which they define as central moral emotions, and which act as a regulating moral behavioural code in harmony with commonly accepted moral standards (Tangney et al. 2007, 345–372). Since these emotions function as an “emotional moral barometer, providing immediate and salient feedback on our social and moral acceptability”, they can strongly impact the individual's sense of self-worth (Tangney et al. 2007, 345–372).

With reference to Helen Block Lewis and Michael Lewis, Tangney and Dearing (2002, 25) summarise the following as common characteristics of shame and guilt:

- both fall into the class of ‘moral’ emotions
- both are self-conscious, self-referential emotions
- both are negatively valenced emotions
- both involve internal attributions of one sort or another
- both are typically experienced in interpersonal contexts
- the negative events that give rise to both shame and guilt are highly similar (frequently involving failures or transgressions) (Tangney and Dearing 2002, 25).

Despite these common elements, several disparities are noticeable as well (Table 1.3).

From a more philosophical and interdisciplinary perspective, Julien Deonna, Raffaele Rodogno, and Fabrice Teroni take a more critical stance on the traditional characterisation of shame as a purely social emotion with its concomitant negative side effects (Deonna et al. 2012) by adding a cultural aspect to the discussion. Firstly, according to their understanding, the individual in a shameful situation tends to violate group standards much more than personal norms. Secondly, they doubt that the inner self is bared by shameful behaviour. From their perspective, it is only the public self that is exposed. Thirdly, by feeling shame, the individual reflects primarily on the perspective of others (Deonna et al. 2012, 27–29).

**Table 1.2** Summary of the phenomenology of shame and guilt (Lewis, 113 in appendices, 45)

<i>Phenomenology of shame and guilt</i>		
Stimulus	Disappointment, defeat or moral transgression	Moral transgression
	Deficiency of self	Event, thing for which self is responsible
	Involuntary; self unable, as in unrequited love	Voluntary; self able
	Encounter with ‘other’ or within the self	Within the self
Conscious content	Painful emotion	Affect may or may not be present
	Autonomic responses: rage, blushing, tears	Autonomic responses less pronounced
	Global characteristics of self	Specific activities of self
	Identity thoughts; ‘internal theatre’	No identity thoughts
Position of self in field	Self passive	Self active
	Self-focal in awareness	Self-absorbed in action or thoughts
	Self-imaging and consciousness; multiple functions of self	Self-intact, functioning silently
	Vicarious experience of other’s negative view of self	Pity; concern of welfare
Nature and discharge of hostility	Humiliated fury	Righteous indignation
	Discharge blocked by guilt and/or love of ‘other’	Discharge on self and other
Characteristic symptoms	Depression; hysteria ‘affect disorder’	Obsessional; paranoid thought disorder
<b>Shame variants:</b> humiliation, mortification, embarrassment, chagrin, shyness		
<b>Guilt variants:</b> responsibility, obligation, fault, blame		

Their understanding of shame focuses on the interdependence of shame, values and identity. In contrast to shame, the focus of guilt is not on the own inability, but on the own action as a norm transgression. In their view, guilt differs from shame in that the evaluative focus, in the case of guilt, is limited exclusively to moral action, while shame has a much broader perspective (Deonna et al. 2012, 114). Accordingly, they highlight the following four relevant aspects:

- (a) shame differs from guilt in being a social emotion;
- (b) shame, in contrast to guilt, affects the whole self;
- (c) shame is linked with ideals, whereas guilt concerns prohibitions, and
- (d) shame is oriented towards the self, guilt towards others.

**Table 1.3** Differences between shame and guilt (Tangney and Dearing 2002, 25)

Focus of evaluation	Global self: “ <i>I did that horrible thing</i> ”	Specific behaviour: “ <i>I did that horrible thing</i> ”
Degree of distress	Generally more painful than guilt	Generally less painful than shame
Phenomenological experience	Shrinking, feeling small, feeling worthless, powerless	Tension, remorse, regret
Operation of ‘self’	Self ‘split’ into observing and observed ‘selves’	Unified self intact
Impact of ‘self’	Self impaired by global devaluation	Self unimpaired by global devaluation
Concern vis-à-vis the ‘other’	Concern with others’ evaluation	Concern with one’s effect on others
Counterfactual processes	Mentally undoing some aspect of the self	Mentally undoing some aspect of behaviour
Motivational features	Desire to hide, escape, or strike back	Desire to confess, apologize or repair

In their concept of shame, Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni stress the importance of the autonomy of shame based on the idea that people tend to judge against their own values. Such personal autonomy is nevertheless subject to certain cultural conditions, and following one’s personal autonomy therefore requires, not only making decisions, but making decisions in terms of one’s own identity and taking responsibility for them (Deonna et al. 2012, 127). This requires a certain degree of self-respect—an important health resource—which is generated during childhood and developed throughout life.

The following section explains how shame is formed and developed from childhood to adulthood, and why the management of shame is important in terms of a healthy and nontoxic view of shame.

### 1.3 Formation and Development of Shame

Some researchers, like Wurmser (2010, 2015), Lewis (2011) and Hilgers (2013), emphasise that; Sinha and Buch, in this book) childhood experiences are critical determinants in the development of either a healthy, or a toxic perception of shame. Numerous researchers—particularly in Western countries—have explored the issue of how shame arises from a developmental perspective. Some of these views are referred to in the following paragraphs.

Shame develops in the early childhood and lasts throughout the entire human life (Hilgers 2013, 16; Sinha, in this book). Thus, shame is not explicitly tied to specific life stages nor limited to them. However, shame can manifest differently in different stages of life. Additionally, shame does not appear to be linked to certain triggers. The different manifestations of shame are often a by-product of a particular era and depend on the

*Zeitgeist*. What an individual, a group or a society regard as shameful behaviour, is often related to the thinking and feeling of a particular era, the prevailing norms, and the cultural, political and economical conditions.

In terms of his developmental-stage theory, Erikson (1968) locates the first occurrence of shame as taking place as early as in the second of the eight stages of identity crises experienced by humans through the typical life cycle—i.e. it first appears during the toddler stage (autonomy vs. shame and doubt), which occurs between 2 and 3 years of age. At this time the child becomes more mobile and begins to assert its independence by walking away from the caretaker, by selecting which toy to play with, and by making choices about what it wants to wear, eat, etc. The child also discovers that it has various skills and abilities, such as putting on its clothes and shoes, playing with toys, etc. Such skills reinforce the child's growing sense of independence and autonomy. Erikson views it as vital that parents allow a child to explore the limits of its own abilities in an encouraging environment that is tolerant of failure. He also indicates that this stage has an important impact on willpower and self-control. If, during this stage, a child is encouraged and supported in terms of its growing sense of independence, it becomes more confident and secure in its own ability to survive in society. By contrast, if the child is criticised, overly controlled, or not given the opportunity to assert itself, it begins to feel insecure in its ability to survive, and may then become overly dependent on others, develop low self-esteem, and experience a sense of shame or doubt in its own abilities. Erikson (1968) regards the origins and development of shame as directly related to the anal stage and to "toilet training". The outcome of this toilet-training stage is a sense of either autonomy, or of shame and doubt.

In their research, Tangney and Dearing (2002) also found that guilt or shame-proneness, appears to develop quite early in childhood. Their research showed that adolescents' guilt and shame proneness remained very stable from the age of 10 to 18.

Michael Lewis highlights the connection between shame formation and the development of self-consciousness. He postulates that the self-conscious-emotions (SRGs) arise during the third year of life when the child begins to integrate with its family and peers. This new capacity gives rise to a new set of emotions, one of which may be termed self-conscious evaluative emotions. This includes a new form of embarrassment as well as of guilt, shame, pride and hubris. In this context, Lewis defines embarrassment as a less intense form of shame. The child experiences embarrassment in the company of others when it violates the SRG of the culture (Lewis 2011, 2).

The American psychologist and social-worker-couple, Ron and Pat Potter-Efron, offer two explanations on the occurrence of shame in the earliest stages of childhood (Potter-Efron and Potter-Efron 1989). Firstly, they highlight the predisposition toward shame as displayed by the child in an attempt to minimise uncomfortable stimulation by looking away or by losing interest. Secondly, they assert that shame develops during the first two years of life due to the development of verbal and non-verbal communication. Thus, they conclude that children are born with different capacities toward shame, with some infants probably being much more sensitive than others to those feelings. The parents and caretakers influence the

child by either shaming or by appreciating it (Potter-Efron and Potter-Efron 1989, 63–64). German psychoanalyst Hilgers agrees with this view.

Hilgers (2013, 16), suggests that shame develops in early childhood and accompanies individuals all through their lives. In this sense, shame is not a priority pathological emotion nor is it tied to a particular phase of life, either with regard to its origin from a developmental perspective, or in terms of its trigger mechanisms. Every phase of life experiences shame emotions, but they can manifest differently in different ages, e.g. an infant with special needs which remain unanswered, or an ageing individual who feels shame due to various physical restrictions and the loss of autonomy. Hilgers stresses that shame and pride have decisive regulatory functions with regard to individual development. And due to the fact that there is no explicit shame phase, from a developmental psychological perspective, and no self state which can be held liable for shame specifically, no shame emotion can be identified per se (Hilgers 2013, 16). Individuals gain their initial shame experiences in relation to their primary attachment figures, e.g. their parents (Hilgers 2013, 293), and therefore, the incentive to cope with challenges and transform shame into pride, depends on the family of origin. Hilgers underlines that shame is not bound to a particular development stage and that, once shame has emerged, it remains throughout life as an experiential and behavioural option (Hilgers 2013, 296). Based on Stern, Lichtenberg and others, and in accord with current findings in infant and affect research, Hilgers (2013, 293) indicates that the first precursory manifestations of shame—like embarrassment—may already be observed in infants from around 4 to 5 months of age. However, stronger shame reactions occurring as an expression of an already developed concept of self, typically manifests from the age of six. In this context, Hilgers also takes into consideration the fact that there are gender differences and other relevant cultural factors and values which equally influence shame development (see Sinha as well, in this book).

Concerning the development of shame, the German social scientist Stephan Marks (2010, 39–40), places the emergence of shame much earlier by indicating that shame starts to appear about the middle of the first year after birth when the capacity for objective self-consciousness and self-evaluation becomes manifest. This ability is shaped through previous experience, particularly through experiences in association with the child's primary caretakers. With reference to Wurmser, who refers to the precursors of shame which are developed during the first months of life, Marks emphasises that shame is profoundly influenced by early parent-child communication. This communication happens primarily through visual and physical contact. Marks therefore identifies shame as a potential health resource. He identifies a healthy level of self-confidence (“healthy shame”) as the basis for being able to process shame experiences in a constructive way later in life. Alternatively, negative parent-child communication will result in low self-esteem, in which case shame experiences will be internalised through the collapse of self-esteem, and as existentially threatening crises (“pathological shame”) (Marks 2010, 39). In terms of a coherent self-experience (Marks 2010, 39–40) in early childhood, acceptance and appreciation, i.e. to be seen and to be smiled at, is of significant importance. The newborn child is helpless and has an existential need for recognition,

protection, belonging and integrity. For the development of either healthy or pathological shame, it is crucial—according to Marks—that the existential interests of the child be answered by parents or caregivers. The following ideal-typical confrontations are not about individual experiences, but about durable relationship patterns, e.g.:

- The precursors of healthy shame are positively reinforced to the extent that early parent-child communication on the whole is successful, i.e. that the child is mirrored in a loving manner and experiences that it is safe, protected and supplied with loving care;
- When the child experiences love and acceptance unconditionally—despite some “less favourable” feelings such as sadness, frustration, pain or anger—it will nevertheless develop a healthy sense of shame; and
- Similarly, when the child learns that its limitations are recognised and accepted, it will develop a secure attachment to its caregivers, accompanied by a basic sense of trust.

On the other hand, the precursors of pathological shame are reinforced to the extent that the early parent-child communication is disrupted, e.g.:

- This typically occurs when the child’s boundaries are not respected, e.g. when the parents are overly-intrusive by treating the child as a mere object, or when the child becomes emotionally, physically or sexually victimised by the parents;
- When the child is shamed, humiliated, neglected or disregarded, as if it is not wanted; and
- When the child is rejected, punished or ostracised, its feelings of inadequacy will become manifest in signs of helplessness (“weakness”) and pain.

If the child, through physical violence or the withdrawal of love, experiences that it is not worthy of being loved because of who it is, its feelings of inadequacy will be reinforced. Similarly, when parents behave in an emotionally unpredictable manner in being “now near, now far“, the child will fail to develop a sense of confidence in having someone present to nurture, maintain and protect it (Marks 2010, 40, translated by the authors).

In this context, Marks (2010) believes that it is important to point out the pathological process of shame-development which can be caused by the failure of individual parents to instil a sense of self-worth in the child. Often, however, the parents’ behaviour is closely associated with social, economic or historical factors or circumstances.

The American psychoanalyst Masters (2016, 3), highlights childhood as a vitally important period when the fine line between healthy and pathological shame can be crossed quite easily and either result in benefitting the child—if it experiences shame positively—or it can debilitate and harm the child if it is subjected to a pathological perception of shame. Even if both healthy and unhealthy shame interrupt, expose, and deflate individuals, the ultimate effect will be different in each case. According to Masters, healthy shame can empower individuals to take healing



action, whereas individuals experiencing toxic shame, will tend to disempower themselves by resorting to escape mechanisms, or by engaging in compensatory activities. In healthy shame, individuals tend to set things right and express their remorse, whereas in unhealthy shame, individuals tend to freeze, flee or flagellate themselves (Masters 2016, 4). Masters concludes:

Healthy shame mobilizes us, and unhealthy shame immobilizes us. Healthy shame triggers our conscience, whereas unhealthy shame triggers our inner critic, which often masquerades as our conscience (Masters 2016, 4).

Having focused on the development of shame, both with regard to healthy and unhealthy manifestations, the following section presents selected categories of shame proposed by various authors in an attempt to categorise shame experienced by individuals, particularly in adulthood.

## 1.4 Categories of Shame

Within the framework of Western discourses on shame by various authors such as Hilgers and others, Marks and Brown attempt to define various primary categories of shame, each requiring a different approach. To provide insight into these categories within the typical Western framework, three systems of categorisations are presented below.

In the context of his model of shame as a group of affects, Hilgers (2013, 26–28) identifies the following categories of shame (c.f. Metz 2009) (Table 1.4).

**Table 1.4** Micha Hilgers' categories of shame (Hilgers 2013)

Shame category	Definition
Existential shame	(a) As a person being considered as undesirable or being marked with a blemish
	(b) Having the genuine impression of being invisible or to be non-existent
Competence shame	Individual lack of competences or of control; Is revealed (in public)
Intimacy shame	Due to violation of intimacy or privacy
Disgrace	Lack of dignity, loss of face, acute humiliation
Ideality shame	(a) Discrepancy between self and ideal-self
	(b) As result of culpable action
Shame	Based on one's own dependency on a relationship, falling out of a desired relationship, unrequited love, perceived dependence from a person subjectively regarded as important
Oedipal shame	Experience of general rejection, feeling inferior or inadequate
Shame-guilt-dilemma	Interrelation of guilt and shame appears as an unsolvable intra-systemic conflict, either guilt or shame is felt: shame in case of a failure towards own standards, value or ideals, guilt as a failure in regard to the expectations of others

**Table 1.5** Stephan Marks—categories of shame (Marks 2007)

Shame category	Definition
Assimilation shame	Understood as one major affect group, based on the failure of not performing according to current norms and expectations (Marks 2007, 13) “Directed towards the outside, this self-related shame affect is oriented towards the gaze of the other and the expected appraisal of the individual’s environment” (Metz 2009, 25)
(a) Body shame	Assimilation shame may refer to the own body, appearance or personal qualities
(a) Group shame	This specific kind of assimilation shame may refer to other individuals, e.g. a family member
Empathetic shame	Related to others in case we witness humiliation
Intimacy shame	Protects privacy against others
Traumatic shame	Intimacy shame can change into traumatic shame in case of rape, sexual violence
Conscience or moral shame	Related to the violation of one’s conscience, like in case of disrespectful behaviour, the omission of assistance or the damage of others; often linked to of guilt for the shame inducing behaviour (Metz 2009, 26)

Marks (2007) refers to various other categories in defining shame (Table 1.5).

Finally, Brown (2012) defines twelve ‘shame categories’ (without further specification) which are essentially aligned with different roles and spheres of life:

- Appearance and body image
- Money and work
- Motherhood/fatherhood
- Family
- Parenting
- Mental and physical health
- Addiction
- Sex
- Aging
- Religion
- Surviving trauma
- Being stereotyped or labeled

These categorisations of shame show that shame is categorised in various, often highly analytical ways, which are mostly based on the framework of typical Western classification systems. These classification systems are not deemed to be positive or negative per se. However, the categorisation of “traumatic shame” would, for example, typically be defined as relating to a negative shame experience.

Accordingly, the primary issues to be addressed, are: (1) How can shame be, or become, a valuable resource, and (2) what paradigm shifts are required in terms of

our understanding of shame so as to recognise and acknowledge shame as a (potential) health-resource?

### ***1.4.1 The Value of Shame: Change of Paradigm in the Understanding of Shame***

The power of shame over our lives is substantial. Shame touches our feelings of love and directs our fears; it links to our activities and honesty, but frequently releases tremendous forces of resistance; it fires our creativity and intelligence, but also creates destructive myths; it is constituted in national pride and occasionally manifests in unspeakable atrocities. Shame meets us at every step as an agent of social control and is constantly asking questions regarding the truthfulness of our behavior. Hardly any other feeling holds such diverse consequences for our very being and actions. All areas of our lives are structured by provisos that have something to do with the protection against injury, and any form of mental injury also affects the shame perception (Briegleb 2014, 9).

Exploring shame in the context of current theory, research and practice, reveals that several decades ago (Lewis since the 1970s and Wurmser since the 1990s) shame was already being discussed, not only within the parameters of a pathological paradigm, but also in a salutogenic context in terms of the broader paradigm of positive psychology (Antonovsky 1979).

In terms of positive psychology, many argue for the understanding and fostering of factors related to shame that would support and allow individuals, groups, communities and societies to flourish and grow (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). This approach usually impacts positively on individuals and collectives alike, and increases mental health and well-being. Additionally, these factors have a particularly positive impact on feelings of self-sufficiency, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, to manage challenges and to optimise personal potential (Rothmann 2014). Frederickson (2001) pointed out that, within the paradigm of positive psychology, there is a need for research and theoretical models that focus more prominently on the positive aspects of emotions.

A review of the available literature shows that some studies do, in fact, refer to shame as being a positive phenomenon, and even as being a resource of resilience (Tangney and Dearing 2002; Brennan, Robertson and Cox, in this book). Connor concludes that shame is a potential strategy to enforce social coherence (Connor 2001, 211–230), which is a notion commonly associated with positive psychology, and is extremely important with regard to integrating, not only the individual members of a particular social group, but also the group as a whole. In the context of social coherence, shame is viewed as a constructive strategy when it comes to the building of social relationships, the management of task relations, the perceived unity within and across groups, and the management of emotions which relate directly to the four main components of the concept of social cohesion.

The consequences of resilience appear to have a toughening effect on the individual. A sense of having coped with one situation may support the anticipation of

active mastery over future situations. Resilient individuals have a set of assumptions about themselves that influence their emotions, behaviours and the skills, which are dynamic and constantly developing towards a so-called “mindset” The mindset of a resilient person is not free from stress, pressure and conflict, but can successfully cope with obstacles, such as shame. The concept of shame as a source of resilience is therefore an important aspect in managing intra- and inter-psychological stress. Shame, in the context of being a source of resilience, is associated with a highly developed self-awareness, mindfulness, reflexivity, social learning, cognitive capacities, the evaluation of individual standards and self-conscious evaluative emotions.

The Swiss-American psychiatrist Wurmser (2010, 2015), was one of the first scientists to identify shame as a guardian of human dignity, by pointing out the important function of shame as a regulator of proximity and distance, as well as its essential task of self-protection. Based on Wurmser’s foundation of shame in the context of human dignity and self-protection, the German psychoanalyst Hilgers (2013) explicates Wurmser’s statements with regard to the positive implications of shame. On the one hand, Hilgers (2013) describes shame at the individual level as initiating self-reflection, individual learning and development processes, and emphasises that shame “preserves the self and intimacy limits as it presents an incentive for performance, development and autonomy”. On the other hand, shame is seen as a source of increased “autonomy and competence of humiliating dependence” (Hilgers 2013, 20), which might support the experience of boundaries of self and intimacy. It also creates a sense of development, autonomy and achievement. By experiencing self-awareness and self-development, as well as an increase in individual competencies, individuals can free themselves from shaming dependence (Hilgers 2013, 20). Hilgers (2013) refers to this kind of disruption as the “unquestioned naturalness of self-esteem” (Hilgers 2013, 20) and the awakening of an consciousness of the self and the other as important functions of shame from within. Additionally, Hilgers (2013) attaches importance to the socially regulative dimension of shame which is positively connotated as well: Shame encourages individuals to overcome their own limitations and deficits, This shame is a socially regulative function and its position increases the proprietary trading—in the best case, without them to accept from the outset as merely existing (Hilgers2013, 45).

Hilgers (2013, 309) continues to show that “shame is a prickler which challenges for realistic coping as long as the affected person sees adequate ways to deal with and acquire new skills”. The experience of being willing and able to face one’s own shame and to overcome shameful situations and experiences successfully, can open access to new knowledge, strength and competencies.

A key aspect of such development is the ability of self-objectification, particularly, the delimitation of the self from others and the associated self-reflection and self-relativisation that would ensue. Shame becomes a basic resource for self-reflection and self-objectification, and is an important enabler of individual development. Our need to be accepted and to be appreciated by others, encourages us to overcome personal barriers and fears, develop new insights and competencies

in order to escape shameful situations. In this respect, shame is considered as a lifelong health and learning resource (Hilgers 2013, 16).

Accordingly, shame incites individuals to overcome individual boundaries and possible deficits and to perceive shame as a relevant adjustment factor in social contexts, as Harper (2011, 189) stresses:

One positive function of shame is its use to help socialize and teach norms important for survival and interpersonal success. Moreover, shame enables individuals to pause for a moment and to consider themselves through the eyes of others. Shame supports individuals and serves to differentiate between themselves and others. Through the experience of shame, a person can put her-/himself into another person's shoes, and this ability enables individuals to imagine what another person might feel - an unalienable premise for empathy and sociability.

The German social scientist Stephan Marks offers a further functional description of shame:

Shame is like a seismograph which reacts very sensitively when our basic desire for recognition, protection, affiliation or integrity is injured. To respect the dignity of a person means – from the perspective of shame psychology – to prevent the person from superfluous, avoidable shame, i.e. to provide a “space” in which the individual gains recognition, protection, a sense of belonging and integrity. Only then can learning, development, and growth be achieved (Marks 2010, translated by the authors).

Significant to the notion of shame is, on the one hand, the idea that a human being is both an autonomous entity with the potential to self-construction, and on the other hand, a social being (Werden 2015, 211). Thus, the idea of dependence on, or striving for recognition as a significant element, comes into view.

It may therefore be assumed that shame has both an individual and a social dimension. In recent times, some authors have also alluded to a political dimension. Briegleb (2014, 10), for example, speaks of shame as a significant instrument in maintaining power, such as in group or mass humiliation. He even introduces the term of shame-violence, and refers to colonialism as an emphatic example of this. The contributions of Louth, Brennan, Robertson and Curtis and Buch (in this book) all highlight this dimension of shame. Jennifer Jacquet also examined shame and guilt as instruments of punishment and found that shame means “worrying about the group” (Jacquet 2015, Pos 134). She escalates this idea even further when she describes shame as closely related to (constantly changing) norms and as something that can make a valuable political tool in an increasingly connected and deflected world (Jacquet 2015, Pos 108).

This is especially true because of the close relationship between shame and individual and collective values, as confirmed as follows by Schneider:

Shame raises consciousness. Shame is the partner of value awareness. ... Shame is a ‘positive and authentic’ sign of the human community, not to be jettisoned. ... Shame is not merely a necessary limitation that must be grudgingly acknowledged on the way to our liberation; it can itself be a means of freeing a person and extending self-actualisation. ... Shame need not be eradicated in order to arrive at human liberation; it is a resource in the journey to individuation and maturity. ... Shame sends out its red flag against the distorted strand of popular thought that seeks to reduce human life to the dimensions of the

scientific/technological or the individual self. It reveals the limits of the self and bears witness to the self's involvement with others. Shame thus functions as a guide to a more authentic form of self-realisation" (Schneider 1987, p XIV–XIVII).

Briegleb (2014, 12) agrees when he states that "our sense of shame has a low-threshold alarming propriety system", and emphasises that shame encourages humans to show socially adequate behaviour. He even goes as far as describing shame as a "source of happiness, awareness and culture" (Briegleb 2014, 19), and concludes that shame places a permanent demand on individual's self-perception and acts as a disruptive factor. In harmony with this, superficial shame can keep individuals' sensitivities awake, the intelligence irritated, and it can enhance inventiveness, but it can also liberate personal ability to deal with insurmountable obstacles and useless hostilities (Briegleb 2014, 19).

Having considered the various paradigms of shame above, we also need to examine shame from a cultural perspective and within a cultural context. The next section will consider these perspectives.

## 1.5 Shame and Culture

Over the past several decades, shame has been researched quite extensively in the context of culture and psychology (Shweder 2015; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Sznycer et al. 2012).

The first significant study on shame and culture (Benedict 1946) identified shame as an important emotion within the anthropological study of Japanese and Western cultures. Based on Benedict's research—in which she divides cultures into guilt and shame cultures—many studies have replicated the view of the differentiation of cultures into shame and guilt cultures. Benedict highlights that in so-called "shame cultures", the emotional reaction is based on the criticism of the audience (for further discussion see Bhawuk, Sinha, Mayer, in this book). Shame is embedded in external sanctions and environments for good behaviour, and it places emphasis on external standards of behaviour.

Since this first groundbreaking study on shame and culture, shame has subsequently been defined as a cultural experience and as an expression of emotions which are connected to various associated cultural feelings and emotions, as well as to so-called "feeling rules" (Markus and Kitayama 1991). The word "shame" exists in various languages and, on the basis of a study across 135 cultures, shame can be defined as a "universal emotion" (Casimir and Schnegg 2002; Sinha, in this book). Anthropologists have identified the importance of the role of shame in various cultures and argue that the experience of shame is universal (Harper 2011, 1). However, the experience of shame is nevertheless culture-specific in terms of its perception, experience and expression. Within the context of culture, it is often emphasised as being a particularly social emotion (Casimir and Schnegg 2002). Additionally, recent research highlights the differences in the perception of shame

across cultures, and indicates that shame needs to be understood as socially and contextually defined (Lindisfarne 1998; Miller 1996). Greiner (2014, 19) points out that the experience of shame is strongly connected to the cultural space a person is socialised and living in. Accordingly, shame and culture should also be viewed as connected to the influences of religion and the *Zeitgeist*.

However, shame is not only related to socio-cultural, spatial and temporal influences. An early publication on shame by Lynd (1958) draws attention to the interrelatedness of shame and identity constructs. It is argued that shame is connected to identity and to the core of a person's character (Davidhoff 2002), and therefore to the intra-psychological realm of a person's life that connects to various aspects of social identity as well. From a pathological viewpoint, Davidhoff (2002) argues that shame is a highly influential emotion which impacts on identity and on the question of how individuals define themselves. At the same time, shame is often connected to feelings of exposure, degradation, situational avoidance or silence. However, shame is also viewed as a constructive emotion that contributes to developing identity goals. When experienced as a negative intimate emotion, shame can lead to the development of positive and constructive identity goals. It has also been identified as a constructive emotion in the search for identity.

Wong and Tsai (2007, 219) highlight the different conceptions of shame in terms of "valuation elicitors and behavioural consequences of shame", which vary as "a function of the type of self-construal that is promoted in one's cultural context". Accordingly, these authors define culture as "historically derived and socially transmitted ideas (e.g. symbols, language, values, and norms) and practices (e.g. rituals, mores, laws), as well as artefacts (e.g. tools, media) and institutions (e.g. family structure).

According to Wong and Tsai (2007, 214), in "many non-Western cultural contexts, shame is not only valued, but is also viewed as an appropriate emotional response to failure." The authors highlight that negatively evaluating the self in terms of shameful behaviour or shame is not necessarily "viewed as harmful to psychological wellbeing", but have informational and motivational significance in collective contexts rather than in individualistic contexts (see Bhawuk, Sinha Buch, Brennan, Robertson and Curtis, in this book).

Studies have found that collectivistic cultures value shame as being more positive than individualistic cultures do. Menon and Shrewder (1994) highlight this in a study comparing Hindu and American participants, and Fischer et al. (1999) compare Spanish and Dutch individuals and conclude that Spanish participants valued shame more positively than the Dutch participants.

Focusing on the language and terminology used to describe shame experiences, it has been shown that Japanese participants see shame as more closely related to other positively valued emotional states such as love and happiness, while English participants tend to associate shame more with negatively valued emotions such as fear and anger (Romney et al. 1997).

Shame is assumed to regulate the social activities of individuals in society and to guide individuals in terms of socially acceptable behaviour, feelings and values.

Werden (2015) concluded that shame, as well as guilt, are universal emotions which exist in culture-specific expressions and dimensions. Due to its embeddedness in the culture-specific context, shame and guilt differ across cultures in terms of meaning-making. Werder concludes that, while in a guilt culture guilt causes shame, in a shame culture, shame evokes guilt. While it is essential to preserve affiliation in a shame culture, she describes it as essential in a guilt culture, to create a self-defined identity. Therefore, according to Werden, it is important for the individual living in a shame culture not to question the collective values which define the significant community and provide guidance in terms of the behaviour and actions of individuals. For the proper functioning of the collective and for the integration of the individual within this social environment, this adaption is more relevant than the expression of individuality. Relevant triggers for shame are therefore the failure to achieve the harmony of the collective, rather than the failure of the individual's personal integration into the collective. In a guilt culture, according to Werden, individuals are primarily responsible for their own identity construction (attitude, actions, behaviour etc.). This leads to the fact that shame arises less from others than from oneself, while guilt is founded in self-construction (Werden 2015, 13–14).

The discourses on shame and culture are often anchored in the question of individuality versus the collective, and in the following section, culture-specific insights into shame, which do not necessarily refer to typical Western contexts, will be provided.

## 1.6 Culture-Specific Insights into Shame

Shame has often been researched in the context of comparisons of Western and Eastern viewpoints, and numerous studies analyse shame from cross-cultural perspectives, thus comparing shame in the context of different national contexts. Other studies, however, aim at providing culture-specific insights, as described in the following examples.

In a comparative study by Cole et al. (2006), the authors highlight, that in Tamang and Brahman villages in Nepal, the people of Tamang tend to rebuke the angry child, but would reason with and yield to the child who appears ashamed. Brahmans, however, tended to respond to angry children but would ignore shame. The authors, therefore, draw the conclusion that cultural heritage, religious differences, class and status, as well as majority and minority statuses, play a role in the respective perceptions of anger and shame.

In a comparative study of children from Japan, Korea and the US respectively, Furukawa et al. (2012), found that Japanese children scored highest in terms of shame, Korean children with regard to guilt, and US children in pride. In all three cultural groups, shame-proneness is positively correlated with aggression-relevant constructs. In this context, Miller (2002) points out that shame is often associated with collectivism, and guilt is usually associated with individualism. However, both



concepts, i.e. shame and guilt, are experienced with reference to self (Furukawa et al. 2012).

Bagozzi et al. (2003) compared salespeople from the Philippines and the Netherlands with regard to their experience and self-regulation of shame. Both groups were found to experience shame similarly as a consequence of customer actions, but they reacted differently to shame. In response to experiences that produced shame, Filipino employees improved in terms of customer-relationship building, civic virtue and assistance, while in the case of Dutch employees, sales volumes tended to decline, and so did communication-effectiveness and relationship-building. The authors concluded that Filipino employees responded to shame by adapting their resource utilisation, while Dutch employees reacted dysfunctionally towards the firm and with respect to protective actions.

Behaviour that is seen as shameful is also culturally, contextually and situationally bound. Farrell (2011), for example, explores the shame and stigma attached to being “fat” within the American cultural context. In the context of a German school, issues that are experienced as shameful include shame related to achievement, motivation and motifs of endeavour.

A study from Brazil shows that shaming is often used as a micro-political concept in daily interactions, particularly with regard to topics of individualising, psychologising and accepting responsibility and blame for illiteracy. Consequently, illiteracy is frequently associated with shame, as is the incorrect use of language (Barlett 2007).

In a study on sighted, blind and congenitally blind individuals from more than 30 nations, Tracy and Matsumoto (2008) found that individuals from most cultures displayed behaviours associated with shame as a response to failure. Results further showed that sighted individuals from North America and West Eurasia were intentionally inhibited by other sighted individuals in accordance with cultural norms, while blind and congenitally blind individuals were hardly ever required to adapt to cultural norms (Tracy and Matsumoto 2008, 11655).

Starrin (2016, 1) highlights that the concept of shame is tabooed in Western societies and that individuals feel ashamed of experiencing shame. Scheff (1988) denounces the “invisibility of shame in Western cultures” which is typical of cultures with “low visibility shame” (Scheff 1988, 400). This low visibility is based on a negative evaluation of shame in Euro-American societies and has led to a lack of research on shame in various contexts in Western societies, but particularly in school contexts (Wertenbruch and Röttger-Rössler 2011). This absence of research on shame might also be a consequence of the fact that the experience of shame usually reminds individuals of the physical body and its boundaries, habitual patterns, values, rules and the abilities to respond to them on the interpersonal, social or cultural levels. Ryan (2016, 6) emphasised that the experience of shame across various cultures highlights the sense of “being out of place” in terms of particular behaviours.

In Western societies, a person who experiences high levels of shame is viewed as insecure and dependent on others, as well as having low self-esteem (Ferguson 2005; Scheff 1988). Röttger-Rössler (2004, 2010), however, indicates that a

culture-specific and culture-relative perspective is needed to understand shame in various cultural contexts, and particularly in contexts where shame is valued as a positive emotion and as one of the goals of socialisation. Markus and Kitayama (1991) emphasise that the experience and expression of emotions—and therefore of shame—are based on various cultural influences which are coded in “feeling rules”, i.e. rules which prescribe how individuals should express and experience emotions. If these rules are contravened, individuals and groups within societies experience shame, particularly when other individuals know about the contravention of these social standards.

Shame has not only been researched in the context of culture, but also with regard to other causes of diversity, such as gender. The following subchapter provides insight into the relationship between shame and gender.

## 1.7 Shame from a Gender Perspective

Shame, when viewed from a gender perspective, is often considered to be a feminine characteristic *par excellence*. Despite this somewhat generalised perception, research indicates that this belief is more a matter of convention than of fact. Contrary to this generalised perception, we believe that feminine shame has at its core the concealment of a sense of gender deficiency. In saying this, we are not, however, ignoring the fact that shame also manifests for other reasons (Freud 1961/1933; Freud et al. 1989, 193–196).

Shame has a female and male face: Although the gender implications of shame are still an under researched field, evidence exists to show that shame is a “gender-responsive” phenomenon (Hernandez and Mendoza 2011).

Tangney and Dearing found that females across all ages display a greater propensity to both shame and guilt than males. They also found that, regardless of age, females “consistently report *greater* levels of shame than their male counterparts” (Tangney and Dearing 2002, 154). Lewis (1992) likewise emphasises a gender difference in suggesting that—based on gender specific differences in response to shame—men typically assert that women are overly sensitive, while women assert that men are overly aggressive (Lewis 1992, 184). Lewis concludes that social conditioning inevitably produces women who typically feel shame and men who tend to feel guilt. He asserts that not only do women feel more shame than men, but tend to express it differently. Typically, females deal with shame through introversion and self-hate while males are more likely to exhibit extreme anger and violence. He suggests that one of the major causes of shame in women relates to feelings of unattractiveness, or that, in comparison to men, failures in personal relationships were a leading cause of shame due to feelings of sexual inadequacy or failure.

In their research on sexual offenders and shame, Scheff and Retzinger (1997), suggest an alternative explanation for the differences in how men and women

manage the shame associated with sexuality, and observe that this phenomenon is “quite prevalent” in modern society. The authors found that women typically experienced shame-shame feedback loops, while males experienced shame-anger feedback loops. They characterise the shame-shame loop as a circular process in which an individual is ashamed of being ashamed, which leads to an ever-increasing sense of shame. This can affect health, e.g. as manifested in withdrawal or depression. In shame-anger loops, which are considered to be more typical of men, individuals are angry about their shame, and are ashamed of being angry. This creates another emotional loop that feeds on itself and often culminates in antisocial acts (Scheff and Retzinger 1997). Scheff and Retzinger conclude that feeling shame with regard to their own sexuality, often leads to a lack of sexual interest in women, as well as withdrawal, passivity or late-blooming interest, while shame with regard to sexuality, often propels men to boldness, anger and aggression (Scheff and Retzinger 1997).

Efthim et al. (2001) studied the relationship between gender role stress and the resultant disposition toward shame, guilt, and externalisation. They demonstrated that some people are more predisposed to the constructs of shame-proneness and guilt-proneness, and therefore experience more situationally-based manifestations of shame. They define three essential principles as the basis for their findings, namely that male gender role stress is attributable to shame, guilt, and externalization. They conclude that since shame—or guilt—is caused by an individual’s failure to follow societal demands or socially expected behaviours, such a person will then feel shame and guilt and experience a sense of reduced self-esteem. They point out that most children are socially conditioned during early childhood to feel guilt and shame for not following cultural norms. In this context, infraction of gender roles often result in unfavorable consequences and in poor internalisation of self, which then produces to shame. They found that men in particular, see shame as transgressing masculine norms such as feeling unsafe, defenseless, and out of control. Men then tend to turn to defensive tactics such as externalisation to reduce their emotional pain (Efthim et al. 2001).

Efthim et al. (2001) found that men feel particularly ashamed when an alleged or actual failure threatens to become public, while women feel particularly ashamed when their intra-psychological thought processes or other internal thoughts or emotions are disclosed or exposed. The further a woman digresses from her socially prescribed role, the more shame she will experience. Their findings show that socially-constructed gender roles have gained recognition as important factors affecting the developmental, psychological, and relational well-being of men and women (Efthim et al. 2001). For example, the results of their research reveal that, for men the failure to conform to expected societal norms of what defines masculinity, either at work or in private, will result in symptoms of depression, anger, and shame (Efthim et al. 2001). Accordingly, Efthim and others conclude that men who are most committed to traditional male schemas, experience more discomfort with regard to shame and turn to defensive manoeuvres such as externalisation to manage the painful effects of shame (Efthim et al. 2001). Some of the common

male defenses against shame are denial, withdrawal, rage, perfectionism, arrogance, and exhibitionism (Potter-Efron and Potter-Efron 1989).

Arndt and Goldenburg (2004) found that women tend to score higher in personal self-consciousness and typically show higher increases in self-reflective behaviour than men—and therefore women tend to experience higher levels of shame than men.

Other authors (Erden and Akbağ 2015) assert a different gender-specific involvement in terms of shame. They investigated the extent to which personality traits could effect shame and guilt and found that both are predicted by personality traits. In regard to shame, they further discovered that shame was predicted by conscientiousness and agreeableness in women only, whereas guilt was predicted by agreeableness for both genders, but was prognosticated by conscientiousness only among men.

O'Connor et al. (1994) conducted a study on men and women who were recovering from substance addiction, and particularly with regard to the different levels of depression and self-conscious behaviour displayed by them. Their findings show that there appear to be differences between men and woman with regard to their proneness to shame, guilt, externalisation, detachment, and pride. They were able to show that significant differences exist between the sexes in terms of proneness to shame, detachment, and depression. While women scored significantly higher on shame and depression, men scored significantly higher on detachment (O'Connor et al. 1994).

Connor (2001) comes to the conclusion that women are ashamed of breaking out of the typical and socially constructed female paradigm, while men are ashamed of failing to live up to the typical male social paradigm. Of particular relevance in understanding shame in terms of these gender differences, the authors identify a gap along the line separating heteronomy and autonomy. Connor found that female shame has frequently been presented as the heterogenic or 'other-originating' force of shame imposed on woman, thereby constraining their assertion of autonomy. Female shame has mostly been regulatory and disciplinary. With regard to the shame attached to menstruation and pregnancy, as well as to illegitimate birth and excessive or unfeminine behaviour (e.g. drunkenness, ribaldry, lewdness, loose talk), being shamed has compelled women to live according to classical role expectations.

In contrast—so Connor (2001)—male shame seems to be understood mostly as “autogenic or self-authorising shame at the expense of autonomy” (Connor 2001, 211–230). He points out that when men experience shame it is typically not the result of having overstepped a boundary, but rather because of a failure to do so. On the other hand, men seem to regard shame as a kind of acknowledgement or affirmation (Connor 2001, 211–230).

Connor concludes that both female and male shame might be seen as strategy to enforce social coherence (Connor 2001, 211–230). Thus Connor contributes to the discourse by regarding shame as a health resource.

In the United States, Brown (2012) conducted hundreds of interviews on shame. At first she interviewed only women, but subsequently expanded her research to

**Table 1.6** Female and male descriptions of shame (Brown 2012, 85–91)

Women (Brown 2012, 85)	Men (Brown 2012, 91)
Look perfect. Do perfect. Be perfect. Anything less than that is shaming	Shame is failure. At work. On the football field. In your marriage. In bed. With money. With your children. It doesn't matter—shame is failure
Being judged by other mothers	Shame is being wrong. Not doing wrong, but being wrong
Being exposed—the flawed parts of yourself that you want to hide from everyone are revealed	Shame is a sense of being defective
No matter what I've achieved, how far I've come, where I came from or what I've survived, shame will always keep me from feeling that I am good enough	Shame happens when people think you're soft. It's degrading and shaming to be seen as anything but tough
Even though everyone knows that there's no way to do it all, everyone still expects it. Shame is when you can't pull off looking like it's under control	Revealing any weakness is shaming. Basically, shame is weakness
Never enough at home. Never enough at work. Never enough in bed. Never enough with my parents. Shame is never enough	Showing fear is shameful. You can't show fear. You can't be afraid—no matter what
No seats at the cool table. The pretty girls are laughing	Shame is being seen as the “guy you can shove against the lockers.” Our worst fear is being criticized or ridiculed—either one of these is extremely shaming

include men. She found that women and men describe different shame raising experiences (Table 1.6).

Brown (2012) relates these diverse shame descriptions to attributes associated with expectations of femininity or masculinity in the US. According to the research of Mahalik et al. (2005, 317–335) the following attributes are typically associated with femininity:

Being nice, pursuing a thin body ideal, showing modesty by not calling attention to one's talents or abilities, being domestic, caring for children, investing in a romantic relationship, keeping sexual intimacy contained within one committed relationship, and using our resources to invest in our appearance (Brown 2012, 89).

By contrast, Mahalik et al. (2003, 3–25) identified the following attributes which may be regarded as typical masculine traits: emotional control, risk-taking, violence, dominance, high self-reliance and self-esteem, giving priority to work, supremacy over women, judgemental of homosexuality, and the pursuit of status.

Brown stresses that these norms are at the core of shame triggers (Brown 2012, 107) and concludes that, although shame is “most definitely organised by gender” (Brown 2012, 95), the experience of shame can be seen as universal and profoundly human.

Additionally, Hilgers indicates that men seem to more frequently handle shame in an aggressive manner than women do. By contrast, women, apparently, gravitate more to an introverted, sometimes depressive kind of coping behaviour than men (Hilgers 2013, 325).

Finnish social psychologist Silfver-Kuhlampi (2009) highlights the relevance of the survey method in regard to gender-specific differences between the sexes. She believes that, as a consequence of traditional feminine role models, females are probably encouraged to be more empathetic, and more guilt—and shame prone than males. However, it has to be acknowledged that the difficulty in using scenario-based measures of guilt and shame is the fact that men and women apparently experience shame and guilt in different contexts (Silfver-Kuhlampi 2009, 37–38).

Moreover, Silfver-Kuhlampi acknowledges that most findings regarding gender differences in morally relevant constructs, are based on Western cultures, and these differences are not necessarily regarded as universal (Silfver-Kuhlampi 2009). According to the results obtained by Fischer and Manstead (2000), there are gender differences both in experiencing and in expressing emotions, especially with regard to guilt and shame. These gender differences in various emotions usually seem to be more pronounced in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures where the gender difference in societal roles are relatively minor. She underlines that in collectivistic cultures, societal roles are more strongly differentiated based on gender, i.e. gender differences in emotion were found to be less prominent in women from collectivistic cultures, whereas men from individualistic cultures scored lower in self-reported guilt and shame than women from these cultures, or than men and women from collectivistic cultures (Silfver-Kuhlampi 2009, 37–38; further discussion of the differences between shame in collectivistic and individualistic cultures see Bhawuk, Sinha, Buch, Louth, Brennan, Robertson and Cox, in this book).

Fischer et al. (2004) found that men from countries where gender differences in societal roles are less pronounced, scored lower in terms of the intensity of self-reported emotions that produce a sense of powerlessness (fear, sadness, guilt and shame) than women, or than both genders in countries with more pronounced gender differences. Fischer and Manstead (2000) relate these results to individualistic values such as fear and sadness, and indicate that shame and guilt therefore contribute to a sense of powerlessness and lack of control. They therefore conclude that, in individualistic cultures, women have assumed the responsibility for maintaining positive social relationships and a healthy emotional atmosphere (Fischer and Manstead 2000).

Silfver-Kuhlampi (2009, 76) points out that a recent survey confirmed the presence of culture-specific features of gender differences. In this research, individuals from Finland and Peru were compared and the findings indicated that the Peruvians valued tradition, conformity, power, and achievement more than people from Finland, whereas the Finns showed higher results for values like hedonism, stimulation and benevolence than the Peruvians. At the same time, gender differences in values were found to be stronger among Finns than Peruvians. According to Silfver-Kuhlampi, gender differences were significantly more pronounced in the

Finnish group than for the Peruvians in terms of the importance given to power, universalism, and security. She found that girls scored higher than boys in their estimate of universalism, whereas boys placed a higher premium on power and security than girls. By comparison, the gender difference was wider for Peruvians in terms of hedonism. While the Peruvian girls scored very low in their estimate of hedonism, Finnish boys as well as girls scored higher than Peruvian boys. She points to the fact that there were less variance in value-priorities among the Peruvians than among the Finnish test subjects. Conformity was regarded as the most important value among the Peruvian test subjects. Respecting traditions and conforming to social norms was considered very important for both genders in Peru. The results for guilt and shame proneness also showed a marked gender difference in guilt-proneness, and this was more prominent among the Finns than among the Peruvians. Finnish boys had lower scores in guilt-proneness than Finnish girls or than both genders in Peru, which is consistent with the findings of Fischer and Manstead (2000) in terms of the difference in guilt and shame between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Silfver-Kuhlampi 2009, 76).

Silfver-Kuhlampi concludes that that cultural perceptions relating to values and guilt-proneness, were more differentiated by gender in Finland than in Peru. The results of the present study suggest that attributes connected to masculine and feminine gender roles differ between cultures.

In their research on the perceptions of different age groups with regard to shame, guilt, and two forms of pride (authentic and hubristic), Orth et al. (2010) collected data from more than 2000 individuals between 13 and 89 years old. Their findings show that women reported higher levels of shame and guilt experiences, but less hubristic pride experiences than men. In terms of differences in ethnic background, Blacks reported less shame than Whites or Asians, and Asians reported more hubristic pride than both Blacks or Whites (Orth et al. 2010, 1067).

This book aims at contributing to theoretical, cultural and culture-comparative insights and perspectives. The following section contains brief previews of the various chapters and discussions of the book.

## 1.8 Chapter Preview

Based on the preceding discussions of shame within the context of the current paradigm shift towards viewing shame as a health-related resource, from the perspective of positive psychology and against the background of cultural divergence, shame is understood in this book as a health-related resource that can have a protective effect on the self.

Additionally, shame is a socio-cultural construct which is always embedded in a discourse of cultural and social norms and values. Shame is viewed as a relevant force in the development of personal identity and in the individual's continued growth and development. In being a relevant emotion for the individual and for the

development of personal identity, shame—if used and transformed constructively—can become an important factor in creating a stable and positive identity, and will contribute to the mental health of the individual throughout life. Shame can also become a key ingredient in reinforcing socially acceptable behaviour by increasing an awareness of authenticity, integrity and congruence both within the individual and the collective, and can contribute positively toward an acceptable social value system and norm-base. Shame can contribute to the resilience of a person by enhancing the ability to attach meaning to the social environment and to experience a sense of belonging and protection by self and others. Thus, shame becomes a powerful regulative of the individual and of the collective, and initiates lifelong learning, growth and development. It is also seen as a factor that stimulates creativity, and empowers individuals and groups towards greater self-development through self-reflection, counselling and stimulation.

The descriptions of shame above provide the basis for the following brief previews of the various chapters of this book. The book is divided into three main parts which include: (1) theoretical discussions, (2) culture-specific insights, and (3) the application of shame as a health-related resource in counselling and therapy.

### ***1.8.1 Part One***

The first three chapters discuss shame in the context of various theoretical perspectives.

In her chapter, Michelle May contributes to the existing knowledge-base on shame from a psychodynamic systems perspective. The author highlights relevant fundamental principles derived from a psycho-analytic approach based primarily on Freud, Klein, Bion, and Jaques. In conclusion she presents a case study to illustrate how psychodynamics can contribute to an understanding of shame dynamics, emphasising the interrelationships with culture and race.

Markus van Alphen's chapter on "Shame as a functional and adaptive emotion: A bio-psycho-social perspective", focuses on shame from the perspective of regarding it as a constructive, functional and adaptive emotion. The author presents a theoretical synthesis of emotion theories, and takes a closer look at shame and its manifestations across various cultures.

Tom Ryan refers to healthy shame within the context of personal conviction, individual value systems and self-evaluation. The author explores shame in the context of the person, as well as with regard to cultural norms in the Australian context. Finally, shame is discussed in the context of spirituality and morals. The author concludes that shame is a fundamental element of humanness which is necessary to be an integral, responsible human being.



### 1.8.2 Part Two

The second part of the book consists of six chapters and refers primarily to culture-specific perspectives on shame.

Dharm P.S. Bhawuk describes the Indian concept of *lajja*, or shame by exploring its meanings and analysing its usage in two popular scriptural texts, the Bhagavad-Gita and the Durga Saptashati. This chapter provides more extensive cultural insights, not only with regard to these two scripts, but also in terms of the use of the concept in daily communication and proverbial expressions. The author shows that in India the notions of *lajja*, shame and guilt are integrated concepts whereas, in the Western world they are usually viewed as distinct notions. Accordingly, this chapter takes a different perspective with regard to the common distinction between “guilt and shame cultures” and other concepts encountered in global psychology.

The authors, Claude-Hélène Mayer and Louise Tonelli, provide new insights with reference to the context of Higher Education Institutions in South Africa. Since very little research has been done on shame in the South African work context, the authors present new insights on shame in this particular context by presenting in-depth, qualitative research findings. Definitions on shame, examples of shame experiences at work, and personal and organisational strategies to manage shame at work, are presented. The positive impact of shame is discussed, and recommendations are given for future research and practice.

In her theoretical chapter on the role of shame in different cultural environments, Barbara Buch elaborates on the cultural effect of shame with reference to present-day North American/Canadian society, as well as its effect on previous generations. She develops a shame-pride-continuum which relates to Antonovsky’s model of salutogenesis. The author provides examples of shame in indigenous and European-colonialist cultures, thus contributing towards a better understanding of the implications of shame in the present-day North American society. Finally, shame is examined as a political tool that can contribute to both individuals and societies in terms of being a health or survival resource.

Sharon Louth explores shame from a particular cultural perspective in the section: “Indigenous Australians: shame and pride”. The author examines shame within the Australian society, with a special focus on the perspective of Indigenous Australians. The notions of self-confidence, self-conceptualisation and self-efficacy are explored in the context of shame. Strategies to enhance these abilities on a personal level are discussed and examples of cultural communities are provided.

The authors Samantha Brennan, Neville Robertson and Cate Curtis define shame as a powerful and evocative experience which is not necessarily experienced negatively by all. This chapter explores responses to shame in the context of resilience. Research findings are presented which highlight experiences among the Pākehā New Zealanders.

Rebecca Merkin reports on findings that show the correspondence of shame experiences and bullying across different cultural groups within the US. The author

highlights that shame can serve as a resource-oriented mechanism based on the desire for harmonious mediation, and reviews relevant available literature with regard to cross-cultural perspectives on shame.

### 1.8.3 Part Three

The third part of the book deals with the application of shame and culture in therapeutic and counselling practices.

Author Mrigaya Sinha provides an overview of shame and psychotherapy with regard to prevailing theories, methods and practices. Shame can be accessed in terms of its meaningfulness in psychotherapeutic interventions and identified through verbal and non-verbal markers of shame. The author discusses shame in the context of therapy and provides guidelines for therapists when treating shame.

Finally, in her chapter on how shame can become a “soul feeding emotion”, Claude-Hélène Mayer illustrates, through archetypal work in a group development process, how shame can be transformed through therapeutical group work. A case study is presented to further illustrate the process. Reference is made to the archetypal work of Carl Gustave Jung within the perspective of positive psychology.

The book integrates different psychological perspectives and approaches, including moral and spiritual references to shame, social and literary approaches, as well culture-specific insights gained from Australian, Indian, South African, New Zealand, Northern American, and European cultural contexts.

By presenting theoretical, empirical and practical insights on shame and culture from the perspective of positive psychology, this book contributes to constructing a sound knowledge base for future conceptual work, research and practice in dealing with shame from different disciplinary and cultural perspectives.

## References

- Andrews, B., Qian, M., & Valentine, J. (2002). Predicting depressive symptoms with a new measure of shame: The experience of shame scale. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 41* (1), 29–42. doi:[10.1348/014466502163778](https://doi.org/10.1348/014466502163778)
- Andrieux, L. (2012). *Submission for INSEAD executive masters thesis consulting and coaching for change* (1st ed.).
- Antonovsky, A. (1979). *Health, stress and coping*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unravelling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Arndt, J., & Goldenberg, J. (2004). From self-awareness to shame-proneness: Evidence of causal sequence among women. *Self And Identity, 3*(1), 27–37. doi:[10.1080/13576500342000022](https://doi.org/10.1080/13576500342000022)
- Bagozzi, R., Verbeke, W., & Gavino, J. (2003). Culture moderates the self-regulation of shame and its effects on performance: The case of salespersons in the Netherlands and the Philippines. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(2), 219–233. doi:[10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.219](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.219)

- Bartlett, L. (2007). Literacy, speech and shame: The cultural politics of literacy and language in Brazil. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 20(5), 547–563. doi:10.1080/09518390701207426
- Benedict, R. (1946). *The chrysanthemum and the sword: Patterns of Japanese culture*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Bengel, J., Wirtz, M., & Zwingmann, C. (2001). *Diagnostische Verfahren in der Rehabilitation. (Diagnostic processes in rehabilitation)*. Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Briegleb, T. (2014). *Die diskrete Scham*. Frankfurt: Insel Verlag.
- Brown, B. (2008). *I thought it was just me (but it isn't)*. New York: Gotham Books.
- Brown, B. (2012). *Daring greatly*. New York, NY: Gotham Books.
- Casimir, M. J., & Schnegg, M. (2002). Shame across cultures: The evolution, ontogeny and function of a “moral emotion”. In H. Keller & Y. H. Poortinga (Eds.), *Between culture and biology: Perspectives on ontogenetic development* (pp. 200–270). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, K.J., & Nicols, R. (2016). The natural history of shame and its modification by Confucian culture. In K. J. Clark (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Naturalism*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Cole, P., Tamang, B., & Shrestha, S. (2006). Cultural variations in the socialization of young children's anger and shame. *Child Development*, 77(5), 1237–1251. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00931.x
- Connor, S. (2001). *The shame of being a man*. Stevenconnor.com. <http://www.stevenconnor.com/shame>. Accessed April 24, 2016.
- Davidhoff, F. (2002). Shame: The elephant in the room. *British Medical Journal*, 324, 623–624. doi:10.1136/bmj.324.7338.623.
- Deonna, J., Rodogno, R., & Teroni, F. (2012). *In defense of shame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Döring, J. (2015). *Peinlichkeit*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Darwin, C., Cummings, M. M., Duchenne, G.-B., & John Murray (Firm). (1872). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*. London: John Murray.
- Efthim, P., Kenny, M., & Mahalik, J. (2001). Gender role stress in relation to shame, guilt, and externalization. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 79(4), 430–438. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2001.tb01990.x
- Elias, N. (1939). *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (1st ed.). Basel: Haus zum Falken.
- Elias, N. (1976). *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Elias, N. (1978). *The civilizing process* (1st ed.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Erden, S., & Akbağ, M. (2015). How do personality traits effect shame and guilt? An evaluation of the turkish culture. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 15(58). doi:10.14689/ejer.2015.58.4
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Farrell, A. (2011). *Fat shame*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Ferguson, T. (2005). Mapping shame and its functions in relationships. *Child Maltreatment*, 10(4), 377–386. doi:10.1177/1077559505281430
- Fischer, A. H., & Manstead, A. S. R. (2000). The relation between gender and emotions in different cultures. In A. Fisher (Ed.), *Gender and emotion: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 71–94). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fischer, A. H., Manstead, A. S. R., & Rodriguez Mosquera, P. M. (1999). The role of honour-related versus individualistic values in conceptualizing pride, shame and anger: Spanish and Dutch cultural prototypes. *Cognition and Emotion*, 13, 149–179.
- Fischer, A. H., Rodriguez Mosquera, P. M., van Vianen, A. E. M., & Manstead, A. S. R. (2004). Gender and culture differences in emotion. *Emotion*, 4, 87–94.
- Fredrickson, B. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218–226. doi:10.1037//0003-066x.56.3.218

- Freud, Sigmund: Das Unbehagen in der Kultur (1930). In: *Gesammelte Werke. Chronologisch geordnet (XIV: Werke aus den Jahren 1925–1931)*, hg. von Anna Freud u. a., London 1948–1968.
- Freud, S. (1961/1933). New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis. In J. Strachey (Ed.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 22). New York: Norton.
- Freud, S., Mitscherlich, A., Richards, A., & Strachey, J. (1989). Werke (pp. 193–196). Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Furukawa, E., Tangney, J., & Higashibara, F. (2012). Cross-cultural continuities and discontinuities in shame, guilt, and pride: A study of children residing in Japan, Korea and the USA. *Self and Identity*, 11(1), 90–113. doi:10.1080/15298868.2010.512748
- Gilbert, P., Gilbert, J., & Sanghera, J. (2004). A focus group exploration of the impact of izzat, shame, subordination and entrapment on mental health and service use in South Asian women living in Derby. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 7(2), 109–130. doi:10.1080/13674670310001602418
- Greiner, U. (2014). *Schamverlust*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Harper, J. (2011). *Regulating and coping with shame*. Pvsps.cz. [http://www.pvsps.cz/data/document/20110715/12\\_Shame.pdf?id=690](http://www.pvsps.cz/data/document/20110715/12_Shame.pdf?id=690). Accessed May 1, 2016.
- Hernandez, V., & Mendoza, C. (2011). Shame resilience: A strategy for empowering women in treatment for substance abuse. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 11(4), 375–393. doi:10.1080/1533256x.2011.622193
- Highfield, J., Markham, D., Skinner, M., & Neal, A. (2009). An investigation into the experience of self-conscious emotions in individuals with bipolar disorder, unipolar depression and non-psychiatric controls. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 17(5), 395–405. doi:10.1002/cpp.674
- Hilgers, M. (2013). *Scham*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Jacquet, J. (2015). *Scham: die politische Kraft*. Ebook: Frankfurt, S. Fischer.
- Jaffe, K., Flórez, A., Gomes, C. M., Rodríguez, D., & Achury, C. (2014). *On the biological and cultural evolution of shame: Using internet search tools to weight values in many cultures*. Laboratorio de Evolución, Universidad Simón Bolívar, Caracas, Venezuela. <http://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1401/1401.1100.pdf>. Accessed June 11, 2016.
- Kaufman, G. (1989). *The psychology of shame*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Korczak, D. (2013). *Schamlos!*. Kröning: Asanger.
- Landweer, H. (1999). *Scham und Macht*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Lewis, H. (1971a). *Shame and guilt in neurosis*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Lewis, H. (1971b). *The role of shame in symptom formation*. Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Lewis, M. (1992). *Shame*. New York: Free Press.
- Lewis, M. (2011). The self-conscious emotions. In *Encyclopedia on early childhood development*. Institute for the Study of Child Development, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Child Health Institute, USA.
- Lietzmann, A. (2007). *Theorie der Scham*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac.
- Li, B., Zhong, J., Qian, M. (2003). Regression analysis on social anxiety proneness among college students. *Chinese Mental Health Journal*, 17, 109–112 (in Chinese).
- Lindisfarne, N. (1998). Gender, shame and culture: An anthropological perspective. In P. Gilbert & B. Andrews (Eds.), *Shame. Interpersonal behaviour, psychopathology, and culture* (pp. 246–261). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lotter, M. (2012). *Scham, Schuld, Verantwortung*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Lynd, H. (1958). *On shame and the search for identity* (1st ed.). New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Mahalik, J., Locke, B., Ludlow, L., Diemer, M., Scott, R., Gottfried, M., et al. (2003). Development of the conformity to masculine norms inventory. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 4, 3–25.
- Mahalik, J., Morray, E., Coonerty-Femiano, A., Ludlow, L., Slattery, S., & Smiler, A. (2005). Development of the conformity to feminine norms inventory. *Sex Roles*, 52, 317–335.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224–253.

- Marks, S. (2007). *Scham - die tabuisierte Emotion* (1st ed.). Düsseldorf: Patmos.
- Mascolo, M. F., & Fischer, K. W. (1985). Developmental transformations in appraisals for pride, shame and guilt. In J. P. Tangney & K. W. Fischer (Eds.), *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride* (pp. 64–113). New York, NY, USA: Guilford Press.
- Masters, R. (2016). *Shame: From toxic collapse to healing exposure*. <http://robertmasters.com/writings/shame-from-toxic-collapse-to-healing-exposure>. Accessed April 24, 2016.
- Marks, S. (2010). *Die Würde des Menschen*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
- Marks, S. (2011). *Scham - die tabuisierte Emotion*. Düsseldorf: Patmos.
- Mendez, M. F. (2009). The neurobiology of moral behavior: Review and neuropsychiatric implications. *CNS Spectrums*, 14(11), 608–620.
- Menon, U., & Shweder, R. A. (1994). Kali's tongue: Cultural psychology and the power of shame in Orissa, India. In S. Kitayama & H. R. Markus (Eds.), *Emotion and culture. Empirical studies of mutual influence* (pp. 241–282). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Metz, K. (2009). *Shame as narrative strategy: Prose by Scottish writers Laura Hird, Jackie Kay, A. L. Kennedy and Ali Smith*. <http://kops.uni-konstanz.de/handle/123456789/3600>. Accessed April 17, 2016.
- Miller, S. B. (1996). *Shame in context*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Miller, T. R. (2002). *Culture, gender, and moral emotions: The role of interdependent self-construal*. Dissertation Abstracts International, 63, 03B (UMI No. 3045180).
- Miller, R. S., & Tangney, J. P. (1994). Differentiating embarrassment and shame. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 13, 273–287.
- Mills, R. S. (2005). Taking stock of the developmental literature on shame. *Developmental Review*, 25(1), 26–63. doi:10.1016/j.dr.2004.08.001
- Morrison, A. P. (1989). *Shame, the underside of narcissism*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- Mosquera, P. M. R., Fischer, A. H., Manstead, A. S. R., Zaalberg, R., Markus, H. M., & Kitayama, S. (1995). *Emotion and culture*. Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Mayer, C.-H., Viviers, R., & Tonelli, L. (2017). The fact that she just looked at me...—Narrations on shame in South African workplaces. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, 43(1), a1385. [10.4102/sajip.v42i1.1385](https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v42i1.1385)
- Nelson, D. L., & Simmons, B. L. (2003). Health psychology and work stress: A more positive approach. In J. C. Quick & L. E. Tetrick (Eds.), *Handbook of occupational psychology* (pp. 97–119). Washington, DC: American Psychological Society.
- O'Connor, L., Berry, J., Inaba, D., Weiss, J., & Morrison, A. (1994). Shame, guilt, and depression in men and women in recovery from addiction. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 11(6), 503–510. doi:10.1016/0740-5472(94)90001-9
- Orth, U., Robins, R., & Soto, C. (2010). Tracking the trajectory of shame, guilt, and pride across the life span. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(6), 1061–1071. doi:10.1037/a0021342
- Oxford Dictionary. (2016). Definition of shame in English, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/shame>. Accessed June 11, 2016.
- Piers, G. & Singer, M. (1971). *Shame and guilt* (1st ed.). New York: Norton.
- Potter-Efron, R., & Potter-Efron, P. (1989). *Letting go of shame*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Qian, M., Liu, X., & Zhu, R. (2001). Phenomenological research of shame among college students. *Chinese Mental Health Journal*, 15, 7–73.
- Robbins, B., & Parlavocchio, H. (2006). The unwanted exposure of the self: A phenomenological study of embarrassment. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 34(4), 321–345. doi:10.1207/s15473333thp3404\_3
- Romney, A. K., Moore, C. C., & Rusch, C. D. (1997). Cultural universals: Measuring the semantic structure of emotion terms in English and Japanese. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 94(10), 5489–5494. doi:10.1073/pnas.94.10.5489
- Rothmann, S. (2014). Flourishing in work and careers. In M. Coetzee (Ed.), *Psycho-social career meta-capacities*. Cham: Springer.

- Röttger-Rössler, B. (2004). *Die kulturelle Modellierung des Gefühls: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Methodik ethnologischer Emotionsforschung anhand indonesischer Fallstudien*. Münster: Lit.
- Röttger-Rössler, B. (2010). Zur Kulturalität von Emotionen. *Existenzanalyse*, 27(2), 20–27.
- Scheff, T. (1988). Shame and conformity: The deference-emotion system. *American Sociological Review*, 53(3), 395. doi:10.2307/2095647
- Scheff, T. (2013). *The S-word: Shame as a key to modern societies. Global summit on diagnostic alternatives*. <http://dxsummit.org/archives/1286>. Accessed May 1, 2016.
- Scheff, T., & Retzinger, S. (1997). *Shame, anger and the social bond: A theory of sexual offenders and treatment*. Sociology.org. <http://www.sociology.org/content/vol003.001/sheff.html>. Accessed May 1, 2016.
- Schneider, C. (1987). A mature sense of shame. In D. Nathanson (Ed.), *Many faces of shame* (1st ed., pp. 194–213). New York: Guilford Press.
- Seligman, M. E., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5–14. doi:10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.5
- Shweder, R. (2015). *Toward a deep cultural psychology of shame*. Humdev.uchicago.edu. <https://humdev.uchicago.edu/sites/humdev.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shweder/2003-Toward%20a%20deep%20cultural%20psychology%20of%20shame.pdf>. Accessed May 1, 2016.
- Sheldon, K. M., & King, L. (2001). Why positive psychology is necessary. *American Psychologist*, 56, 216–217.
- Silfver-Kuhlampi, M. (2009). *The sources of moral motivation—Studies on empathy, guilt, shame and values*. Thesis: University of Helsinki.
- Starrin, B. (2016). Humiliationstudies.org. <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/StarrinShameHumiliationPsychiatricIIIHealth.pdf>. Accessed May 1, 2016.
- Sznycer, D., Takemura, K., Delton, A., Sato, K., Robertson, T., Cosmides, L., et al. (2012). Cross-cultural differences and similarities in proneness to shame: An adaptationist and ecological approach. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 10(2). doi:10.1177/147470491201000213
- Tangney, J., & Dearing, R. (2002). *Shame and guilt*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Tangney, J., & Fischer, K. (1995). *Self-conscious emotions*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral emotions and moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 345–372. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070145
- Tangney, J., Miller, R., Flicker, L., & Barlow, D. (1996). Are shame, guilt, and embarrassment distinct emotions?. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(6), 1256–1269. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.70.6.1256
- Tracy, J. L., & Matsumoto, D. (2008). The spontaneous expression of pride and shame: Evidence for biologically innate nonverbal displays. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 105(33), 11655–11660. doi:10.1073/pnas.0802686105
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2004). Putting the self into self-conscious emotions: A theoretical model. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(2), 103–125. doi:10.1207/s15327965pli1502\_01.
- Tracy, J. & Robins, R. (2017). The nonverbal expression of pride: Evidence for cross-cultural recognition. Retrieved 6 February 2017, from doi:10.1037/0022-3514.94.3.516.
- Tomkins, S. (2008). *Affect imagery consciousness* (1st ed.). New York: Springer
- Wells, R. & Ashizawa, T. (2006). *Genetic instabilities and neurological diseases*. Boston: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Werden, R. (2015). *Schamkultur und Schuldkultur. Revision einer Theorie*. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag.
- Wertenbruch, M., & Röttger-Rössler, B. (2011). *Emotionsethnologische Untersuchung zu Scham und Beschämung in der Schule*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Wurmser, L. (2010). *Die Maske der Scham*. Eschborn/Frankfurt, M.: Klotz.
- Wurmser, L. (2015). Primary Shame, mortal wound and tragic circularity: Some new reflections on shame and shame conflicts. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (Blackwell Publishers Ltd). <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-3956053881.html>. Accessed May 1, 2016.
- Wong, Y., & Tsai, J. L. (2007). Cultural models of shame and guilt. In J. Tracy, R. Robins, & J. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self-conscious emotions* (pp. 201–223). New York, NW: Guilford Press.

**Part I**  
**Theoretical Perspectives on Shame**  
**and Culture**

# Chapter 2

## Shame! A System Psychodynamic Perspective

Michelle May

**Abstract** The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to existing knowledge about shame, through using the systems psychodynamic perspective. Firstly I explore the definition of shame, by building on ideas that illustrate the unconscious dynamics of shame in the context of culture. Then follows an overview of systems psychodynamics, which has its theoretical underpinnings in psycho-analytic thinking based on the work of Freud, Klein's object relations theory, Bion's work on groups, Jaques's and Menzies Lyth's work on organisations as social defences and envious attacks, and open systems theory. A case study is presented to illustrate how systems psychodynamics can contribute to our understanding of shame dynamics operating at the intersection of culture and race (In this chapter race is used in accordance with the South African construction of groups based on their skin colour using apartheid and post-apartheid values.), and how this enhanced understanding can impact the work of practitioners.

### 2.1 Introduction

Exploring the psychodynamics of our emotions often elicits thoughts about the destructive elements of these emotions, at the expense of a positive stance towards the value of these emotions. I see the so-called destructive elements of emotions as elements that can be worked with and processed for an enhanced understanding of one's reaction, in the service of achieving a more useful outcome—such as a conversation that integrates the complexities of the human condition (see Cilliers and May 2010). It is in fact by ignoring, repressing and denying these elements that we ensure destructive outcomes for individuals, groups and organisations.

---

M. May (✉)

Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology,  
University of South Africa (UNISA), AJH vd Walt  
Building 3-109, Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge,  
Pretoria, South Africa  
e-mail: mayms@unisa.ac.za



Therefore, I hold that by focusing on the so-called destructive (and constructive) elements of emotions, in this case shame, we can work with these elements in the service of integrating the complexities at the intersection between culture and race.

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to existing knowledge about shame, i.e. how our understanding of shame, in the context of the intersection between culture and race, can be enhanced through using the system psychodynamic perspective. I first give an overview of the definition of shame, building in ideas that illustrate the unconscious dynamics of shame. Then follows an overview of systems psychodynamics, which is based on the work of Freud, Klein's object relations theory, Bion's work on groups, Jaques's and Menzies Lyth's work on organisations as social defences, and open systems theory (Fraher 2004). A case study is presented to illustrate how systems psychodynamics can contribute to enhancing our understanding of shame dynamics operating at the intersection of culture and race, and how this enhanced understanding can impact the work of practitioners.

## 2.2 The Dynamics of Shame

Shame is conceptualized as a social emotion, elicited by personal devaluation of one's action from the standpoint of others (Elison 2005; Fullagar 2003). Shame arises from one's own consciousness and is experienced in the presence of others, with a focus on the self as bad. It is a set of emotional reactions related to the perception of devaluation through self-monitoring, i.e. a person perceives his/her social status/acceptance by others to be lost, diminished or less desired (Elison 2005; Fullagar 2003; Morrison 2011). Shame involves perceived or actual reduction in social rank (Kane 2012). Thus, the self and self-consciousness have central roles in shame—in that shame is experienced when the (whole) self is experienced as flawed and intolerable (Lansky 1999, 2003). Lansky also describes shame as a moral emotion.

Research has shown a universal expression of shame (a shame display), viz. lowering of the eyes, decreased muscle tone of face and neck resulting in the lowering of the head, as well as using the face, body, words and actions to appear smaller and non-threatening and communicating retreat, surrender and appeasement (Elison 2005). This shame display signals appeasement to others. The intensity of shame is determined by the gap between the ideal self and the actual self. The individual evaluates the self, using the eye of the other (Fullagar 2003) to see how he or she falls short of his/her own ideals or expectations, resulting in feelings of failure or being inferior (Morrison 2011).

In the work of Freud (Lansky 1999) shame, on the unconscious level, is considered to be a signal anxiety about pending psychical painful feelings of being harmed through unbearable narcissistic mortification and incipient social annihilation. At its most unbearable, [shame also] signals loss of all connection to the social order, the ultimate form of separation—social annihilation (Lansky 2005,

p. 879). Shame as a signal anxiety instigates a defence against the painful awareness of negative affect or repelling idea or intrapsychic conflict, which the ego wants to resist. It is important to note that shame is not seen as a defence against drives or instincts, but against the painful awareness of not being worthwhile, or having a defective sense of self (Rizzuto 2014). Shame as a defence does not repress drive conflicts, but rather represses the awareness of drive conflicts pertaining to one's experiences of being inferior, unlovable, etc. (Lansky 1999) in the presence of internal or external objects (Morrison 2011; Rizzuto 2014). In this case shame has an emotion-regulating function, ensuring that the individual maintains the social bond in the context of the possibility of endangered status, lovability, or acceptance (Lansky 1999). Shame is experienced when the self is affected by conflict arising from narcissistic self-evaluation in the presence of significant internal and external objects (Rizzuto 2014). Thus, the experience of shame has a direct connection to internalised object relations (Rizzuto, 2014), where shame involves an internalised gaze of the self (based on the introjected the eye of the other), which judges the ideal self against the actual self (Morrison 2011). As discussed by Lansky (1999), shame results from defensive activity, emotion regulating activity and/or compromised object relations formation. The latter is discussed later in the chapter.

Literature suggests that shame and guilt are poorly understood concepts, and erroneously seen as belonging to the same category (Elison 2005; Lansky 1999; Tangney 2001). The large overlap between the two constructs in research and by theorists could be attributed to shame being one of the main affects associated with guilt (Elison 2005). Lansky (1999) also considers guilt and shame to be moral emotions. Shame in the adult psyche indicates conflict with ego-ideal (a set of standard, ideals and role expectation (Lansky 2005)) referred to as the conscience (Lansky 1999), whereas guilt is concerned with transgressions and punishment and indicates a fear of retaliatory punishment (Lansky 2005, p. 878). The ego-ideal is the early development of the conscience, linked to pre-oedipal dynamics. The later, post-oedipal development of the conscience results in the superego, which stands over and evaluates the ego (Lansky 1999). Further discussion of the differences and similarities between these two constructs does not fall in the ambit of this chapter.

In modern culture it seems that shame has expanded to shame-guilt, embarrassment and humiliation. Elison (2005) provides definitions for these concepts:

- Shame is the perception or expectation of devaluation of oneself by others;
- Embarrassment contains all the aspects of shame and public evaluation;
- Humiliation contains all the aspects of shame, public devaluation and the hostile intent of others. Lansky (1999) defines humiliation as the individual experiencing shame as deliberately inflicted by another; and
- Shame-guilt denotes all the aspects of shame experienced within the context of an offence.

The adaptive function of shame cannot be ignored. Stadter (2011) acknowledges the constructive aspects of shame to include the appeasement of others, the prevention of actions that elicit the perceived or inferred devaluation, the hiding of the

self when weakened or injured, modesty, social sensitivity and conforming to social/cultural norms. Elison (2005, p. 219) states that:

Shame is to relationships what pain is to bodily integrity. Just as pain is a warning that physical harm is occurring, shame is a warning that a relationship has been disrupted. Just as pain's negative quality motivates us to stop it or avoid it, shame's negative quality motivates us to stop it or avoid it. Both pain and shame serve to promote the event to consciousness, turn our attention to it, and motivate appropriate action.

### 2.3 Culture-Related Manifestations of Shame

The discussion thus far attempts to give a universal definition of shame. However, it does not ignore that the universal aspect of shame has different manifestations, with regard to character, substance and meaning, for different cultural groups (Shweder 2003). According to Shweder (2003) the different manifestation of shame across different historical periods can also not be ignored. Although shame is about being judged as defective by the other (universal definition), in one culture it can be about not being lovable (if one's lovability is valued in the culture) and in another about not taking up one's responsibility (if being responsible is valued in the culture) (see Shweder 2003).

Although the manifestations of shame vary across cultures, they do not do so randomly and endlessly. Shweder (2003) proposes a framework describing how the culturally valued aspect of the self can be clustered into three ethics, viz. the "ethics of autonomy", the "ethics of community" and the "ethics of divinity". Through the "ethics of autonomy" the self is conceptualised as an individual preference structure emphasising ever-increasing choice and personal freedom. The "ethics of community" emphasises how the individual's role in the community is intrinsically linked to one's identity, which is part of a larger collective with a particular history. In the "ethics of divinity" the self is conceptualised as a spiritual being connected to a sacred or higher order and is the bearer of a legacy that is elevated and divine (Shweder 2003). The relative weight of the three ethics within a culture affects the experience and expression of [shame], as well as the way [in which shame is] given meaning (Shweder 2003, p. 1121). Through language as an expression of culture, differences in the experience and expression of shame, and the way in which meaning is ascribed to shame, can be observed (Etezady 2010; Taylor 2015).

According to Fullagar (2003) shame is very much connected to the embodied performance of identity in relation to cultural norms, as it produces feelings of self-hatred, disgust and loathing that are not easily detached from the self as "cognitions". Thus shame denotes social rejection, which is either based in reality or imagined. The intensity of shame is influenced by the size of the devaluing audience, the importance of the individuals (friend vs. stranger) who form part of the devaluing audience, whether the devaluation is imagined or real, and the degree (intensity) of the devaluation, e.g. mere expression of disgust versus outright

rejection. These characteristics are influenced by cultural norms. Our judgement of the appropriateness of others' devaluation could dampen or intensify the experience of shame (Elison 2005; Lansky 1999).

## 2.4 The Theoretical Approach: Systems Psychodynamics

Systems psychodynamics allows for the study and interpretation of collective, interdependent, unconscious and conscious individual, group and intergroup processes resulting from the interconnection between different groups and subgroups within a social system (Czander and Eisold 2003). It also affords us the opportunity to attend to unconscious phenomena within people, the organisational context (tasks, structures, boundaries) and the complex interaction between the two (Amado 1995). In the following sections the different theoretical underpinnings of systems psychodynamics are explicated.

### 2.4.1 *Psycho-Analysis*

Although Freud is not known as a group theorist, he speculated about group and organisational dynamics (Freud 1921), which provided the theoretical foundation of systems psychodynamics. Bion (1961) proposed that psycho-analytic principles be applied to group phenomena in order to increase insight into dynamic, group processes occurring on both conscious and unconscious levels in different contexts, including groups and organisations. Systems psychodynamics further assumes conflict between rational behaviour as defined by the task(s) of the organisation and unconscious individual and group processes (Armstrong 2006).

#### 2.4.1.1 Basic Assumption

Bion's central assumption is that in every group two groups are occurring simultaneously, but to varying degrees, viz. the work group and the basic assumption group. Bion emphasised that both the work and basic assumption groups exist and both are necessary to ensure a group's activity. Bion used Kleinian concepts to illustrate that the basic assumption group originates in infancy, and to elucidate our understanding of the functioning of a group. According to Bion (1975) when group members' activity is related to reality and is rational, the group is involved in workgroup activity—which is similar to Freud's idea of the ego. Workgroup activity is obstructed, diverted and assisted by basic assumption activity, which is the psychic activity of the group that is irrational, primitive and lost in phantasy. The members of a basic assumption group show defensive or regressive behaviour

marked by primitive splitting and projective identification, depersonalisation and infantile regression, and the wish to avoid reality (Menzies Lyth 1981).

#### **2.4.1.2 The Organisation-in-the-Mind**

Through Bion's work one can be clearer about the object of attention and interpretation in psycho-analysis in the organisation, i.e. emotional experiences between the individual and the group, the group and the organisation (Long 2004). The relatedness that an individual has to an organisation, i.e. an individual's emotional experiences of the organisation, denotes the organisation-in-the-mind (Armstrong 2006).

#### **2.4.1.3 Object Relations Theory**

Object relations theory primarily emphasises the importance of an individual's relations with actual (external) and phantased (internal) objects. These unconscious, internalised, relations between part self (e.g. I am only bad) and internal part objects (e.g. others are only bad) are connected by feelings and thoughts and result in interpersonal relationship patterns unconsciously chosen and re-enacted through our object relations (Lansky 2003; Stadter 2011). Thus, object relations theory presents a theory of unconscious internal object relations in dynamic interplay with current interpersonal (and intergroup) experiences. Essentially, object relations theory allows an analysis of the person and his/her relations with internal and external objects (Czander 1993; Klein 1985; Ogden 1983). The term object is used because the relations are not only with a person. The relations can be with a group, an idea, an organisation, a symbol and, in infancy, with parts of the body (Czander 1993, p. 44).

## **2.5 Shame and Its Roots in Infancy**

As stated, our understanding of shame can be enhanced by linking shame to unconscious phantasies based on internalised object relations, which has its roots in infancy (Rizzuto 2014). The infant has feelings about how the significant (m)other views him/her due to the actual behaviour of the significant (m)other, or to the infant's projections of his/her own feelings and fantasies. These two components of the infant's experience of the significant (m)other develop into a single representational construction of the significant (m)other as part objects in the psyche Rizzuto (2014). Morrison (2011) suggests that shame is the negative feeling related to narcissism, where narcissism involves the wish to be special to the significant (m) other. When this wish is satisfied by the significant (m)other, the infant develops a sense of self that is coherent, stable and well-esteemed. However, should the infant

fail to merge with or obtain mirroring from the significant (m)other, the self is experienced as chaotic, deficient or fragmented, opening the self to narcissistic vulnerability and shame. The break experienced by the infant of the mirroring of the significant (m)other results in pre-existing beliefs and unconscious fantasies about one's own value/worth, defectiveness or unlovability, which reverberate into adulthood.

### ***2.5.1 The Two Positions***

Klein's object relations theory also demonstrated that adulthood has its roots in infancy by showing that the earliest activities of the ego involved various defence mechanisms (such as splitting, introjection and projection) to exclude particular anxieties from consciousness (Klein 1985; Stein 2000). Klein also demonstrated that early development consists of two distinct, but overlapping, developmental positions, i.e. the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions (Klein 1985; Likierman 2001). The paranoid-schizoid position is marked by splitting, introjection, projection and projective identification, which ensure that others are perceived as part objects, i.e. either good or bad objects. In infancy the significant other is split into good nurturing or bad and withholding, resulting in the part objects (Robbins and Goicoechea 2005). The persecutory anxiety experienced in the paranoid-schizoid position is an intense source of shame, because the self is experienced as unlovable by the rejecting, exploiting and humiliating other (Lansky 2003). In the depressive position a person is able to perceive the other as a whole, separate object that is both good and bad (Brown 2003; Klein 1985; Likierman 2001). Thus the infant realises that it is the significant other who is both good and nurturing and bad and withholding. The self and the other are now organised by feelings and thinking states, and the self is experienced as separate from the other (Robbins and Goicoechea 2005).

The two positions stand in dialectical relationship with each other in that the positions create, negate and maintain each other into adulthood. In the dialectical interplay between the disintegrative tendencies of the paranoid-schizoid position and the integrative tendencies of the depressive position new psychological possibilities emerge creatively, without the descent into either total fragmentation or severe psychological rigidity (Robbins and Goicoechea 2005, p. 197). It is important to bear in mind that the depressive position cannot be completely maintained, because once the self-esteem is threatened (possibly through hidden shame) the person in his/her adult life tends to regress to functioning from the paranoid-schizoid position (Likierman 2001).

## 2.6 Socially Constructed Defences

### 2.6.1 Social Systems as a Defence Against Anxiety

Thus far, I have been discussing the psychodynamics of the infant. I consider this discussion necessary because it will elucidate the discussion of systems psychodynamics within organisations. Klein’s understanding of the relationship between the (m)other and the infant has been applied to the relationship between the individual, and groups (see Fig. 2.1), as well as between groups in the organisation (Powell Pruitt and Barber 2004).

These unconscious pairings between the self and its objects in the inner world affect daily functioning in three ways:

- Unconscious projection of the inner world onto external reality;
- Unconscious choice of relationships that repeat the inner dramas (transference and countertransference); and
- Through projective identification (Stadter 2011).

Klein’s ideas were later applied to adult behaviour in organisations by Jaques, Menzies Lyth, Miller and Rice. Jaques and Menzies Lyth built on the work of Klein, in particular the ideas of primitive anxieties and the defence mechanism mobilised in the paranoid-schizoid and depressive position, to develop social systems as a defence against persecutory and depressive anxiety (Long 2004).

The underlying assumption is that anxiety is specific to, and rises from, the nature of the work and from one’s interpersonal relationships linked to one’s position in the organisation (Jaques 1990; Menzies Lyth 1960, 1990). Individuals in organisations defend against the anxiety-provoking content and the difficulties of collaborating to accomplish a common task, by organising and using the structure of the organisation in the service of defence-related and not work-related functioning (Amado 1995; Jaques 1990; Menzies Lyth 1990). Thus, the organisation is being used by its stakeholders as an anxiety-holding system, and to prevent people

Infant’s relationship with mother	Individual’s relationship with group
- Struggles with fusing/joining and separating/isolation	
- Experiences both nurturance and frustration	
- Experiences strong ambivalent feelings	
- Experiences both love and hate simultaneously	
- Elicits defenses mechanism of splitting and projective identification to cope with ambivalence	
- Struggles with tension between engulfment and estrangement	

**Fig. 2.1** Parallels between infants with mothers and individuals with groups. *Source* Wells (1985), p. 117

from experiencing the anxieties generated by their work and interpersonal relationships (Long 2004).

Thus, social systems as a defence against anxiety explicate the dynamics of a particular organisation by exploring the parallel between individual defences and the social defences used by individuals and groups in a social system. Of critical importance is that the use of projective and introjective processes alleviates persecutory (the other experienced as bad) and depressive (the other experienced as both good and bad) anxiety experienced within care-giving or dependency-oriented organisations (Jaques 1990; Menzies Lyth 1990; Powell Pruitt and Barber 2004; Young 1995). In other words, members of social systems employ social defences, separate from conscious behaviour, to deal with work and interpersonal relationships that may be psychologically demanding (Mnguni 2012; Powell Pruitt and Barber 2004; Young 1995).

### ***2.6.2 Social Systems as an Envious Attack***

Stein (2000) proposes that within systems psychodynamic thinking, social systems as defences against anxiety have been developed extensively, resulting in the defence against anxiety paradigm. A new paradigm, namely the social system as envious attack, has been proposed by Stein (2000). Although envy and defensiveness may occur together, they are conceptually entirely distinct (Stein 2000). Thus, it is proposed that social systems are characterised by both envy and defences against anxiety, simultaneously or at different times, levels and parts (Stein 2000).

Several authors have proposed that envy is a destructive phenomenon in groups, organisations and society (Bion 1985; Mouly and Sankaram 2002; Stein 2000). The conceptualisation of envy assists in focusing on modes of activity that are attacking, and not only those that are defensive, in a group, organisation and society (Bion 1985; Stein 2000). Czander (1993) proposes that envy underlies all conflict within organisations. According to Mouly and Sankaram (2002) envy threatens hope in organisations.

According to Mollon (2002), envy, jealousy and shame are intimately related. Through shame the individual become disconnected and feels inferior, misunderstood or excluded from the other, which could lead to the experience of envy and jealousy. Importantly, envy results when the desired other is experienced as separate and unavailable, while jealousy is experienced when we perceive that our desired place with the other will be or is being occupied by a rival (Klein 1975). Aloofness towards, contempt for, and devaluation of, the other could be defences against envy, shame and jealousy (Mollon 2002).



### ***2.6.3 Hidden Shame Buried in the Envious Attack***

Shame intersects with the manifestation of envy, in that the envious attack can also be understood within the social systems as a defence against anxiety. In this case the envious attack is a defence against the anxiety of the experience of unbearable shame and perceived deficit. The precipitating or trigger event behind an envious attack is “the searing, painful experience of shame”. This painful experience of shame results from the implicit self-comparison in the envious attack where the self is experienced as inferior, lacking or defective in the context of the other’s success, creativity or good fortune in general. This experience of shame denotes hidden shame embedded in the comparative aspect of the envious attack. Thus, the envious attack as defence against the anxiety about the experience of shame is an attempt to deal with and/or expel the unbearable feelings of shame (Kane 2012).

Related to the concept of hidden shame is the expression of contempt as a defence against shame. The expression of contempt is an attempt by the individual to keep shame from consciousness by locating it into another through projective identification (Kane 2012). Projective identification refers to an unconscious interpersonal interaction in which the individual splits off and puts part of him/herself into an external object (the other)—the recipient of the projection. The recipient of a projection reacts to projected feeling as if unconsciously identifying with the projected feelings (Ogden 1983). Czander (1993) also proposes that projective identification requires unconscious collusion between the projector and the object or recipient, i.e. willingness on the part of the other to accept and behave in accordance with the projections.

Now how does projective identification relate to hidden shame? A person defends against the awareness of shame based on internalised object relations by projecting shame into a recipient (an external object). The recipient then identifies with the shame and behaves as a person who experiences shame. The projector is then free from shame and can hold onto contempt for the recipient who identified with the shame. In this way the projector’s shame remains hidden and unprocessed. Although the example is of an individual, projective identification can occur between an individual and a (cultural) group, between (cultural) groups and between a group and an organisation. It would be useful to think about how groups around you and in organisations could be using projective identification to ensure that their shame remain hidden in the intragroup and intergroup interaction.

## **2.7 Case Study**

Research in a historically black university (HBU) in South Africa explored the intergroup psychodynamics between students, lecturers and management from the lecturers’ perspective (May 2010). A qualitative research method based on hermeneutic phenomenology, using a single case study design and the systems

psychodynamic perspective, allowed for the exploration of the lecturers’ (emotional) experiences of their relationship with students and management in a particular HBU. Through convenience sampling (Endacott 2005), nine lecturers (eight white and one black lecturer) from a department at an HBU participated in conversations about their experiences at that institution (Table 2.1). Data collection entailed hermeneutic conversations with the nine lecturers from the HBU. Each interview started with a single open-ended question—namely, please tell me the story of your experiences as a lecturer at this university. Questions based on what the lecturers said were generated thereafter. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. In the analysis, interpretation and reporting of the findings, the interpretive stance proposed by Shapiro and Carr (1991) was used. This analysis and interpretation entailed a collaborative dimension. The analysed data was sent to the lecturers to ascertain whether the analysis was a reflection of their experiences, and to experts in the systems psychodynamic perspective to ascertain whether the interpretations were plausible. With regard to ethics, informed consent was verbally obtained from the lecturers by describing the project and explaining that the data would be interpreted through the systems psychodynamic lens. The lecturers’ confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by storing the audiotapes and transcripts of the data safely, and excluding certain identifying aspects from the data (see Christians 2005).

The findings of the research suggest that the relationship between students, lecturers and management was buried in different layers of difference (race, power, authority, white/black culture, socio-political aspects and language) (May 2010, 2012). Given the polarised South African socio-cultural landscape (see Mnguni 2012), I suggest that the South African white groups adhere more to the “ethics of autonomy”, whereas the South African black groups adhere more to the “ethics of community” (see Shweder 2003). This suggests cultural differences between white and black people in South Africa. In the discussion of the findings I will focus on how the intersection between culture and race amplified the split between the three stakeholders entrenching the shame dynamics operating between the students and the lecturers.

The HBU, as a social system, recruited members or subsystems (black students, white lecturers and black management) into new roles through which they could enact envious attacks on behalf of the HBU generally, and the three stakeholders

**Table 2.1** Biographical information of the sample (*N* = 9)

Race	Gender	Position	Age
White n = 8	Female n = 6	Management/Senior lecturer n = 1 Senior lecturer n = 1 Lecturer n = 4	Above 40 n = 2 Between 30 and 40 n = 1 Below 30 n = 3
	Male n = 2	Senior lecturer n = 1 Lecturer n = 1	Between 30 and 40 n = 1 Below 30 n = 1
Black n = 1	Male n = 1	Lecturer n = 1	Below 30 n = 1

*n* number

specifically (see Stein 2000). The envious attack results from desiring that which is perceived to be good and desirable across diversity characteristics, with particular reference to the intersection between culture and race. For example the black students may have experienced the white lecturers as withholding their knowledge. As suggested by May (2010) the HBU, through its subsystems, launches

- A violent, envious attack on learning, thinking and creativity;
- A deeply damaging attack on linking between the three stakeholders at the intersection between race and culture; and
- An envious attack on all forms of leadership at the intersection between culture and race.

The above discussion gives us some clues about how hidden shame dynamics operated among the three groups in the HBU. In order to obtain even more clarity, I emphasise the relationship between the students and the lecturers to illustrate the hidden shame dynamics operating in this relationship. The mother-infant relations are reconstructed in the lecturing and learning relationship. In the lecturing and learning relationship the lecturers provide opportunities for the students to take in and retain knowledge through learning. However, the students could experience teaching and learning as a threatening attack on their sense of self. It is important to bear in mind that the lecturing-learning relationship is also marked by oscillations between satisfaction and frustration, resulting in a non-pathological cyclical recurrence of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive position (Windland 2003).

Perhaps the students experienced learning, tests and examination as a threatening attack on their sense of self. The students' possible experience of an attack on their sense of self was especially evident from the description of a department as "the Vlakplaas of the university", as mentioned by some of the lecturers (May 2010). Vlakplaas was the base of operations of an apartheid-era security police hit squad. Furthermore, students could have experienced learning as an attack by the lecturers on their sense of self, due to not-knowing and the unconscious demands of tests and examinations, which are intrinsically linked to issues of competition, rivalry, envy, grandiosity, denigration and contempt (Mollon 2002). The findings suggest that examinations and tests entrench an aggressive retaliation from students towards lecturers, for an experienced attack against their sense of self. Students may experience shame as a signal anxiety, instigating a defence against the painful awareness of possible incompetence or inferiority in the presence of the external object (the lecturers). It seems that shame as a defence operating in the relationship between the students and lecturers perpetuates a destructive attack from (black) students against (white) lecturers as a way of defending against shameful, forbidden aspects related to failure in relation to (white) lecturers (May 2010, 2012). It is proposed that these overwhelming feelings experienced by the students could be compounded by the complexities linked to cultural, socio-political and socio-historical factors (Abdi 2002) and other diversity characteristics (Cilliers and May 2002; May 2012; May and Cilliers 2002; Powell Pruitt and Barber 2004) especially race, inherent in the relationship between students and lecturers. In other

words it would be useful to explore internalised object relations between the students and lecturers at the intersection of culture and race and how these impact on shame as a defence against the awareness of incompetence or inferiority.

Through the envious attack the students possibly projected hidden shame into the lecturers, and the lecturers may have identified the projections and behaved as if they were shamed, linked to their apparent inability to provide an optimal learning—lecturing context for the students. In this unconscious collusive communication through projective identification, the students can hold onto contempt for the lecturers who identified with the shame. In this way the students' shame remains hidden and unprocessed.

This could be an instance where the lecturers experience shame resulting from narcissistic self-evaluation (through the eye of the other), which could result in social annihilation from the management of the HBU and their peers in education. In other words the lecturers' ego-ideal (a set of standard, ideals and role expectation) (Lansky 2005) may be under threat due to experiencing themselves a being seen as bad lecturers by students, management and peers. The lecturers probably also projected their shame into the students, the students identified with the shame, the lecturers could be free of the shame and hold onto feelings of superiority and competence. Thus, the students' non-achievement or underachievement became a (k)not of achievement, because the processes of learning and lecturing were primarily impacted by destructive psychodynamics—the ricocheting of primarily negative projections back and forth between students and lecturers (Cummins 2000).

In an ideal situation the lecturers should then introject and transform the hidden shame for the students. In other words the other should attempt to understand the communication about hidden shame, i.e. think about it, and in so doing provide containment for the student (Ward 1993). The other should provide reverie, a calm receptivity towards the communication—a willingness to introject and make sense of the communication (Biran 2003). The lecturer has to maintain nurturing in the face of hidden shame, envy, and jealousy that can arise when the students experience frustration, apprehension, fear and loss when they have to learn with others in the lecture hall and compete with others in the examination hall (see Ward 1993). Thus, the lecturers demonstrate to the students that the hidden shame, i.e. the defence against the awareness of inferiority and incompetence, can be understood, thought about and tolerated. The students internalise this supportive container and hold the internal destructive elements. Through this process the student begins to develop his/her own capacity for reflecting on his/her own state of mind. In this case the student introjects and identifies (introjective identification) with the containing object (the lecturer) (Biran 2003), apparently “correcting” some of the compromised object relations.

In order to capacitate lecturers to provide a containing environment for students, it is imperative that management creates holding environments for lecturers to deal with their hidden shame resulting from their narcissistic self-evaluation. In psychology, thought is often given to care for the practitioner. In the same way, care for the lecturers should be encouraged by creating spaces where lecturers can work, using a systems psychodynamic perspective, with their experiences and the challenges they face from different stakeholders. Of course these lecturers may discover



**Fig. 2.2** Essays on shame (Siopis 2005)

how they collude with the system's psychodynamics. This could be painful and disturbing, but also liberating and filled with learning (as this research project has been for me). In this way, internal holding environments (Alford 2002) (pertaining to the intra-psychic wellness of the lecturers and to physical spaces in the university) for difficult conversations will be created.

## 2.8 Conclusion

It is clear that systems psychodynamics has a contribution to make to our understanding of shame. I present a painting (Fig 2.2) by the South African artist Siopis (2005). The painting illustrates the intrapsychic dynamics of shame, with its roots in infancy often hidden from the self and others. The painting was part of an exhibition entitled "Three Essays on Shame", exploring the significance of shame in wide cultural themes, held in the Freud museum in London from 4 June to 10 July 2005. I offer this painting as an image for further reflection and meaning-making about what other dynamics the (white) lecturers may see and experience when unconsciously looking at the (black) students and (black) management. To me, in this painting the internalized object relations (represented by the child in an adult or an adult within a child) operating at the intersection between culture and race do not look overwhelming, or result in social annihilation. Perhaps the individual or the individual as representation of cultural groups has made time to be in the presence of, and process, the intrapsychic and intergroup shame dynamics?

Through systems psychodynamics it is evident that practitioners can create holding environments in which shame dynamics can be processed in order to ensure the intra-psychic and intergroup wellness of individuals, groups and organisations. To do this, interventions from positive psychology can be used. However, I highlight how systems psychodynamics encourages the creation of holding environments (psychic and physical) to process by being in the presence of apparently destructive elements such as shame. Perhaps positive psychology has something to learn from system psychodynamics about being in the presence of, and surviving, apparently destructive elements such as shame?!

## References

- Abdi, A. A. (2002). *Culture education and development in South Africa: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Alford, C. F. (2002). Is murder impossible? Levinas, Winnicott, and the ruthless use of the object. *Journal of Psycho-social Studies*, 1(1). [http://www.btinternet.com/~psycho\\_social/Vol11/JPSS1-CFA1.html](http://www.btinternet.com/~psycho_social/Vol11/JPSS1-CFA1.html). Accessed November 20, 2004.
- Amado, G. (1995). Why psychoanalytical knowledge helps us understand organizations: A discussion with Elliott Jaques. *Human Relations*, 48(4), 351–357. doi:10.1177/001872679504800402.
- Armstrong, D. (2006). Psychoanalysis and work with institutions. In R. French (Ed.), *Organisation in the mind: Psychoanalysis, group relations and organisational consultancy* (pp. 29–43). London: Karnac Books.
- Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experiences in groups*. London: Tavistock Publication.
- Bion, W. R. (1975). Selections from “experiences in groups”. In A. D. Colman & W. H. Bexton (Eds.), *Group relations reader 1* (pp. 11–20). Washington DC: A.K. Rice Institute.
- Bion, W. R. (1985). Container and contained. In A. D. Colman & M. H. Geller (Eds.), *Group relations reader 2* (pp. 127–134). Washington DC: A.K. Rice Institute.
- Biran, H. (2003). ‘Attacks on linking’ and ‘alpha function’ as two opposite elements in the dynamics of organisations. In R. M. Lipgar & M. Pines (Eds.), *Contemporary developments and applications of Bion’s contributions to theory and practice* (pp. 164–181). London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Brown, A. P. (2003). From individual to social defences in psychosocial criminology. *Theoretical Criminology*, 7(4), 421–437.
- Christians, C. G. (2005). Ethics and politics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 139–164). London: SAGE Publications.
- Cilliers, F., & May, M. S. (2002). South African diversity dynamics. Reporting on the 2000 Robben Island diversity experience. A group relations event. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, 26(3), 42–68.
- Cilliers, F., & May, M. S. (2010). The popularisation of positive psychology as a defence against behavioural complexity in research and organisations. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 36(2), 10 pp. doi:10.4102/sajip.v36i2.917 (Art. #917)
- Cummins, A. (2000). *When the going gets tough (the weak get weaker): Primitive mental states and emotional traumas in students’ attempts to (not) learn*. Paper presented at the Annual Symposium of ISPSO, London. <http://www.ispso.org/Symposia/London/2000cummins.htm>. Accessed December 13, 2004.
- Czander, W. M. (1993). *The psychodynamics of work and organisations: Theory and application*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Czander, W., & Eisold, K. (2003). Psychoanalytic perspectives on organisational consulting: Transference and countertransference. *Human Relations*, 56(4), 475–490.
- Elison, J. (2005). Definitions of, and distinctions between, shame and guilt: A facet theory analysis. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 64(03), 1537 (UMI No. 3085863).
- Endacott, R. (2005). Clinical research 4: Qualitative data collection and analysis. *Intensive & Critical Care Nursing*, 21(2), 123–127.
- Etezady, M. H. (2010). Psychoanalysis in a ‘shame culture’: Japanese psychoanalytic insights. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 91, 1242–1245. doi:10.1111/j.1745-8315.2010.00316.x.
- Fraher, A. L. (2004). Systems psychodynamics: The formative years (1895-1967). *Organisational & Social Dynamics*, 4(2), 191–211.
- Freud, S. (1921). *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego: Complete works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Fullagar, S. (2003). Wasted lives the social dynamics of shame and youth suicide. *Journal of Sociology*, 39(3), 291–307.
- Jaques, E. (1990). On the dynamics of social structure: A contribution to the psychoanalytical study of social phenomena deriving from the views of Melanie Klein. In E. Trist & H. Murray (Eds.), *The social engagement of social science* (pp. 420–438). Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kane, M. (2012). Knowing and not-knowing one’s place, organisational ranking and the operation of envy and shame in organisational life. *Organisational and Social Dynamics*, 2, 194–209.
- Klein, M. (1975). *Envy and gratitude and other works 1946–1963*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis.
- Klein, M. (1985). Our adult world and its roots in infancy. In A. D. Colman & M. H. Geller (Eds.), *Group relations reader 2* (pp. 5–19). Washington DC: A.K. Rice Institute.
- Lansky, M. R. (1999). Shame and the idea of a central affect. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 19(3), 347–361. doi:10.1080/07351699909534255.
- Lansky, M. R. (2003). The “incompatible idea” revisited: The oft-invisible ego-ideal and shame dynamics. *American Journal of Psycho-analysis*, 63(4), 365–376.
- Lansky, M. R. (2005). Hidden shame. *Journal of American Psycho-analytic Association*, 53(3), 865–890.
- Likierman, M. (2001). *Melanie Klein: Her work in context*. London: Continuum.
- Long, S. (2004). Building an institution for experiential learning. In L. J. Gould, L. F. Stapley & M. Stein (Eds.), *Experiential learning in organisations: Applications of the Tavistock group relations approach* (pp. 101–136). London: Karnac Books.
- May, M. S. (2010). *The unconscious at work: The (k)not of relationship between students, lecturers and management in a historically black university*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- May, M. S. (2012). Diversity dynamics operating between students, lecturers and management in a historically black university: The lecturers’ perspective. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 38(2), 8 pp. doi:10.4102/sajip.v38i2.1003 (Art. #1003)
- May, M. S., & Cilliers, F. (2002). *The Robben Island diversity experience 2001: Diversity dynamics a year later*. Paper presented at the 8th National Congress of the Psychological Society of Southern Africa, University of Western Cape, Cape Town.
- Menzies Lyth, I. (1960). Social Systems as a defense against anxiety: An empirical study of the nursing service of a general hospital. *Human Relations*, 13, 95–121.
- Menzies Lyth, I. (1981). Bion’s contribution to thinking about groups. In J. S. Grotstein (Ed.), *Do I dare to disturb the universe a memorial to W.R. Bion* (pp. 662–666). London: Karnac Books.
- Menzies Lyth, I. (1990). A psychoanalytical perspective on social institutions. In E. Trist & H. Murray (Eds.), *The social engagement of social science* (pp. 463–475). Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mnguni, P. P. (2012). Deploying culture as a defence against incompetence: The unconscious dynamics of public service work. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 38(2), 9 pp. doi:10.4102/sajip.v38i2.1000 (Art. #1000)



- Mollon, P. (2002). *Shame and jealousy: The hidden turmoils*. London: Karnac Books.
- Morrison, A. P. (2011). The psychodynamics of shame. In R. L. Dearing & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Shame in the therapy hour* (pp. 23–43). Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association. doi:10.1037/12326-002
- Mouly, V. S., & Sankaram, J. K. (2002). The enactment of envy within organisations: Insights from a New Zealand academic department. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 38(10), 36–56.
- Ogden, T. H. (1983). The concept of internal object relations. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 64, 227–241.
- Powell Pruitt, L., & Barber, M. (2004). Savage inequalities indeed: Irrationality and urban school reform. In S. Cytrynbaum & D. A. Noumair (Eds.), *Group dynamics, organisational irrationality and social complexity: Group relations reader 3* (pp. 303–320). Washington DC: A.K. Rice Institute.
- Rizzuto, A. M. (2014). Shame in psychoanalysis: The function of unconscious fantasies. In C. Pajackowska & I. Ward (Eds.), *Shame and sexuality: Psychoanalysis and visual culture*. London: Routledge.
- Robbins, B. D., & Goicoechea, J. (2005). The psychogenesis of the self and the emergence of ethical relatedness: Klein in light of Merleau-Ponty. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 25(2), 11–223.
- Shapiro, E. R., & Carr, A. W. (1991). *Lost in familiar places: Creating new connections between the individual and society*. London: Yale University Press.
- Shweder, R. A. (2003). Toward a deep cultural psychology of shame. *Social Research*, 70(4), 1100–1129.
- Siopis, P. (2005). *Painting of shame*. London: Freud Museum. <https://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions/10524/three-essays-on-shame>. Accessed March 01, 2016.
- Stadter, M. (2011). The inner world of shaming and ashamed: An object relations perspective and therapeutic approach. In R. L. Dearing & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Shame in the therapy hour* (pp. 45–68). Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association. doi:10.1037/12326-002
- Stein, M. (2000). After Eden: Envy and the defences against anxiety paradigm. *Human Relations*, 53(2), 193–211.
- Tangney, J. P. (2001). Constructive and destructive aspects of shame and guilt. In A. C. Bohart & D. J. Stipek (Eds.), *Constructive and destructive behaviour: Implications for family, school and society* (pp. 127–145). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Taylor, T. F. (2015). The influence of shame on posttrauma disorders: Have we failed to see the obvious? *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 6, 28847. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v6.28847>.
- Ward, T. (1993). An object relations analysis of learning and emotional containment in school systems. In T. W. Hugg, N. M. Carson & R. M. Lipgar (Eds.), *Proceedings of the ninth scientific meeting of the A.K. Rice institute* (pp. 193–197). Jupiter, FL: The A.K. Rice Institute.
- Wells, L. (1985). The group-as-a-whole perspective and its theoretical roots. In A. D. Colman & M. H. Geller (Eds.), *Group relations reader 2* (pp. 109–126). Washington DC: A.K. Rice Institute.
- Windland, L. C. (2003). Learning as a lived and living process-reflexivity in research in the light of Bion and Bergson. *Journal for Psycho-Social Studies*, 2(1). [http://www.btinternet.com/~psycho\\_social/Vol2/JPS2-LCW1.html](http://www.btinternet.com/~psycho_social/Vol2/JPS2-LCW1.html). Accessed December 20, 2004.
- Young, R. (1995). Psychotic anxieties in groups and organisations. In D. Armstrong, W. G. Lawrence & R. M. Young (Eds.), *Group relations: An introduction*. Retrieved April 5, 2006, from <http://human-nature.com/rmyoung/papers/paper99.html>.



# Chapter 3

## Shame as a Functional and Adaptive Emotion: A Biopsychosocial Perspective

Markus van Alphen

**Abstract** This chapter concentrates on emotion as the essential ingredient for human experience and primary motivating force behind all behaviour: All emotion is thereby both functional and adaptive, not something troublesome that needs to be brought under control. Also shame, one of the negative self-conscious emotions, is then by definition both functional and adaptive. This chapter starts by providing a theoretical synthesis of several old and current emotion theories into what is called a bio-psychosocial model of emotion. This means that emotions have a biological element, an intra-psychological element as well as a social element. Especially the social element of emotion translates directly into social behaviour and thereby forms the basis of the functionality of emotion. The position of shame is then clarified vis-à-vis other negative self-conscious emotions, amongst others by considering the difference between shame, guilt and embarrassment and the typical ways people react to these three. From here on the focus shifts to shame, probably the least understood emotion and one which also has a huge impact on people's functioning. The whole chapter focuses on emotion and shame in terms of that which all cultures largely have in common rather than on cross-cultural differences, which is the subject of later chapters.

### 3.1 Introduction

Before dealing with shame specifically, it is wise to put it into perspective in its wider context, that of emotion. Emotion could be seen as something troublesome that needs to be brought under control, yet this is a rather limiting perspective. It is only when emotion is seen as adaptive, functional and that which gives meaning to an individual's life, that how it influences learning, behaviour and (psychological)

---

M. van Alphen (✉)  
Schotlandstraat 85, 2034 LC Haarlem, The Netherlands  
e-mail: info@MarkusvanAlphen.com

functioning may be appreciated. From this general point of view on emotion, shame is considered. Shame is probably the least understood emotion, yet one which also has a huge impact on people's functioning.

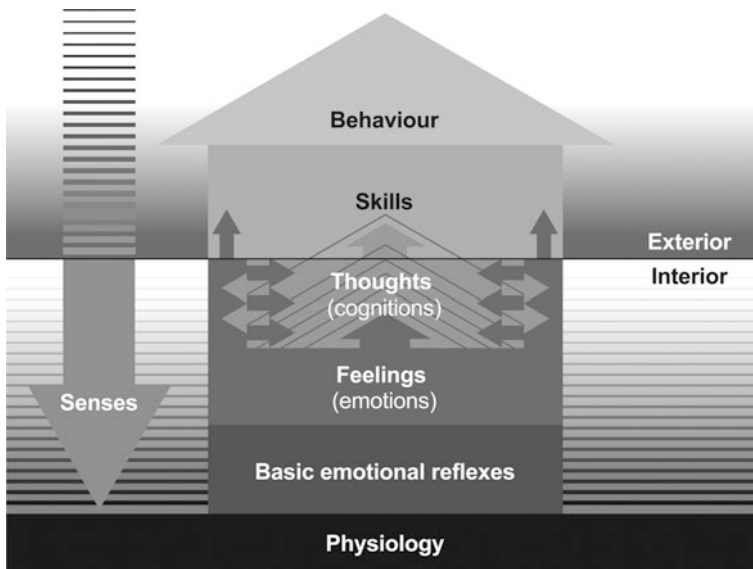
This chapter focuses on emotion and shame in terms of that which all cultures largely have in common rather than on cross-cultural differences. To begin, emotion will be placed into perspective by providing a biopsychosocial model of *behaviour*. Then a theoretical synthesis of several old and current emotion theories is provided as a biopsychosocial model of *emotion*. This then lays the basis for the concept of *functionality* of emotion, which in essence fits well with the principles of positive psychology: Seeing things in terms of the possibilities they create rather than their impossibilities. Using this biopsychosocial model as point of departure, the position of shame vis-à-vis other negative emotions is then clarified, as are the self-conscious emotions, moral emotions, etcetera. The chapter then directs its attention to shame itself, paying particular attention to the difference between shame, guilt and embarrassment and the typical ways people react to these three.

## 3.2 A Biopsychosocial Model of Behaviour

The word emotion comes from the Latin word *emovere*, which literally means to “out move”—that which causes someone to move. Emotion is therefore the foundation from which people *act*. A natural starting point is therefore to consider behaviour, for which a model proposed by Watkins (2013) will be used, adapted and slightly adjusted to fit the terminology generally used in the field of psychology. In his model, behaviour is like the roof of a building and the building represents the person's behavioural skills. Generally people think that having the necessary skills is sufficient to demonstrate adequate behaviour. However merely having a skill will not guarantee it will actually be used.

Before demonstrating a particular skill, the person needs to believe that applying it will have the desired effect. This requires confidence in one's own ability, the so-called *self-efficacy* (Bandura 1977). Being a belief places self-efficacy in the cognitive (or thinking) domain. Whereas skills and behaviour are visible, cognitions aren't. They are under the surface and form the first cellar of the building as depicted in Fig. 3.1. In other words, the way one thinks influences which skills are actually deployed and thereby one's behaviour.

Thoughts and beliefs don't occur in a vacuum, however. They are coloured by the way a person feels, both how he or she has felt in the past as well as in the here-and-now. The second cellar is therefore the constant ebb and flow of ever-changing feelings. A person needs more than only think he or she can do something, he or she also needs to feel it. And that feeling is emotional more than cognitive. Also one's mood will determine which skills one chooses to implement and which not. This is why there are more arrows from the emotional landscape to the cognitive domain than from thinking to feelings: How one thinks does influence



**Fig. 3.1** Pieter Houtekamer: a biopsychosocial model of behaviour (adapted from Watkins 2013)

how one feels, but nowhere nearly as strongly as the other way around. And self-esteem, self-confidence and mood even directly influence (how and how well) one is able to execute the skills at one's disposal.

This doesn't yet complete the picture, though. What causes these feelings to constantly change will be dealt with to some depth in the next paragraph. In brief, this is due to basic emotional reflexes: The human body is wired to react in a certain way, whereby a person actually feels his or her feelings physically. These basic emotional reflexes form the third cellar under the building. And under this third cellar the foundation may finally be found: The physiology. It is via the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) and via the body that stimuli, transformed into electrical, electromagnetic and biochemical signals, trigger the basic emotional reflexes. And these stimuli are the things that are encountered in the outside world.

This completes the circle: Behaviour elicits a reaction from the environment, which is perceived via the senses, leading to electrical, electromagnetic and biochemical changes in the body. These in turn trigger basic emotional reflexes, which bring about change in the emotional landscape, resulting in the experience of a feeling. This feeling affects the cognitive apparatus and which skills one chooses to implement, again influencing behaviour.

What is then meant by a *biopsychosocial* model of behaviour? The term biopsychosocial comes from a broader paradigm as how to view the human being. For example, in the medical model it's all about the body and the body can be seen as a machine: Function and dysfunction are the result of a properly or improperly

running machine (the body). The biopsychosocial paradigm takes a more holistic view. By no means a new view, as Tomkins already worked using this perspective in the 1950s (Tomkins 1995). The paradigm regained popularity towards the turn of the century with proponents such as Kiesler (1999) suggesting mental health should be viewed more broadly than merely from point of view of the medical model. In this biopsychosocial paradigm, human experience is the result of an interaction between three areas:

- biological;
- psychological and
- social.

Both positive and negative experience arises due to changes in one or more of these areas. However, the interrelatedness of these areas sees to it that any change in one area automatically induces change in the other two areas. Human experience therefore is the result of both the *operation of* and the *interaction between* these various arenas.

To translate the model of behaviour into these three areas: The biological area is represented by the senses, the physiology and the basic emotional reflexes. The psychological area is represented by the emotions and cognitions. The social arena is that which is in the exterior world: Not only the person's skills demonstrated as behaviour, but also the reactions this behaviour elicits. To summarize: The biopsychosocial model of behaviour illustrates how the three areas influence one another and puts the importance of the emotions centre stage.

### 3.3 Biology and the Basic Emotional Reflexes

To understand emotions and how they arise, the biology of emotion needs to be considered first, starting with the brain. Specifically a little organ in the midbrain called the amygdala.

#### 3.3.1 *The Limbic System and the Amygdala*

LeDoux (1996) discovered the role of the amygdala in how a new situation is processed, leading to a dual path: A quick and dirty route versus a slow and thorough route. To illustrate with an example: Strolling in the garden at dusk a man suddenly sees a snake. He catches fright and directs all his attention to this snake. Biologically, the amygdala interpreted the signal and sent the alarm. He doesn't need to think about it, it happens automatically and his body is rapidly brought into a state of preparedness. Corticosteroids (so-called stress hormones) are released, in

turn causing adrenaline to flow into his bloodstream, causing his heart rate to increase, his breathing to speed up and energy to be freed up via his liver. All his resources are activated and energy is sent to his muscles so that he is ready to deal with the situation. This is the so-called *fight-flight-freeze* reflex. From an evolutionary standpoint very sensible: He is ready to fight his way out of the situation, run away from it or to freeze dead in his tracks. It increases his chance of survival. From the human evolution he “knows” that snakes don’t see too well and that his best chance for survival is to freeze. If he stands very still, chances are the snake won’t even see him and therefore won’t bite him. In the meantime the information has also been passed on to the neocortex, the slow and thorough processing commences and the finer details become noticeable. Aha. It isn’t a snake, but the garden hose! If it were to bite him (which it cannot) there wouldn’t be any adverse effects. The state of alarm is called off, his heart rate returns to normal, he breathes a little more comfortably and his attention can relax.

The amygdala thereby has an effect on emotional experience in a very functional way. Research on the limbic system in the brain, specifically the size of the caudate nucleus, implies a relationship between how anxiously people are inclined to be generally (Delgado et al. 2004). The amygdala and caudate nucleus are presented by way of example, as a wealth of research is available about how physiological organs and processes affect the emotions. Also one’s genetic makeup provides certain predispositions, which affect one’s propensity to experience emotion, just as it has a role in temperament.

### 3.3.2 *Neuropeptides*

Research initiated by the late medical doctor Candace Pert ascribes an important role in emotional experience to small substances called neuropeptides (Pert 1997). She named them the *molecules of emotion*. They are found in the brain and are even produced by ordinary body cells. More than 100 different types have been discovered in the brain alone. These neuropeptides are released whenever an emotion is experienced and influence *at cell level* how emotions are physically felt. It seems that the hypothalamus is partially responsible for the release of neuropeptides, but that they are also released via the “memory” of individual body cells.

These neuropeptides attach themselves to receptors on the cell wall, allowing certain nutrients and other substances to enter and leave the cell (or block them from doing so). This means the experience of emotion affects the physiology at cellular level! It also gives an explanation why emotions are felt physically. The direction of causality is a still unanswered question: Do the emotions cause the release of neuropeptides or is it the other way around: Because neuropeptides are released a physical feeling is experienced that leads to an emotional experience?

### 3.3.3 *Basic Emotional Reflexes*

It is obvious that newly-born babies experience something. As they cannot be asked about their experiences, it may be deduced from their behaviour. From many sources, such as research in the 1950s by Tomkins (1995), in the 1970s by Ekman (1980) and many others inspired by them, it seems that irrespective of culture, certain bodily responses are displayed uniformly by all babies and are already present at birth. This leads to the deduction that certain basic responses and reflexes are biologically wired: They are innate, not acquired. Some of these reflexes disappear as the baby grows up, others remain throughout the entire lifetime.

From a very young age babies are able to imitate facial expressions, according to Field and Walden (1982) already from some minutes after birth. These are very basic imitations, which do not seem to be committed to memory. From the age of about 10 months, imitation seems to be accompanied by some form of consciousness (Legerstee and Markova 2008). All this kind of research raises the question about when a facial expression is nothing more than that, or the reflection of an inner emotional experience. This discussion may be avoided, as what is known is that adult facial expression to some degree reflects the emotion being experienced internally. To some degree, as people are socialized into rules for appropriate display of emotion. In this paragraph the *emotions* people experience are not yet being considered, but the basic physiological *expressions*, which seem to be inborn. To emphasize this, the author uses the term *basic emotional reflex* (and not the confusing term affect programmes as used by Tomkins and others, which seems to imply a psychological experience):

**Basic emotional reflex:** Biological. When a basic emotional reflex is triggered (by a definable stimulus) a mechanism is activated which leads to a chain of biochemical and physiological events that are felt (experienced) physically.

Point of departure is that these basic emotional reflexes help one to react appropriately to situations (by directing one's attention to what is important, for example) and to elicit appropriate attention from caregivers. Tomkins (1995) describes nine of these basic emotional reflexes, which he explains as directing the learning processes and by extension all human experience, ranging from very basic in the baby to a complex interaction between biology and psychological meaning in the adult. His theory in brief is that every basic emotional reflex has a certain "colour" and when triggered it colours experience to a certain intensity, see Table 3.1. Through learning processes a person associates the experience of these basic emotional reflexes with situations, whereby meaning is given to those situations. In this sense the basic emotional reflexes tell one physically what is important and to what one should devote one's current attention.

The basic emotional reflexes can be divided into three broad categories based on valence, depending on how they are experienced: Two positive, six negative and one neutral. The biological purpose is logical: It is important that one can estimate what requires attention and what doesn't. From an evolutionary point of view very

**Table 3.1** The nine basic emotional reflexes according to Tomkins

Category	Colour	Expression via the body
Negative	Distress—anguish	Sobbing, crying, eyebrows arched upwards, tears, red cheeks, flailing arms and legs. See Fig. 3.2
	Distaste	Neck forward and head down, lower lip and tongue protruded (as when spitting out something that tastes foul)
	Dissmell	Upper lip drawn upward, nose wrinkled and head drawn back (as in avoiding something that smells bad)
	Anger—rage	General muscular tension, clenched jaws or screaming, eyebrows down, red face, increased heart rate and rapid breathing (fight-response)
	Fear—terror	Eyes wide (and tracking that which causes fear), lower eyelids tensed; eyebrows raised and drawn together; face pale, increased heart rate and rapid breathing (flight-freeze response)
	Interruption	Looks away, the neck muscles relax so that the head falls, turning away or hiding, blushing.
Neutral	Surprise—startle	Blinking of the eyes, eyebrows up, eyes wide, the “oh!” effect. See Fig. 3.4
Positive	Interest—excitement	Tracking with the eyes, gazing, eyebrows down, slightly raised heartbeat and breathing
	Enjoyment—joy	Relaxed face, mouth (slightly) open, smiling, gleaming eyes, laughing. See Fig. 3.5

adaptive: If nothing would draw one’s attention, the first hungry lion would quite easily enjoy one as his next meal. In our current society to a broader degree, as it’s now about more than only physical survival. In a complex world a person constantly needs to divide his or her attention between various things and determine what has priority right now. That selection process requires consciousness and Tomkins suggests that nothing enters consciousness, nothing becomes urgent, until it is first amplified by a (biological) emotional reflex. In brief: Something happens in the body that serves as signal. As these reflexes are biological, they always operate whenever triggered, irrespective whether the person is consciously aware of them or not.

A number of these basic emotional reflexes may be recognized in Figs. 3.2, 3.4 and 3.5. A remark concerning their names: Some of them are named after adult emotions (Tomkins even uses the term “shame” for the interruption reflex). This does not imply that babies experience these basic emotional reflexes as emotions or the same way adults do when they experience that emotion. It is the *bodily and facial expression* that coincides with the typical expression when adults experience that emotion.

Experience isn’t solely due to processes in the brain, but a complex game between biological (biochemical and physiological), psychological and social factors—the biopsychosocial principle. It is only once a person becomes aware that a basic emotional reflex has been triggered (which requires some degree of consciousness) and depending on the intensity and the context, before it will get



Fig. 3.2 Wilma van Heerden: basic response “distress”

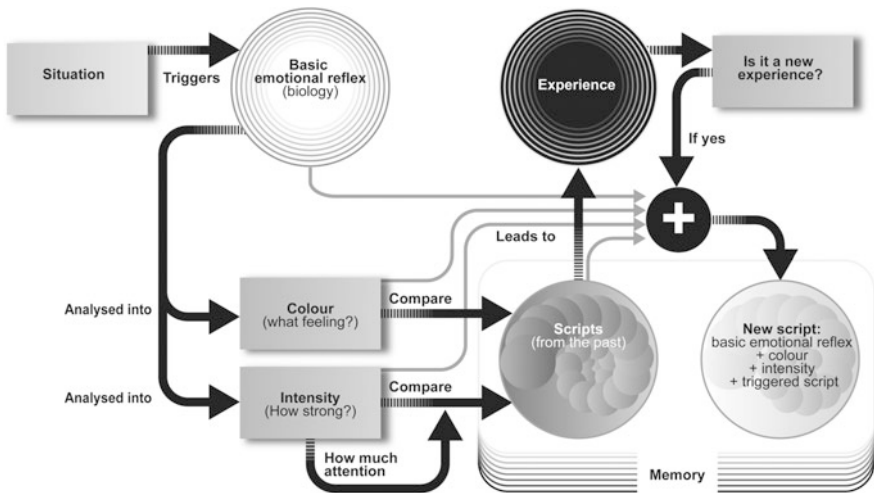


Fig. 3.3 Pieter Houtekamer: basic emotional reflexes, scripts and experience

meaning in what Tomkins calls a script. Such scripts can be very basic, yet as development progresses they become more complex as both scripts and basic responses are combined into new scripts. This is a largely unconscious learning process, of which the basic emotional reflexes are the biological building blocks, see Fig. 3.3. Scripts enable the human being to react appropriately (that is, as learnt)



and quickly in almost every known situation, without requiring much energy from the thinking apparatus. Very adaptive from an evolutionary standpoint: This frees up resources to pay attention to other stimuli. To summarize: Scripts are the building blocks of human experience and thereby the primary motivator of behaviour.

It is only after a basic emotional reflex has been triggered that a situation actually draws one's attention: It "loads" it so as to motivate one to do something with that situation. And similarly, just as an actual situation "does something with one", the same goes for memories. They too are loaded by the basic emotional reflexes they trigger in the person. By the intensity of the response the person knows what is important, what deserves attention and what kind of reaction may be appropriate. This is why they are the primary motivator for learning, as future choices and behaviour are based on what similar choices brought about on previous occasions. Tomkins says that all behaviour is motivated by the urge to increase positive experience and reduce negative experience and it is this principle that also drives learning in a social context. It boils down to that which one becomes aware of in a (social) situation, is brought to one's attention by a basic emotional reflex (biology), leading to the experience of a feeling (physiological). This feeling is given meaning from the individual's history (library of scripts in memory) leading to an (emotional) experience (psychological).

About the difference between various basic emotional reflexes: Probably the most primary is surprise (Fig. 3.4), or in its more intense form, the startle response. Its purpose clearly is to draw the attention to something new or to an important change in the environment. It causes one to transfer one's attention from what one was doing to this new stimulus. It is most visible in the eyes, the raised eyebrows



**Fig. 3.4** Wilma van Heerden: basic emotional reflex "surprise"

and the open mouth. Also adults display a similar facial expression. Even when repressed it may be noticed by a slightly raised eyebrow (of one or both eyes).

The difference between interest and surprise is subtle: Where surprise captures the attention, interest holds the attention. Surprise is short-lived, a kind of reset button. When this flows over into interest, the eyes remain wide and the interesting stimulus is tracked. The major difference in facial expression is that the mouth relaxes.

The four negative basic emotional reflexes that are most easily recognized (both in adults and in children) are fear, anger, distaste and dissmell. With fear the wide eyes and the wrinkled forehead are characteristic and with anger the lowered eyebrows. Distaste, as the name implies, renders a facial expression as when food that in first instance looks good is eaten, but found to taste bad and spat out. Dismell is the same, except that it is as food which smells bad and isn't actually eaten: The turned up nose is an attempt to distance oneself from this bad smelling (and therefore to be avoided) substance.

The basic emotional reflex joy (Fig. 3.5) is usually easy to recognize due to the smile and the generally positive appearance. The most difficult to explain is the basic emotional reflex interruption (which Tomkins calls shame, easily confused with the adult *emotion* shame). It is not possible to forever find a new stimulus interesting, nor will something that gives joy keep doing that into eternity. Something (biochemical and physiological) needs to interrupt that stream. This means turning away from the stimulus by the relaxation of the muscles in the neck, so that the stimulus is no longer the centre of attention. Take the Western norm regarding eye contact by way of example: If one didn't regularly break eye contact whilst speaking with another person, it would lead to staring. Ultimately either or



**Fig. 3.5** Pieter Houtekamer: basic emotional reflex “joy”

both parties is going to feel uncomfortable. The natural making and breaking of eye contact is a perfect example of the basic emotional reflex interruption regulating behaviour so that an uncomfortable feeling is avoided.

To reiterate: Do not see the basic emotional reflexes as emotions. What is true is that by recognizing which basic emotional reflexes have been triggered one can make a better *estimation* of the emotions the other is experiencing. Remember though, that the display of emotions is a cultural phenomenon. So although all have the culturally independent biology and physiology *with which* to express emotion, how one actually *gives* expression to what one is feeling internally, is bound by all kinds of social and cultural norms. For example: In the Japanese culture it is inappropriate to let another lose face. So even when seething on the inside, a good face and smile will be kept so as not to affront the other. The trained observer will however see other cues behind the smile and with his or her knowledge of cultural differences still make a better estimation of the internal state of the other. To repeat again: the anger in the example above is an *emotion*. The smile is a physiological/biological response. Emotions are however more than the physiological and biochemical responses that give one the ability to experience and express emotions.

### 3.3.4 *The Biology of Emotion*

To recapitulate: The body is wired to respond to the outside world. The limbic system plays an important role in how the outside world is interpreted, leading to triggering of the basic emotional reflexes. These in turn may be seen as the physical (i.e. physiological and biochemical) building blocks of experience. By causing certain reactions in the body, they motivate one towards seeking positive experience and avoiding negative ones. Via learning processes people unconsciously associate these physiological reactions, the intensity to which they are activated and the context wherein they are triggered into so-called scripts. These scripts become ever more complex and enable people to experience situations, making them the primary motivators of behaviour. Neuropeptides give a possible explanation to why emotions are experienced physically.

## 3.4 A Biopsychosocial Model of Emotion

That people experience emotions is an obvious statement of fact. When studying psychological theory on what exactly an emotion is, it becomes somewhat more difficult. A number of theories exist that overlap here and there and differ from each other in other areas. In this paragraph a model of emotion is introduced that is a synthesis of several theories, leading to a broader, if not different role for emotions.

Often the terms feeling, emotion and mood are used interchangeably, hence first some definitions (Nathanson 1996):

**Feeling:** Consciousness plays an important role: A feeling is experienced when an individual becomes aware that a basic emotional reflex has been triggered. It is physical.

**Emotion:** An emotion is a complex combination of basic emotional reflex patterns and memory of previous experiences in which these were undergone. *Basic emotional reflexes are biology, emotions are biography.* An emotion is dependent on a “story”. Each individual experiences a certain emotion from his own perspective (acquired via socialization and history).

**Mood:** A state of continued experience of a certain emotion, a state of being. Usually temporary until it is no longer “fed” by memories or until something more important captures the attention.

**Mood disorder:** When a negative mood is so persistent and salient that it disturbs daily functioning.

As the biology of emotions has been dealt with to some extent, now some of the classical psychological emotion theories will be briefly discussed:

### 3.4.1 *James-Lange, Tomkins and Izard*

One of the first theories linking emotion with experience has been dubbed the James-Lange theory. Point of departure is that emotions are specific, by which is meant that one does not need to question whether one is experiencing happiness or fear, for example, as they are qualitatively different experiences. When scared of snakes one will not need to think: “*Oh, there is a snake. I am scared of snakes.*” When a snake is encountered instantaneously one undergoes an anxious reaction, which, without needing to think about it, is experienced as fear. LeDoux’ (1996) theory on how the amygdala regulate emotional responses supports this point of view: The quick and dirty route that immediately causes a reaction. This short route is what the James-Lange theory is about: When something happens in the environment one immediately undergoes an emotional reaction and instantly knows which emotion is being experienced. LeDoux’ long route is only activated when the intensity of the reaction tells one that this is important enough to warrant one’s full attention.

People therefore seem to first experience and give meaning to what they are experiencing afterwards and this is already hard-wired into the human biology. It leads to the next discussion: To what degree are the emotions discrete, by which is meant specific and distinguishable from one another. Does anxiety feel different than sadness, for example? The theory that emotions are nothing more than a non-specific state of arousal, to which meaning is given afterwards on the basis of the environment (Schachter and Singer 1962), is not supported by research. See for example Marshall and Zimbardo (1979), who tried replicating the experiment without success. Tomkins (1995) says few people have actually taken the effort to read the original article by Schachter and Singer. In his words:

... despite the fact that there was no statistically significant main effect and that those significant effects reported were either small or in the wrong direction.

In brief the original article already shows that there is little support for this theory, it seems to have been incorrectly cited by other authors.

Izard's differential emotions theory which now goes under the name of the discrete emotions theory (Izard et al. 2002) says there are a number of basic emotions, but that these are rather broad categories of emotion. Each individual creates his or her own emotional "programmes" from neuronal, hormonal, behavioural and learning processes. These associations are based on experiences in the past. These programmes show a marked likeness to Tomkins' scripts, described in Sect. 3.3 on basic emotional reflexes. The discrete emotions theory has a lot of overlap with Tomkins' theory generally, from which it is also derived. Researchers do not entirely agree on the number of basic emotions: Ekman et al. (1982) cite six (joy, sadness, fear, anger, surprise and disgust) whereas the latest research distinguishes only four. Anger and disgust would be one and the same basic emotion, as also surprise and fear (Jack et al. 2014).

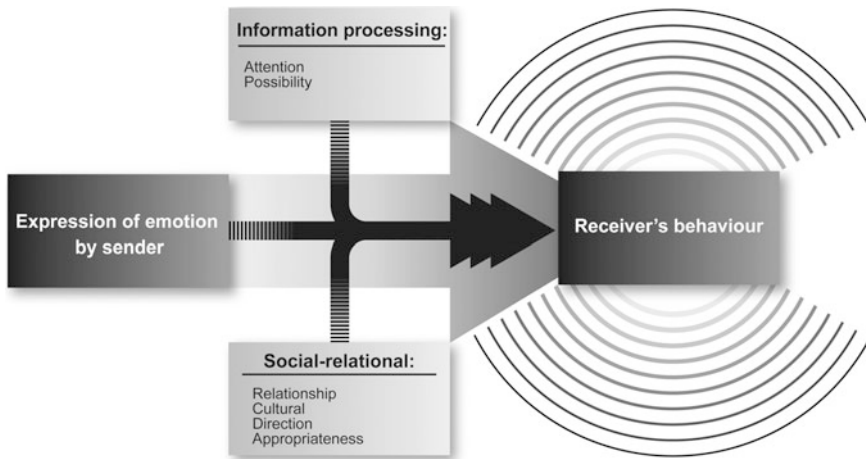
The current thinking in the discrete emotions approach tries to explain the richness of emotional experience using systems theory (Colombetti 2009). In the systems theory approach there is also a role for intensity and difference in experience. Colombetti further challenges the idea of an "emotional episode", by which she means the ability to link the experience of a particular emotion to a specific timeframe. In the systems approach emotion is constantly being experienced and changes dynamically in reaction to several factors, which also constantly vary.

Another contemporary approach to emotions sees them as componential, consisting of a subjective feeling component, a physiological component, a motor expression component, and an action readiness component (Vandercammen et al. 2014). From this point of view individuals will first appraise whether an event is relevant for their well-being and only if so, are the different emotion components activated.

### ***3.4.2 Social Function of Emotion***

That the expression of emotion has a social function seems clear. Van Kleef (2009) in his EASI-model (Emotions as Social Information) explains how emotions in a social interaction give parties information on which they also act. People "read" each other's emotions, use this to judge the other's mood while it simultaneously elicits an emotion in them. In this model there are two factors that influence what the impact of another's emotion is on one's own behaviour: Information processing and social-relational factors, see Fig. 3.6.

By information processing is meant that both motivation and the possibility to process need to be present before something is actually done with the emotional information at one's disposal. Motivation boils down to the intensity with which the own basic responses are triggered: Only when something sufficiently "does something" with one, will attention be given. The possibilities can depend on all



**Fig. 3.6** Pieter Houtekamer: the emotion-as-social-information model by Van Kleef (2009)

kinds of thing. Someone with an autism spectrum disorder, for example, has a deficit when it comes to being able to read others' emotions. Or if something else has priority at that moment, attention will be drawn to that, reducing the possibility to interpret the other's emotion.

Social-relational factors can be summarized as the nature of the relationship (for example the mismatch in power between people), cultural norms (such as the acceptable ways in which emotions may be expressed), on what the emotion is directed (on the individual as person or on the environment) and how appropriate the emotional expression is (for example displaying happiness in a situation which most others experience as sad).

Of particular interest is the general difference between Eastern and Western cultures regarding what constitutes good feelings and what constitutes bad feelings in social situations (Kitayama et al. 2000). In a Western culture where individuality is celebrated, good feelings are associated with independence, feelings of individual confidence, etcetera. These feelings are associated with disengaged emotions, which are emotions that separate the person from others and emphasize his or her competence. In Eastern cultures the *relationship* between the self and the (direct) social environment is more important, in other words the interdependence between people is emphasized. When in harmony with others, these so-called engaged emotions give rise to good feelings.

To sum up: A person will to some degree react on the emotional expression of another (and vice versa) and the interpretation of another's emotion is subject to several factors. The point is, however, that emotions have a social function both in terms of the reactions they elicit, as well as the appraisal the person interpreting social emotions makes.

### 3.4.3 *Emotion Regulation*

In discussing the emotion-as-social-information model, another important aspect was implicitly touched upon, that of emotion regulation. By this is implied that people also to some extent process raw emotion and make decisions as to whether give expression to their emotions (via their behaviour), to suppress them (both in terms of expression via behaviour and in terms of how much they allow them to affect them) or whether they should be reappraised (thereby giving them a different meaning). The purpose of emotion regulation may be divided into two global aims, hedonistic or instrumental. By hedonistic is meant a focus on the internal experience of emotion—generally people prefer to experience positive feelings above negative feelings, that is, they like to feel good and avoid feeling bad. By instrumental is meant that via behaviour one is able to influence the environment to be able to obtain certain (desired) results. A simple example is that by crying when sad, sympathy and comfort from others may be obtained.

The emotion a person experiences at any given point of time may be viewed from two dimensions. The emotional valence is the experience of how positive or how negative an emotion is. The second dimension is the intensity: the stronger the intensity, the more salient the emotion is. It was previously mentioned that an emotion will need to impact the individual to a sufficient degree before something is done with it, a so-called threshold. Above this threshold the intensity will also determine the urgency with which the individual will need to react. In Fig. 3.7 a simplified model is depicted for the emotion regulation system.

Stupar et al. (2015) found certain tendencies in how valence and intensity affect emotional regulation. Their first conclusion is that the intensity of the emotion (irrespective valence) has a positive correlation with its expression. They also observed that the most reappraised and the most suppressed experiences are on average the most negatively valenced experiences. This may be partially explained by the evolutionary adaptive negativity bias: The tendency to pay more attention to negative information (as negative information could mean a threat to one's safety or well-being).

In terms of intensity, they found that more intense emotions are *less* suppressed and reappraised than less intense emotions. At the same time the variability in emotion regulation increases as the intensity increases, implying that other factors such as personality or context also play a role, especially when the emotional experience is more intense. This isn't such a strange result as one may think, especially when regarding the emotion regulation system as being primarily a cognitive process. As the intensity of emotion (especially negative emotion) increases, one is driven ever further into the primary reaction mode due to the fight-flight-freeze response, in which the limbic system "short-circuits" the neocortex in an (adaptive) attempt to preserve life. In other words, the urgency to act overrides other, less essential processes, including cognitive processes and the emotion regulation system. This principle is easily demonstrated by considering an

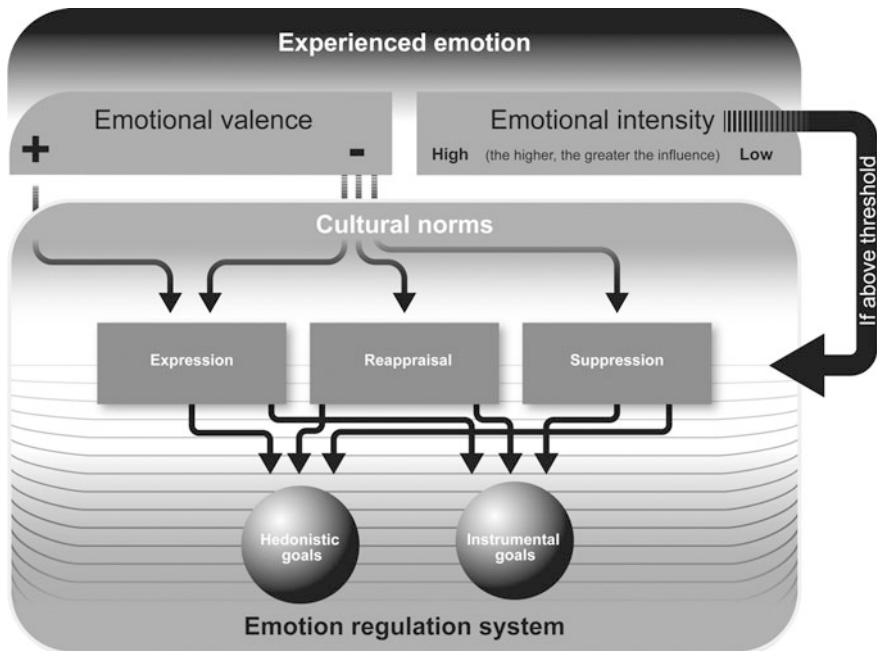


Fig. 3.7 Pieter Houtekamer: a simplified model of emotion regulation

escalating fight in a relationship, where the longer the fight endures, the more intense the emotions become, the less their expression is controlled and the less reasonable the parties become (and the less effective rational arguments become!).

The last factor to include in this model is the role of culture. Culture doesn't only socialize one into what are appropriate and inappropriate ways to express one's emotions, but also affects the individual in terms of what he or she is allowed to feel about himself or herself. By way of simple example, feeling proud of one's achievements is encouraged in the American culture, yet disapproved of in the more traditional Dutch culture. Stupar et al. (2015) however found that culture had little effect on the amount of social sharing and could only find a small influence of culture on suppression (non-Western suppress more than Western) and a small influence on reappraisal (non-Western reappraise more than Western).

For the purpose of the biopsychosocial model which will now be introduced, the emotion regulation system is divided into two subsystems, an internal system in which suppression and reappraisal are used to change the way people feel about themselves, and an external system in the social arena in which the expression (including the behavioural suppression) of emotion is tempered due to culture and socialization.



### 3.4.4 A Biopsychosocial Model of Emotion

By combining, a biopsychosocial model of emotion as depicted in Fig. 3.8. may be posited:

To illustrate the model, one may begin with a situation that presents itself in the social arena. This elicits a physical reaction via the short, unconscious route described by LeDoux’ theory. It triggers the appropriate basic emotional reflex via the library of scripts, giving the person a (complex) feeling, as was depicted in Fig. 3.3. As this feeling is felt physically, it causes a change in the emotional landscape. This environment is dynamic, that is, it is constantly fluctuating. So it is actually the change in feeling which is noticed and is called an emotion. The feelings are however largely biological (neurotransmitters, neuropeptides and predispositions).

The link between the situation and the feeling is committed to memory due to classical conditioning. This memory influences both the intensity of the bodily reaction and how these reactions are experienced. Every repetition of that situation increases the intensity. The more intense the memory, the larger its amplifying power. To continue: The process of classical conditioning is unconscious. The memory isn’t only stored in the brain, but also in body cells via the operation of neuropeptides.

When a situation sufficiently draws a person’s attention, the conscious, long route of LeDoux is activated, leading to cognitive processing and internal emotion regulation. When the emotion is reappraised or suppressed, this changes the way the person feels, again by triggering the appropriate basic emotional reflexes and scripts in a sort of feedback loop. It also affects further processing (that is, the interpretation of the emotion) and the way the situation is stored in memory.

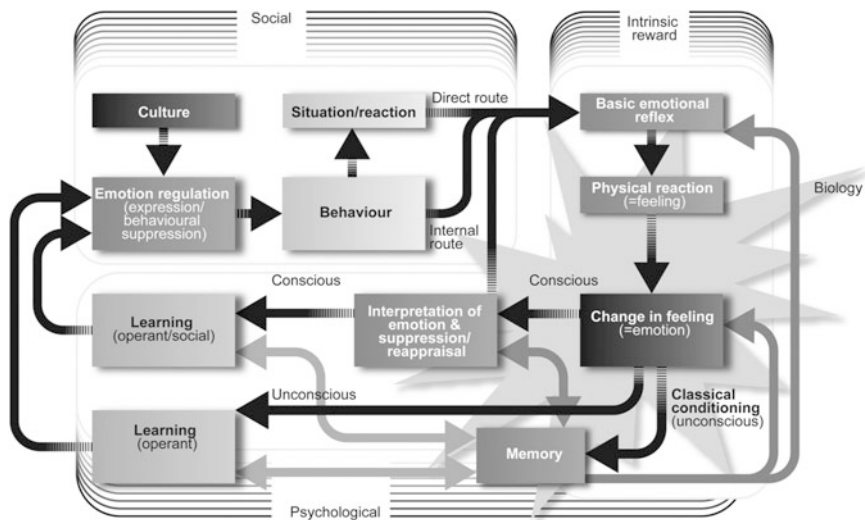


Fig. 3.8 Pieter Houtekamer: a biopsychosocial model of emotion

In terms of further cognitive processing, both the situation and the (possibly modified) feelings it elicits are then interpreted in combination with what is in memory. This interpretation then directs learning (on a more conscious level) using the processes of operant conditioning and social learning. The person notices what the consequences of a particular situation or his or her reaction towards it are. Also this conscious process causes an interaction between interpreting and memory. This more conscious (or in any case more deeply processed) interpretation not only affects the person's current reaction to the situation at hand, but is also stored in memory, thereby affecting his or her future behaviour.

What generally is ignored in behaviourism is what exactly reinforces behaviour in operant conditioning. It isn't the actual reward or punishment, but what that reward or punishment *means* to the person. And that's a feeling, not the objective consequence. The reinforcement is the experiencing of the emotion that the objective consequence evokes. A positive consequence of specific behaviour will only be experienced as being positive when it renders a positive feeling. This is also why triggering the basic emotional reflexes, the concomitant feeling and the change in one's emotional landscape may be regarded as an intrinsic reward. The valence of the emotion doesn't alter this principle: That the experience of emotion *in itself* is an intrinsically rewarding experience. This will be further discussed anon.

Not all behaviour is consciously chosen, a lot is done automatically. The several heuristics people use are a good example of unconscious decision making and by extension unconscious behaviour. Yet all behaviour was learnt sometime, someplace before, also the behaviour now executed heuristically. So also here memory plays a role.

Whatever the situation, a person will react consciously or unconsciously. Also when he or she does nothing, this too is a reaction, just like it is impossible to not communicate. Whatever the (lack of) reaction, it is behaviour. Exactly how one responds is influenced by the external (social) emotional regulation system, in which cultural and socially accepted ways of expressing emotions influences actual behaviour. And that behaviour in turn elicits a response from the (social) environment, leading to a new situation.

That completes the circle: Situation—basic emotional reflex—bodily response—change in feeling/emotional landscape—processing of this change—storage in memory—choice of reaction—reaction—new situation.

In this circle the function of the social environment becomes apparent. For example how social and cultural norms for expressing emotion are instilled. One could say that most of the (mental or behavioural) disorders only become visible when the *expression* of the internally experienced emotions is seen as inappropriate *in that society*. Cultural norms for the appropriate expression of emotion are primarily socialized via the learning process: Via the individual's behaviour and the reaction that this behaviour draws out from the social environment. This explains why the Japanese person who is seething on the inside will continue to smile: Any other reaction in the Japanese culture is inappropriate and this has been made clear to him or her as a child by his or her caregivers. The external emotion regulation

system tries to ensure that these norms are respected by suppressing (culturally) inappropriate displays of emotion.

Behaviour also draws out a bodily reaction in another way: Directly, without the intervention of the social environment, called intra-psychological. Research shows that when pretending to laugh, there still is an effect. Endorphins are released, even if the person feels unhappy whilst forcing himself or herself to laugh. The self-perception theory (Bem 1972) says the same thing: In an ambiguous situation people interpret their own behaviour and draw conclusions from that interpretation. Seen from the self-perception theory one could say that: “Because I am laughing, I probably am happy”. In this way behaviour brings about a physical reaction in the body, without the help of the social environment. The same goes for memories, which when activated will also elicit an emotional experience irrespective the presence of the social environment.

Operant conditioning as strategy for altering dysfunctional behaviour goes awry as the link between negative consequences and behaviour doesn't always lead to a reduction of that behaviour. Some people keep finding themselves in situations which aren't particularly beneficial for them. Sometimes that can be explained by the difference between short term advantages versus long term disadvantages. Sometimes people simply aren't equipped to deal differently with a situation (that is, a deficit in skills as explained in Sect. 3.2). There is yet another explanation: The physical reaction and its influence on the emotional landscape can be seen as intrinsically rewarding irrespective whether the experience turns out positively or negatively. Merely experiencing an emotion is rewarding. This may be illustrated using depression: People who suffer from depression are generally apathetic and their emotional experience is drab. By manner of speaking they are depressed because they aren't experiencing anything. This is similar to what the behavioural therapists say: *rewarding experiences* are lacking. But inactivity leads to a *lack of all forms of reinforcement*, also those which lead to a negative experience. To exaggerate: The change in emotional landscape tells the person that he or she is experiencing and therefore that he or she is alive. And that is in itself a rewarding experience. The fact that emotions are intrinsically rewarding can even lead to an addiction to certain emotions ...

When emotions become addictive it can lead to persevering problems. A cognitive approach has little effect then, as the problem lies in the emotions, not the thinking. Experimenting with new behaviour is usually an easier route than the repression or avoidance of difficult emotions (in other words: Unlearning dysfunctional behaviour). Trying out new behaviour leads to a new (or at least different) emotional experience. This new behaviour will not only draw out a different reaction from the social environment, but is also reinforced due to the intrinsic reward of the emotional experience it elicits. When the new emotional experience is positive or more positive than the one the dysfunctional behaviour yielded, one will tend to utilize this new possibility more easily. The old behaviour doesn't need to be unlearned: It will be used ever less often until it eventually extinguishes by itself.

What then about the cognitions? Seen from this model, cognitions, thoughts and beliefs are secondary. That doesn't mean they are unimportant, to the contrary. Yet how a person thinks about things has to do with memory. They don't "just think", but use all their knowledge and experiences from the past as a background for the new thought that arises. As it is the change in emotional landscape that signals what is important, by extension it also determines what is remembered and how that is remembered. Emotions thereby are primary. Cognitions do also influence behaviour: In terms of systems theory they form one of the several feedback loops that maintain behaviour. As the cognitions are regulated by the emotional experience, they thereby are a so-called second-order factor. By the way: Behaviour in this model may be seen broadly as everything someone does (i.e. a verb). This means that thinking (a verb) is also behaviour, delivers an emotional experience and is by itself a rewarding activity!

In summary, emotional experience is one great, complex interaction which keeps itself going. The central facet is a dynamic, ever-changing emotional landscape, in which an emotion is a self-rewarding phenomenon that directs a person's thinking, what is remembered and the way people see themselves: Emotion gives meaning to one's life and to the moment, and regulates one's behaviour.

### **3.5 Shame and Guilt**

What should be clear from the preceding paragraphs is what emotions are and how they play a primary role in how people experience and by extension behave. What should also be clear is that emotions are functional: Without emotions it makes no sense to do anything at all. In other words emotions are functional in that they tell people what is important to them and give them the experience of being alive. This means they motivate one. From this broad perspective on emotions, the focus may now be narrowed down to the subject of this book: Shame. Shame is one of the emotions people experience and should therefore also be a functional emotion. That people generally experience shame as something negative may be clear. In simple terms shame has a limiting effect: It prevents one from "going over the top" and in that sense it has a protective intention. As with all emotions, shame only becomes problematic when it is overly limiting or not present at all. This could be due to all kinds of factors: poor or misplaced emotion regulation, inappropriate appraisals or expectations, to name but a few. To put it differently, shame as a normal reaction isn't problematic and is functional just as the normal experience of fear prevents people from doing potentially dangerous things.

In this paragraph how shame influences our experience and behaviour is considered, beginning by making a distinction between shame and guilt, two terms that are easily thought to be interchangeable for the same emotion. After that how people deal with shame is specifically reviewed.

### 3.5.1 *The Difference Between Shame and Guilt*

The discussion about the difference between shame and guilt has been ongoing for some time. In everyday language the difference between these two is not all that clear and people often use the terms interchangeably (Nathanson 1996). The most usable definitions are given in an overview by Tangney et al. (2007):

**Moral emotions:** Emotions that motivate to the doing of good and not doing what is evil (Kroll and Egan 2004). What good and evil are, is however dependent on culture.

**Self-conscious emotions:** These are experienced via (implicit or explicit) self-reflection and self-appraisal. The self is the object.

**Guilt:** Is a negative, self-conscious, moral emotion which occurs when the individual admits that he has done something that transgresses a moral law. The focus is on inappropriate behaviour.

**Shame:** Is a negative, self-conscious, moral emotion which occurs when someone see *his person* as being deficient, because something he did transgressed a moral law. The focus is on the person.

**Embarrassment:** Is a negative, self-conscious emotion specific to the social situation. The person experiencing this emotion feels himself deficient and observed, yet no moral law has been transgressed.

Guilt, shame and embarrassment are negative, self-conscious emotions and can refer to the past (something that has happened) or to the future (one anticipates how a particular situation will play out). Embarrassment and shyness are however limited to (perceived) social situations and generally are only problematic when they are an exaggerated reaction. If one slips whilst walking, it isn't really strange if one momentarily feels embarrassed. Yet when one doesn't dare to make any social contact, this can form quite a barrier to one's functioning. Often problematic embarrassment and shyness are linked to self-image issues, beyond the scope of this chapter. The discussion is in first instance limited to the two negative, self-conscious, *moral* (as Tangney et al. 2007 define them) emotions: Shame and guilt.

There are two options when an individual is confronted with an imperfection in their person or their behaviour: They can accept that fact or they can defend themselves against it. When it is accepted the focus shifts from the person to the inadequate behaviour, leading to the experience of guilt. From previous literature research (Van Alphen 2004) it appears people seem to accept their faults more readily in two circumstances: When it doesn't do that much to them (because it isn't that important, for example) or when it is so overly apparent that they cannot manoeuvre around it.

When people feel guilty, they tend to feel sorry for what they have done and have the wish to make undone what their actions brought about. That can be by offering apologies or by restoring or reimbursing the damages. In this sense guilt is a negative emotion with a positive outcome. Where guilt becomes problematic is when the possibility to repair is absent or when the feelings of guilt are irrational or misplaced. In trauma, for example, people often develop a guilty feeling in the

sense of “*If only I had done ..., this wouldn’t even have happened*”. The victim of a traumatic experience is seldom *objectively* at fault. Also when someone dies (irrespective the objective guilt question) the possibility to undo what happened simply isn’t there. In brief, normal feelings of guilt motivate people to restore their relationship with others they have somehow wronged while misplaced feelings of guilt usually aren’t resolvable. The moral element is obvious: Guilt is only felt if the *person* subjectively feels he or she has transgressed a moral standard.

Shame on the other hand is experienced when the person perceives *himself or herself* deficient. Because the focus is on the person, the first tendency is self-protection, as no-one likes to feel themselves lacking. A number of strategies are therefore used to draw attention away from this (now experienced as deficient) person. Take the alcoholic who has promised his partner not to drink during the day. Chances are, if he doesn’t stick to his promise, that his partner will smell his misstep via his breath. Chances also are that she will let him know in no uncertain terms when she finds out. So when his partner confronts him with his behaviour, he sees his own behaviour as transgressing a moral law. He had a drink, whilst that wasn’t the agreement. So the law being transgressed is: “*Stick to your promises.*” Instead of admitting that his *behaviour* is inappropriate (“*I know it wasn’t what we agreed, but I couldn’t stop myself.*”), chances are he will try to draw his partner’s attention away from him as person. This is characteristic for shame—the alcoholic doesn’t consider his behaviour inappropriate but sees himself as a defective person because he didn’t keep his word. And that doesn’t feel that good, so the sooner he isn’t under scrutiny anymore, the sooner he doesn’t have to face this rotten feeling.

### 3.5.2 *Is Shame a Moral Emotion?*

A valid question is whether shame is limited to a self-conscious *moral* emotion, meaning a departure from Tangney et al.’s (2007) definition. The author tends to see shame occurring whenever a person perceives himself or herself as being a *defective person*, irrespective whether a moral law has been broken or not. In other words, also when a person feels incompetent and attributes this (explicitly or implicitly) to him or her being a defective person, this will give rise to shame. One could stretch the idea of moral transgression by saying one is morally obliged to be an autonomous, competent person ... Yet what a moral emotion is, is a matter of discussion (Cova et al. 2015). This implies that when an individual from his or her own personal frame of reference feels he or she has broken a moral code, it may evoke the experience of a particular emotion such as shame or guilt. This may be true, but does not logically imply the opposite. It doesn’t preclude a person from experiencing these two emotions without putting morality into the equation. Hence the suggestion to concentrate the definitions of shame and guilt on the emotion connected with feeling oneself a defective person (shame) and feeling one’s

behaviour is inappropriate (guilt), given that both emotions arise from a self-conscious evaluation (that is, the self is the object under evaluation) according to one's own frame of reference.

### 3.5.3 How People Deal with Shame

Nathanson (1992) worked out the way people defend themselves from shame in a model he calls the Compass of Shame. His model enjoys sufficient support (Elison et al. 2006) and is the basis for some questionnaires to measure internalised shame. According to Nathanson, when confronted with shame people use one of four broad defence mechanisms (a psychoanalytic term describing the many ways people deal with negative emotions): Withdraw, attack the other, attack themselves or avoid (see Fig. 3.9).

Has your partner ever called you on something you did and you answered: “Yes, but you ...”? From a logical point of view it isn't even relevant what another did or didn't do, it doesn't suddenly make one's behaviour right. The yes-but-you answer is called the turn-around trick and is a good example of one of the four defence mechanisms: Attack the other. This strategy works, because now the attention is no longer on the person and his or her defects, but on the other person. The opposite strategy might look like acceptance but isn't: Attack oneself: “Oh, how could I be so stupid!” After having said it, there no longer is any need to talk about it, leave alone do anything about it. Or the person becomes the “victim”, which also draws

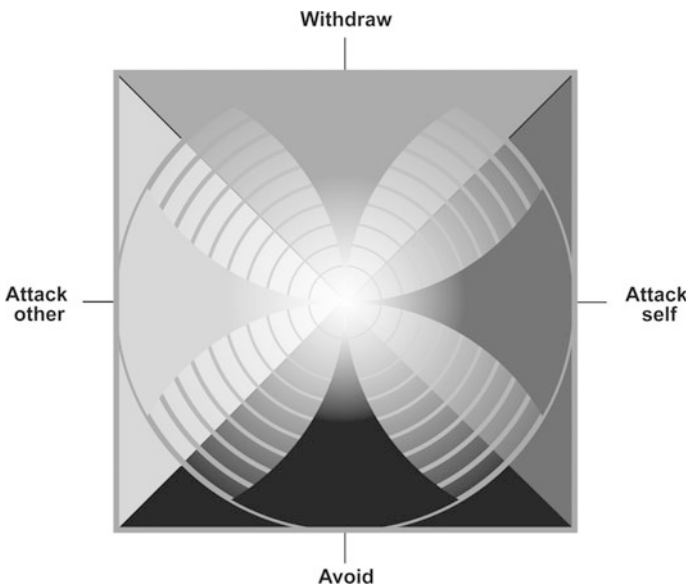


Fig. 3.9 Pieter Houtekamer: the compass of shame adapted from Nathanson (1992)

attention away from the shameful act. Ever walked off in a huff during an argument, or that the other did that? Walking off doesn't solve the problem, but does mean that (for the moment) one doesn't have to deal with the bad feeling, or at least to a lesser degree. Children do this by hiding, sometimes literally and sometimes by hiding their faces behind their hands. This way the situation simply isn't there anymore. These are all examples of another strategy—to withdraw. The fourth strategy is avoidance. That can be short-term by denying or by changing the subject, or longer term by using alcohol or drugs to avoid the bad feeling, or by replacing the bad feeling by seeking out other forms of excitement.

An individual therefore chooses between one of two “axes” when confronted with shame: Attack or run away (*fight or flight*).

- When attacking, an object is required: People either attack the other or they attack themselves. All the so-called disclaimers also fall into these two categories: That is, all the different ways in which one claims not to be at fault for what has been done.
- The other axis has more to do with time. Withdrawing is immediate, as from the instant one (actually or psychologically) walks away, the situation no longer exists—just like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand. Avoiding takes a little more time: The bad feeling doesn't dissolve straight away, it takes time before the avoidance strategy kicks in.

To sum up, the way in which people defend themselves against the bad feeling shame gives them is symbolized by the four points of the compass as depicted in Fig. 3.9.

None of the four strategies is in itself pathological. Which of these broad choices a person uses depends on all sorts of things such as personality, how he or she was brought up, culture and life history, etcetera. Also the situation or situational factors have influence. A healthily functioning individual will switch strategies depending on the situation. It becomes problematic when a person always, irrespective the situation, uses one and the same way to defend himself or herself against the bad feeling. Or never takes a step back and accepts that something one did could have been done differently. Shame can have a pathological effect on one's mental health depending on the frequency and intensity in which shame is experienced, in contradistinction to guilt, where the imperfection is accepted.

To return to the fictional alcoholic and his partner. He could deal with his feeling of failure by venting that on his partner (the attack other strategy). Yet he doesn't lash out at her because he wants to attack her *personally*, but because she happens to be the person who is around when he needs to deal with the bad feeling. It's about him, not her. What often happens is that the partner in turn interprets this as him venting his anger *on her*, causing her to react, which causes the argument to escalate. The vicious circle (the escalating argument) is therefore an interaction between how the man deals with his *shame* and how his partner interprets his *attempt to deal with* this feeling of shame. Here is an example how shame can cause a dysfunctional interaction.



### 3.6 Conclusion

So what is then the functional and adaptive side of shame? As may be evident, shame kicks in when the person experiences himself or herself as being defective. The natural first reaction is *not* to deal with it, yet in the long run shame eventually should bring one to the point where one actually does something about one's *behaviour*. In other words, shame (with its focus on the deficient person) becomes functional when it converts itself into guilt (by shifting the focus to inappropriate behaviour). To put it differently, shame is always experienced internally and in the long run motivates us (or should motivate us) to becoming a better person. And it isn't another who needs to determine whether the individual is a better person or not, but it's about the person feeling himself or herself valuable and worthwhile. Using the biopsychosocial model of behaviour in Sect. 3.2, this means shame converted to guilt causes one to change one's behaviour in a restorative way. The improved relation with others eventually translates into positive interactions, leading to changes in the emotional landscape towards a more positive feeling.

This is adaptive, as whichever way one chooses to look at it, individual survival is dependent on common survival—people need each other, they are interdependent. Even in a culture where independence is celebrated, all should implicitly know that without the social background the individual simply wouldn't exist. There may be cultural differences in how people experience and give expression to shame, but this does not lessen its adaptive purpose. Shame motivates people to act. Shame when converted to guilt therefore increases the chances of both individual and collective survival as both the individual and humanity as a whole are more likely to survive when people help one another than when they are in a constant competition or war with one another. Shame helps to draw the boundaries and gives an emotional experience to be able to perceive the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour. Shame helps to restore relationships. Shame in this sense is the very essence of our social fibre.

**Acknowledgements** I would like to thank the following people specifically for their contribution to this chapter: Pieter Houtekamer for the figures, Wilma van Heerden for the use of her photographs and Dr. Snežana Stupar for her comments and suggestions.

### References

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191–215.
- Bem, D. J. (1972). Self-perception theory. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 6, pp. 1–62). New York: Academic Press.
- Colombetti, G. (2009). From affect programs to dynamical discrete emotions. *Philosophical Psychology*, 22, 407–425.
- Cova, F., Deonna, J., & Sander, D. (2015). Introduction: Moral emotions. *Topoi*, 34, 397–400.

- Delgado, M. R., Stenger, V. A., & Fiez, J. A. (2004). Motivation-dependent responses in the human caudate nucleus. *Cerebral Cortex*, *14*, 1022–1030.
- Ekman, P. (1980). *The face of man: Expressions of universal emotions in a New Guinea village*. New York: Garland STPM Press.
- Ekman, P., Friesen, W., & Ellsworth, P. (1982). What emotion categories or dimensions can observers judge from facial behavior? In P. Ekman (Ed.), *Emotion in the human face* (pp. 39–55). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Elison, J., Pulos, S., & Lennon, R. (2006). Shame-focussed coping: An empirical study of the compass of shame. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, *34*, 161–168.
- Field, T., & Walden, T. (1982). Perception and production of facial expression in infancy and early childhood. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, *16*, 169–211.
- Izard, C. E., Ackerman, B. P., Schoff, K. M., & Fine, S. E. (2002). Self-organization of discrete emotions, emotion patterns, and emotion-cognition relations. In M. D. Lewis & I. Granic (Eds.), *Emotion, development, and self-organization: Dynamic systems approaches to emotional development* (pp. 15–36). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jack, R. E., Garrod, O. G., & Schyns, P. G. (2014). Dynamic facial expressions of emotion transmit an evolving hierarchy of signals over time. *Current Biology*, *24*, 187–192.
- Kiesler, D. J. (1999). *Beyond the disease model of mental disorders*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., & Kurokawa, M. (2000). Culture, emotion, and well-being: Good feelings in Japan and the United States. *Cognition and Emotion*, *14*(1), 93–124.
- Kroll, J., & Egan, E. (2004). Psychiatry, moral worry, and moral emotions. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, *10*, 352–360.
- LeDoux, J. (1996). *The emotional brain, the mysterious underpinnings of emotional life*. New York: Touchstone.
- Legerstee, M., & Markova, G. (2008). Variations in 10-month old infant imitation of people and things. *Infant behaviour & Development*, *31*, 81–91.
- Marshall, G. D., & Zimbardo, P. G. (1979). Affective consequences of inadequately explained physiological arousal. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *37*, 970–988.
- Nathanson, D. L. (1996). *Knowing feeling. Affect, script and psychotherapy*. New York: W.W. Norton Company.
- Nathanson, D. L. (1992). *Shame and pride: Affect, sex, and the birth of the self*. New York: Norton.
- Pert, C. B. (1997). *Molecules of emotion: The science behind mind-body medicine*. New York: Touchstone.
- Schachter, S., & Singer, J. (1962). Cognitive, social and physiological determinants of the emotional state. *Psychological Review*, *69*, 379–399.
- Stupar, S., Van de Vijver, F. J., & Fontaine, J. R. (2015). Emotion valence, intensity, and emotion regulation in immigrants and majority members in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Psychology*, *50*, 312–318.
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral emotions and moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *58*, 345–372.
- Tomkins, S. (1995). The quest for primary motives: Biography and autobiography of an idea. In E. Demos (Ed.), *Exploring affect: The selected writings of Silvan S. Tomkins*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Alphen, M. F. (2004). *Shame and decision-making*. Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Van Kleef, G. A. (2009). How emotions regulate social life—the emotions as social information (EASI) model. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *18*, 184–188.
- Vandercammen, L., Hofmans, J., Theuns, P., & Kuppens, P. (2014). On the role of specific emotions in autonomous and controlled motivated behaviour. *European Journal of Personality*, *28*, 437–448.
- Watkins, A. (2013). *Coherence: The secret science of brilliant leadership*. London: Kogan Page Limited.

## Chapter 4

# The Positive Function of Shame: Moral and Spiritual Perspectives

Thomas Ryan

**Abstract** While shame can be both destructive and constructive, healthy shame, with its roots in personal conviction, is inherently associated with values and self-evaluation. Understood thus, it is an integral part of wholesome human functioning in the personal, social and cultural realms. This chapter investigates these statements in four stages drawing on relevant scholarship both past and present. First, it examines briefly the relational foundations of shame. Second, in the moral area, it taps into the tradition of virtue ethics as represented by Thomas Aquinas and approached through the virtue of charity. Third, it investigates shame's educative aspect in two forms: personally, in terms of shame's correlative quality, namely, honour; collectively, through three examples of cultural learning in relation to shame and injustice in the Australian context. Fourth, from spirituality, it uses insights from James and Evelyn Whitehead's (and others') discussion of shame in relation to spiritual growth. In doing so, it suggests briefly individuals who have transcended social shame and directed it to be a subversive and transforming influence.

The title of this book points to broadening perceptions of shame. "Value", "health resource" and "across cultures" reflect an increased appreciation of the dynamics and functions of shame that go beyond its toxic and destructive forms. The past two decades have confirmed one author's recognition of the emerging "fresh and fruitful perspectives" on shame as a gateway to "a recovery of spirit and spiritedness in our personal and collective lives" (Fowler 1996, 96).

This chapter's aim is to explore this statement further with a specific focus on moral and spiritual perspectives on the positive role of shame. It will do so in four phases. First, it examines briefly the relational foundations of shame. Second, in the moral area, it taps into the tradition of virtue ethics as represented by Thomas Aquinas and approached through the virtue of charity. Third, it investigates shame's educative aspect in two forms: personally, in terms of shame's correlative quality,

---

T. Ryan (✉)

Australian Catholic University, c/- 3 Mary St., Sydney, NSW 2110, Australia  
e-mail: tryansm@bigpond.net.au

namely, honour; collectively, through three examples of cultural learning in relation to shame and injustice in the Australian context. Fourth, from spirituality, it builds on James and Evelyn Whitehead's (and others') discussion of shame in relation to spiritual growth. In doing so, I suggest some individuals who have transcended social shame and directed it to be a subversive and transforming influence.

## 4.1 Relational Foundations of Shame

We all know moments when we blush, when we are embarrassed. It may be when I walk into a room and interrupt a private conversation or find two people in a passionate embrace. Or I see a person smiling at me. I move to greet them and realise the smile was directed to someone behind me. Or I think of the instinctive reaction of people covering their faces when confronted by a media pack. I may become conscious of how I would react if hurtful things I have done were exposed to public gaze.

Elsbeth Probyn suggests that common to these scenarios of embarrassment or "blushing" is my body telling me that *I am out of place* and that, underlying this, is the desire "to fit in", for connection even the possibility of love (Probyn 2005, 3, 38). In these situations, I have been affected in a bodily and psychological way. I am emotionally moved in that my body instantly senses that a boundary has been transgressed within the realm of those social/cultural or moral patterns of how to act or not to act. I feel exposed. I want to hide, even from myself and my mistakes or my deficiencies. I am reminded that, at times, I am not the person I would like to be. I feel ashamed. What are the roots of this?

As humans, we all desire to belong, to be included and to be loved. In many ways, our survival depends on companionship. Exile and banishment are tantamount to a living death. Together with guilt, shame is a social dynamic that guards our social identity and warns us of any action that threatens us being excluded or "banished" from where we belong.

It is beyond the scope of our discussion to elaborate, in detail, the psychological and sociological roots and patterns in shame's development. We distil the key ideas needed for the purposes of this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

Shame is one of a number of affect sets that "begins as a non-pathological innate neurobiological affect program in humans" (Fowler 1996, 104). In Tomkins' scheme of nine basic affect sets, two are relevant here: interest-excitement (gaze riveted on an object, mouth partially open) and enjoyment-joy (bright shining face, smiling response). It is the negative affect shame-humiliation (eye contact avoided, head lowered) that interferes with the interest-excitement/enjoyment-joy responses such that "the self-balance, self esteem or standing with other" is threatened. The threat can arise from the "strangeness" of another. But it can also result from

---

<sup>1</sup>See Tomkins (1963, 1995), Probyn (2005) and Fowler (1996, 97–103) and other chapters in this present book.

responses of others that suggest the likelihood that a person may be rejected or devalued in some way.

Fowler offers an illustration known as the “still face” experiment of filming a number of mothers and infants (Tronick et al. 1978). The mother sits face to face with her infant in pleasant surroundings. She is told to behave normally. The films seen in slow motion show the absorbed interest between mother and child as they view each other. The mother is asked to leave the room for a few minutes. On returning, she is told to sit down in front of her infant. She is to make eye contact but to refrain from any facial expression or gesture and to be as neutral as possible. The babies try to engage the mother in the normal interaction. After a while, the infants behave in either of two ways. Some will cry out in distress. Others will slump down in the chair, turn their head down and avert their eyes from the mother’s face. The interest-enjoyment of the child has been interrupted. Shame has been

triggered by some signal related to the maternal refusal to participate in the expected interchange (Fowler 1996, 100).

From this, Fowler suggests important clues about the shame-humiliation affect: it occurs in a setting of face-to-face relations; is triggered by something that occurs in the relation that suggests the experience of rejection, disapproval or exclusion; it directs one’s attention away from the other and heightens awareness of the self; it brings painful feelings of confusion, self-doubt and a sense of unworthiness (Fowler 1996, 102).

Fowler suggests that, in contrast with the other eight affect sets that respond to situations external to us (as interesting, repugnant or threatening etc.), shame-humiliation is unique in that it is “*reflexive in direction*” in that it gives rise to “neurophysiological responses and accompanying feelings that reference and amplify awareness of the *self*” (Fowler 1996, 102). This affect is both foundational in the emergent processes of self-awareness and self-consciousness and in motivating the cognitive operations involved in constructing the perspectives of others, especially their evaluations of the self. Fowler suggests, following critiques of Tomkins, a complementary reflexive affect, namely, confidence-pride, which amplifies “one’s sense of well-being and of being valued” (Fowler 1996, 103).

From these considerations, it has emerged that shame entails a context of *relationships*, an *affective* response and the process of *evaluation*—of self and others. Our discussion will explore these three aspects in relation to the moral, educative and spiritual dimensions of shame. Part of that process involves “across cultures.” It is helpful, then, to have a working definition of culture to guide us. Don Browning takes culture to mean

a set of symbols, stories (myths), and norms for conduct that orient a society or group cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally to the world in which it lives (Browning 1976, 73).

On that basis, culture can be understood to include groups or “sub-cultures” within a given wider context of culture or society.

## 4.2 The Moral Dimension

There is divided opinion about shame's role in the moral life. Bernard Williams, for instance, in *Shame and Necessity*, is intent on recovering the Greek sensitivity to shame's role as a healthy virtue. This is in contrast with the restrictive view of shame as "pre-moral" social conformity (Williams 1993). Rather than servile shame that rested on public opinion, healthy shame was grounded in personal conviction. Similarly, Calhoun (2004) observes that some moral philosophers consider shame to be a "more primitive and less useful moral emotion than guilt" and that individuals and cultures "should move past it." Shame as a moral emotion and the public exposure involved seems less directed at any wrong done than at how we appear or "at what other people require us to do or like" (Calhoun 2004, 127–8). Calhoun disagrees and argues that if one is a participant with others in a life of shared moral practices, then shame over moral failings is "essential to a mature moral agent's psychology" (Calhoun 2004, 129). Both Williams and Calhoun are in continuity with the tradition of virtue ethics with its roots in Aristotle, for instance, and developed much later in Thomas Aquinas in his views on shame and its role in the moral life. It also converges with the relational, affective and evaluative qualities of shame outlined above. I will parse previous discussions of shame through the lens of love.<sup>2</sup>

For Aquinas, the supreme unifying and animating principle of all the virtues is charity. It is love that directs our impulses, actions and desires in our relationship with God, as too with others and oneself (ST 2.2.23.6-8). Aquinas considers emotions are essential to the moral life and to human integration. Shame, closely associated with the body (especially touch), is part of the affective virtue of temperance or self-care concerning our bodily, sexual and affective needs and desires.

For Aquinas, in contrast with Aristotle, all the cardinal virtues, and, hence, temperance and shame must be seen primarily in the context of love in its various forms and in a theological framework. Concerning the self, Aquinas holds that

- (a) healthy self love is an essential component of Christian living;
- (b) we must have love for our body as a gift from God);
- (c) concern for one's own good is integral to virtue or moral self-transcendence (Respectively ST 2.2.25.4; 2.2.25.5; 2.2.26.6).

For Aquinas, shame as a cultural and psychological reality is one of life's teachers—socially, relationally and morally. Three statements capture Aquinas' approach to shame. First, shame involves values, self-evaluation and the framework for living a good life.

Aquinas' treatment of shame (*verecundia*) in the *Summa Theologiae* starts with a specific question on the morality of the emotions.<sup>3</sup> Is there any emotion that is

---

<sup>2</sup>For an extended discussion of this see Ryan (2013 and also 2008).

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Aquinas treats of shame as a foundational moral response in ST I-11.24.4, as one of the six species of fear in ST I-11.41.4 and as an integral part of the virtue of temperance in ST

always good or evil “by its very nature” (ST 1.2.24.4). An emotion that is good of its very nature is shame (*verecundia* or modesty or *timor turpis*) which is the fear of doing what is morally base in one’s eyes but especially because it damaging to oneself in the eyes of others. Citing Aristotle’s Ethics, Aquinas says that *verecundia* is a praiseworthy emotion and is a virtue in the broad sense (ST 2.2.144.1).<sup>4</sup> It expresses healthy self-care and concern for one’s own good.<sup>5</sup> It must be remembered that shame’s positive role in self-evaluation and self-transformation depends on shame being consciously acknowledged, as will emerge later in the chapter.<sup>6</sup>

For Aquinas, shame (*verecundia*) as an emotion is good or evil of its very nature in a relational context, namely, as being “in tune” (*conveniens*, fitting) or out of tune (*dissonans*, not fitting) with right reason or authentic humanity. It is an emotion that enhances human flourishing, personally and socially. While shame is negative (makes us feel uncomfortable), its positive function emerges from its object, namely, the value it is directed towards upholding and the attitude produced. For Aquinas, to feel no shame (to be morally “shameless”) or to lack sensitivity to another’s pain is not a desirable or even admirable state.

Secondly, for Aquinas, shame is integral to healthy human functioning both personal and social.

There are some things we should be ashamed of, just as there are things about which we should be angry or afraid. Like any emotion, especially those that we call “negative” (we feel uncomfortable), shame can be constructive or destructive.

---

(Footnote 3 continued)

11-11.144. He also has treatments in his Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics Book 4, 17 a-m et passim. Summa Theologiae 1.2. 24.4; 1.2. 41.4; 2.2. 141-144 (henceforth ST). For translations of the Summa, the author has consulted the Latin/English (Blackfriars) version of the English Dominican Province (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1963–1975), the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, 2nd rev. ed. 1920, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province in the on-line version [www.newadvent.org/summa/](http://www.newadvent.org/summa/) and the new translation by Alfred J Freddoso, online version at <http://www.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/TOC.htm> accessed 20/12/2008. Unless indicated, translations are from the Blackfriars’ version. Summaries or paraphrases are the author’s.

<sup>4</sup>By contrast, an emotion evil by its very nature is envy. It is part of our humanity to recognize what is good in others and to have a basic response of pity and compassion to their suffering. To take pleasure in another’s plight or be sad at their gifts or success indicates defective self-esteem. One’s moral character is flawed.

<sup>5</sup>This is consistent with Aristotle’s view that appropriate self-regard (*philautia*) is integral to human flourishing. Shame is entailed in self-care as moral sensitivity to actions that could reflect, or have reflected, badly on oneself (and a sense of remorse and even a desire to atone. See Oakley (1992, 74). Nussbaum notes that shame “requires self-regard as its essential backdrop. It is only because one expects oneself to have worth or even perfection that one will shrink from or cover the evidence of one’s nonworth or imperfection” (Nussbaum 2001, 196).

<sup>6</sup>It is not suggested here that one is reflectively and consciously aware at that particular time that one is experiencing shame. Evaluation certainly involves that one accept that it is legitimate for one to feel shame (whether consciously or not) through acknowledging the temporary sense of exposure or “fragility” it brings. All it may mean, at a basic level, is that one may feel shame (blush), withdraw a bit, and because that blush was not pleasant, avoid the situation in future.

Feeling shame can sustain personal well-being and guide our responses in our relationships and social life.<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, shame can undermine the sense of self and can be “lethal”, especially as an instrument of reproach, power, control and submission (Probyn 2005, 92). In both forms, it has an educative function at both the personal and collective levels, as we shall see later.

For Aquinas, shame, as part of the virtue of temperance or self-care, helps us to grow in the likeness of God, using the gift of our body and what is associated with it. It is reflected in sensitivity to whatever demeans oneself as a person. Its companion is *honestas*, namely a sense of moral excellence and of love for its beauty. Aquinas certainly sees shame in terms of disapproval or loss of face with others (ST 2.2.144.3) and, in that sense, it is located socially and culturally.<sup>8</sup> Shame makes one more sensitive to what threatens virtue, personal goodness, and, most importantly, what fosters or undermines our responsiveness in relationships (ST 2.2 142.4 and 144.1).<sup>9</sup>

The third aspect of shame in Aquinas is its *universal capacity*. Studies across different disciplines indicate shame’s importance and that we are, by nature, social beings. Despite “essentialist or ethnocentric epithets” that may “hover in the air”, Probyn is still prepared to suggest that we need to be open to the evidence that shame may be “biologically innate” and see where that leads us (Probyn 2005, 28 and 25).

Aquinas would not consider such essentialism as outside his “comfort zone.” Aquinas’ classification of emotions is built on the assumption of a common humanity with little sense of cultural variations and cross-cultural differences. For all that, the varieties of shame and its relationship to individual and temperamental differences remind us how human nature, as a source of morality, is subject to much variation. Aquinas acknowledges that, beyond the very general, it is difficult to arrive at moral norms that are certain and universal when faced with so much variability and contingency in human life (ST 1.2.94.4).

---

<sup>7</sup>It is interesting that we can feel shame when others incorrectly perceive us as engaging in unworthy action. Even in such a situation, we have a deeper interest in being good as opposed to merely appearing to be good. Further, despite the social nature of shame, it is true to say that what shames you may not shame me.

<sup>8</sup>We can also feel shame for others, particularly our children. Moreover, while I can have passing moments of feeling fragile and exposed, I can desire (and will) myself to have a sense of shame. Further, a greater sense of shame can be cultivated by a voluntary examination of self.

<sup>9</sup>Given the spontaneous nature of emotional responses, one often hears them described as psychological facts that are “morally neutral.” This is understandable particularly when it comes to the “negative” emotions (those that make us feel uncomfortable, such as anger, shame or fear). The danger is because we feel “bad” (our equilibrium is disturbed) we conclude that we are “bad” morally (that we have done something wrong). For our purposes here, it suffices to say that Aquinas considers that we do have some level of responsibility for our emotions and our emotional life. They can be morally significant in themselves and not just from our attitude to them. It is through our emotions that we are affected by and respond in the world of relationships and, hence, need the affective virtues. See Harak (1993), Murphy (1999) and Ryan (2001a).



Aquinas' treatment of shame, like Aristotle's, is the reverse side of the treatment of honour (*honestas*) or "moral excellence" where the possession of virtue is worthy of recognition. Reputation and public respect are external to virtue and, in fact, may be extended to a person without virtue. In essence, for Aquinas, one's moral worth does not depend on a person's standing in the eyes of others. Rather, how others regard people is a reflection of their moral excellence.<sup>10</sup> Honour and shame are social responses—one to moral goodness, the other to a failure to live up to that. They assume the shared nature of the moral life and need for recognition and mutual support from others, as we shall further explore later in this chapter.

We have explored the value of shame as a resource for moral health and well-being in the context of the virtue of temperance and as an expression of self-care. How does "across cultures" apply here? One way is in recalling that shame, as part of the virtue of temperance and the four cardinal virtues, comes out of a Western philosophical and theological tradition. However, we find virtues that function in similar ways from other traditions, as in the Confucian philosopher Mencius (c. 390-310 b.c.e).

"Propriety" (reverence and respect for others) approximates the role given to love by Aquinas. "Intelligent awareness" as the skill of making right judgments parallels the virtue of prudence. "Righteousness" deals with our responsibilities to others, hence, it resembles justice. For Mencius, it includes shame (*hsiu*) and aversion (*wu*) which serve righteousness since "sensitivity to both helps us remain in right relationship with others" (Lamoureux and Wadell 2010, 136).<sup>11</sup> Benevolence (*jen*), resembles Aquinas' compassion (as described above n. 5) and love (as willing the good for another, *ST* 2.2.23.1). Benevolence involves an enduring sensitivity to others, especially in their suffering and a commitment to strive to alleviate suffering. It embraces one's family, all human beings and "a general regard for all beings, at least for living creatures" (Lamoureux and Wadell 2010, 135).

After this brief overview of shame as part of the virtue of temperance, it emerges that the focus of Aquinas' treatment is on healthy shame in its moral setting. It is concerned with the personal internalisation of standards and the implications, personal and social, when they are contravened. The person both feels shame and has acted in such a way that they are rightly ashamed (guilty).

But there are situations where people feel shame and have done nothing wrong. There is a normal shame associated with personal privacy surrounding the body and sexuality, an aspect of reverence, even of the sacred. Again, people may not have contravened an internalised moral standard yet their condition or status leads them to feel ugly, hence, worthy of being abandoned or isolated in terms of the expectations of others or some other norm. It may be shame from a personal failure,

---

<sup>10</sup>Honour as "recognition" and appreciation is due to moral excellence. He says that "the honourable amounts to the same as being virtuous" (*ST* 2.2.145.1).

<sup>11</sup>Shame "is an awareness of falling short of some standard, a repugnance manifested in shame about one's own actions" and "aversion focuses on attitude, actions and ways of being one ought to avoid" (Lamoureux and Wadell 2010, 136 citing Yearley (1990, 37, 38, 41).

medical condition, family background, ethnic origin, and physical disfigurement, disability—many of which are beyond the person’s control. These have a bearing on how we construe shame and its role as a health resource, broadly understood. For these reasons I would like to probe shame further in relation to *love or the virtue of charity*.<sup>12</sup>

Amongst the various forms of love, for Aquinas, *caritas* denotes love in its most complete sense. Its ultimate proper object is love of God, precisely as goodness. Given that, for Aquinas, every human being is made in God’s image, and, as such, participates in goodness, love’s object includes human beings since love’s object is what is good. Aquinas sees the desires of love as taking two forms: desire for the good of the beloved (other) and desire for union with the beloved (other).

Aquinas holds that some loves should be greater than others. He says that it is possible to desire the good of humanity in general and to desire some sort of union with all humanity, as in the shared beatific vision (*ST* 2.2.26. 6 ad 1). The desire for union can also include love of oneself since to desire one’s own good is to desire union with oneself, namely, internal integration (*ST* 1.2.23.3).

Stump is instructive on the relation of guilt and shame to the two desires of love. She cites Ruth Benedict’s pattern of collectivist or shame-based cultures (external sanctions, shame as reaction to a real or imagined audience) versus individualist or guilt-based cultures (internalized conviction of sin without anyone else knowing) and observes that this distinction is now “largely rejected.” She explains that

both shame and guilt can come from internalised standards and sanctions, and a real or imagined audience is no more necessary for one than the other (Stump 2010, 142).<sup>13</sup>

In distinguishing guilt and shame, Stump draws on Card (2002) and starts with what guilt and shame seek or fear. In doing something wrong, a guilty person fears repudiation from real or imagined others. Punishment, while appropriate and “good”, from the perspective of others, may, in her view, not be for her own good. Guilt, then, is related to a desire for the good of the person. Alternatively, shame’s correlative is the desire for union. The shamed person is fearful of being isolated and marginalised “by real or imagined others.” His anxiety is directed towards “an absence of union, forced on him by others with whom he desires some kind of closeness” (Stump 2010, 144). Stump cites Card:

---

<sup>12</sup>This discussion is indebted to Stump (2010, 91–100 et passim) and Wadell (1989).

<sup>13</sup>While Benedict’s distinction is perhaps an overly simple generalization, its use is still evident in recent and current literature. A shame-culture is collectivist in that “persons understand themselves as parts of groups or collectives such as family, tribe or nation” (Triandis 1995, 2). They are defined by those groups and do not understand themselves as having a “separate identity.” In contrast with an individualist or “guilt-culture”, members are motivated by “group norms rather than individual needs or aspirations.” See Rohrbaugh (2002, 27–43, at 30 citing Triandis 1995). A sharper picture is offered by Hiebert (1985) in noting that “(I) n a shame-culture (sometimes referred to as “honour-shame culture”), what other people believe is much more powerful. Indeed, my principles may be derived from the desire to preserve my honour or avoid shame to the exclusion of all else” Hiebert (1985, 212).

in expiating guilt we seek respect and reacceptance. In removing shame, we seek esteem or admiration...guilt can only be relieved by forgiveness, whereas shame cannot (Stump 2010, 143 citing Card 2002, 206).

While the guilty person may feel it is appropriate that others are angry with him and want to punish him, nevertheless, there is a sense in which he does not want this since he does not see it as good for himself, in some sense of “good.” The shamed person, alternatively, believes it is appropriate for others to reject “not his good but *him*.” Understood thus, it is consistent with a shamed person’s desire not to be seen, “to avoid the gaze of others, to be invisible”. Such a person is convinced of something about himself—his own ugliness or some standard of desirability—that justifies others in rejecting a desire for him (Stump 2010, 145).

In the light of the above, there is some truth to the statement that shame involves a negative reaction to what a person is and guilt to what a person does. We must also remember, as Stump notes, that there are different varieties of shame because there are different reasons for rejecting a desire for union with a particular person. Moral wrong-doing can also give rise to shame as well as guilt. Further, someone in that situation can feel shamed in his own eyes, finding himself “ugly and repulsive” wanting, as it were, “to divorce himself” (Stump 2010, 146).

In considering these alternatives, what is the role of love in the healing of shame? We noted earlier that, in speaking of moral excellence or virtue, there is a connection between honour/ beauty and between shame/ugliness. We are drawn to a person’s beauty, whether facial, bodily, of disposition or of “soul.” A physically unattractive person can be much loved and loveable because of their “inner” beauty. When a person is honoured and admired, Stump observes that “those who are attracted to him have some desire for *him*” (Stump 2010, 147, italics added). In other words, they are drawn by a desire for union with that person.

As suggested above, other things may prompt shame and self-loathing than “care about one’s moral wrong-doing” and do not melt away with “forgiveness or absolution of guilt” (Stump 2010, 146). Stump cites Jean Vanier and his experience of L’Arche communities in engaging disability and its associated shame. L’Arche groups are international (in fifty countries) and have a clearly delineated set of goals, values and practices. As such, they are a sub-culture that can bring a needed presence and a timely reminder of neglected values within a wider society or culture. For instance, Vanier speaks of their practice of “celebrating the life of the shamed person” as healing and restorative. When significant others celebrate such a person’s life, especially when it is shared with him, “it reveals a desire for *him*” (Stump 2010, 147). Honour is here expressed in the context of love, a desire for union with the beloved (other).

Again, an important way of honouring the shamed person is to allow oneself to be nurtured and cared for by the one who is shamed or disabled. Desire “for”, care “by” and “for”, celebration “of”—these prepositions highlight the interactive, relational and mutual giving and receiving that can dismantle shame’s hold and transform the ugly into the beautiful. In the mutual care-giving of L’Arche communities, being cared for by those with serious disabilities brings healing to those

afflicted by the shame that can accompany those disabilities! (Stump 2010, 147). Vanier's opening remarks about L'Arche concern not what he has done for the disabled but what they have done for him.

Community life with men and women who have intellectual disabilities has taught me a great deal about what it means to be human (Vanier 1998, 6).

We have exemplified here a positive function of shame as an occasion in which human limitation is transformed through the presence and the power of love. In the process, the people involved transcend themselves in goodness and beauty. They grow in moral excellence. This pattern of giving and receiving is perhaps even paradigmatic for the healing needed even of moral shame. O'Sullivan (1995) sums it up:

when vulnerability meets power the result is alienation; but when vulnerability is met by vulnerability, the result is intimacy. The only way into intimacy is through vulnerability (O'Sullivan 1995, 8).

Again, the L'Arche pattern of giving-receiving can be understood as a paradigm of the moral life itself. Enda McDonagh says that the primary moral experience is what happens to us when we stand in the presence of another (McDonagh 1975, 29–40). The presence of the other demands our attention. From their presence, we are called to come out of ourselves into communion with the other. In this light, we can see why friendship is such an appropriate model for the moral life (See Wadell 1989; Sherwin 2005).

McDonagh speaks of three phases in response to the other which are implied in the practices of the L'Arche communities. First, there is recognition where, in giving attention to the other, that person is appreciated as other than oneself. The second is respect, the willingness to be patient and take the time to see the person's goodness. In the process, one, in turn, is recognised and appreciated by the other. There is an associated movement of self-recognition. These stages culminate in response—in moving away from the self and towards to other there is a momentum towards communion (Wadell 1989, 142–167).

### 4.3 The Educative Dimension

Such practices found in L'Arche point to other aspects of moral learning, first, at the *personal* level. It is helpful here to probe Aquinas further concerning two aspects raised by Probyn about the educative and formative function of shame. First, if shame is personal yet in relation to others, can it be localized (as a part of myself) or is it always globalized (spread throughout the whole self)? There are hints in Aquinas about his attitude to this issue. He points to shame's potential to move from a particular aspect of a person's experience to become a more pervasive presence (*ST* 2.2. 144.4 ad 3).

Again, Aquinas, in principle, limits the scope of moral shame to the blame and loss of face for culpable actions. However, in practice, feelings of shame and disgrace can start to envelop other aspects of one's person through the attitude of others, for instance concerning economic status, birth, job etc. (*ST* 2.2.144.2 ad 2). This suggests the unjust face of shame in which a person's standing in the eyes of others is based on qualities that are not relevant to the person's moral goodness. Aquinas is anticipating the negative impact of cultural shame.

For Aquinas, one can recognize shame about part of oneself (an attitude or an action) together with condemnation of others, but that does not necessarily mean that the self disintegrates. One can still learn and improve. The moral life is a journey of ongoing conversion.

For Aquinas, shame's role is about past and future actions (*ST* 1.2. 41.4).<sup>14</sup> But it is also meant to help a person learn from their mistakes. Its teaching function is evident in the experience of retrospective or "disgrace-shame" in terms of our relationships with others and the patterns of social life. It embraces the non-moral and moral domains, from courtesy, thoughtfulness, social gaffes, to breaches of morality and infringements of the rights of others. Shame brings a global sense of being seen by the self and others as flawed or defective in terms of certain standards. Guilt involves a judgement (and self-judgment) about a particular act. Here, one can distinguish the self and "questions of its overall worthiness from its actions" (Fowler 1996, 106–7). This form of shame builds on and can enhance prospective or "discretion-shame" to possible future actions (*ST* 1.2. 41. 4) in which shame resembles a moral antenna. This form of shame involves

both instinctive evaluative responses and the exercise of what we can call moral imagination and plays an important role in the formation of strengthening of conscience (Fowler 1996, 105).

However, this learning is not in isolation. Shame's correlative is honour (*honestas*) or moral excellence that is upheld and fostered by a community and its members. When there is a failure to live up to this by a participant in that community's life, the members have an interest in the person's behaviour since it has an impact on the common good. Aquinas offers a telling insight into how this works in practice. Shame can motivate someone to want to learn from three circles of relationship in a community (*ST* 2.2.144.3), given the degree of closeness and the weight of testimony to the truth found there. In these three circles of interaction, shame prompts openness to criticism, disagreement and change.

There is a noticeable convergence between Aquinas and Calhoun who points out that giving the opinions of others "weight" (hence, the power to shame), indicates that one takes those others seriously "as co-participants in a moral practice." Again, Calhoun argues that shame over moral failings is an essential component of the

---

<sup>14</sup>For the terms "disgrace" and "discretionary" shame, see Schneider (1992). He relates them to two words in French: "honte" which is Aquinas' "shamefacedness" (*erubescencia*) = "discretion-shame" and "pudeur" which is equivalent to Aquinas' "shame" (*verecundia*) = "disgrace-shame" See *ST* 2.2.144.2.

psychology of a mature moral agent and that vulnerability to feeling ashamed before those with whom one shares a moral practice, *even if one disagrees with their moral criticisms*, is often a mark of moral maturity' (Calhoun 2004, 129, italics in original).

Secondly, the educative function of shame can work at the collective level. In this, there are three examples offered that illustrate the positive influence of shame from a group in relation to wider society or between cultural traditions. My focus is the southern hemisphere and, specifically, the Australian context.

The first instance concerns the question of homosexual law reform, an international issue, but our focus will be on one state in Australian. A recent news item raised the matter of expunging the criminal convictions of those convicted of homosexual acts in Queensland until the law was amended in 1990 so that homosexual acts between consenting adults were decriminalised. What was striking in the account was the comment of one man affected by his conviction over thirty years ago. He was excluded from being a teacher. He said about his situation:

You become isolated in your shame and you want to hide this and one of the really interesting thing I've discovered is I'm only one of hundreds, what happened to me there's hundreds and hundreds of people out there who this has affected (Higgins 2016).

Clearly, private shame isolates, shared shame unites. People together can channel their common shame and galvanise themselves to act for a joint cause. In this case, it is for the Government to refer the issue to the Queensland Law Reform Commission to consider how convictions can be expunged from a person's record. Shame is here serving the cause of justice inspired by a group but affecting the wider community.

Second, shame, again used properly, can be a positive instrument for healing and reconciliation and prompt forms of learning across cultural traditions. This is exemplified in legally acknowledged processes of restorative justice and such practices as circle-sentencing, as, in the southern hemisphere, with Maori and indigenous peoples (Probyn 2005, 90–98).

Probyn refers to legal initiatives (e.g., community or "circle" sentencing) taken in New Zealand concerning Maori offenders and in Australia concerning indigenous peoples. In close communities, it is more effective to shame the offender than use formal sanctions (retributive justice). This is because individuals care deeply about what family and friends think about them. Further, it helps offenders more fully appreciate the consequences of their actions when they are face to face with those they have harmed in some way (Probyn 2005, 90–98). In these processes, we can see how cultures can learn from one another, in this case individualist/guilt from collectivist/ shame cultures. Again, they may well alert us to the danger, particularly for westerners, of seeing collectivist/shame-based cultures as being essentially conformist, namely, that they have a moral system centred on what other people expect a person to do. Such a view could also imply that an individualist/guilt-based framework of socialization is more suitable in helping its members cultivate values that are personally appropriated to the degree that they act from deep conviction.

Third, there is collective learning between cultural traditions within a specific cultural and national context and its relation to shame as a “health” resource. I would like to focus on the injustices done to the indigenous people in Australia in terms of the dispossession of land and the “stolen generation” of children.<sup>15</sup> The court decisions and reports around these areas have both reflected and prompted an increasing source of shame for many Australian, even, for some of guilt. Such a response indicates

that we are rightly called to a communal responsiveness to those who are the victims of our wrongdoing or the wrongdoing of those who preceded us (Gaita 1999, 87).

We do acknowledge that collective responsibility does entail guilt when a community can and should act to prevent a harmful or unjust action or policy. It is only with the greatest difficulty that one can attribute guilt or blame on successive generations of Australians who did not intentionally and deliberately act to cause harm. This form of collective responsibility is best expressed as “national shame” suggests Gaita (1999, 95). He also points out that, while a clear distinction is needed between guilt and shame, the distinction is not always sharp. Gaita suggests a lesson from Greek tragedy about a state that is distinct from guilt and shame while having elements of both and is best described as “pollution.” In *Oedipus Rex*, a man kills his father and marries his own mother without any knowledge of their true identity. It is, clearly, a case of ignorance for which he was not culpable. For all that, when *Oedipus*’ realises what he has done and the evil person he has become, ‘his horror is of the kind we would naturally call “remorse”’ (Gaita 1999, 94). *Oedipus* himself and the play’s chorus see him not as blameworthy but as responsible, hence, “as properly responsive to the moral significance of his deeds” (Gaita 1999, 95). It is also a responsibility towards the community that has been “polluted”, tainted, burdened from “being caught up in the evil deeds of others” (Gaita 1999, 94).

In what sense, then, can we say that the Australian community as a whole is “responsible” for such actions or practices that caused past injustice and underlie its ongoing implications? Gaita points out that there is no genuine responsibility without “real responding.” Shame and remorse are responses that reflect what it means to wrong someone else. They go beyond guilt in that they are ways of acknowledging the truth of what we have been caught up in, often through no fault of our own’ (Gaita 1999, 102).<sup>16</sup> Shame is a collective response to wrong done by

---

<sup>15</sup>This phrase is used to describe the policy of the removal of aboriginal children from their families and tribes. The review of the policy was in “Bringing Them Home”—the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families April 1997. Concerning land rights, *Mabo v Queensland* (1992) was a landmark High Court of Australia decision recognising native title in Australia for the first time.

<sup>16</sup>We can consider the analogy of a person who has caused the death of someone in circumstances where that person is totally without blame. They will still speak of “feeling responsible” of the memory still “eating away at them”—language similar to that conveyed by “remorse” in its etymological roots. Darin Strauss’ book *Half a Life* is a memoir about his experience after he hit and killed a cyclist. He describes his feeling as that of “blameless guilt.” He says how the incident



our ancestors, “a truthful response to the evil in our history—of the fact that it is *our* history” (Gaita 1999, 102).

A succinct, yet comprehensive summary is offered by Danielle Celermajer.

The response behind shame does not result from a discrete doing (*actus reus*), but from the people’s bearing and perpetuating the cultural and political context that underpinned the doing...

She goes on to say that if

... collective shame is a valid basis for public policy as distinct from an emotional response of gathered individuals,

it must be grounded in

... the political identity of the nation, linked to some political imperative and because it serves a political objective, such as doing justice, consolidating the nation or strengthening or reforming constitutional values. By linking the members of the nation to shame and responsibility via political culture and the production of the conditions of the original political action (removal), one provides a justification for political action (apology). This shame is not an extra-political response which we then need to justify bringing into the political sphere. Rather this shame is itself grounded in the political sphere (Celermajer 2006, 170–2).

In all this, we return to shame as a virtue (in the broad sense), something acknowledged by Aquinas as reflecting and guarding moral excellence. Acknowledgement of the wrongs done to the Aboriginal people goes beyond the “material or psychological consequences” (Gaita 1999, 101). It means, most importantly, being deeply moved by, being “affected” by, even identifying with, their torment and suffering. This is what the Aboriginal people desire in asking for a national apology (Gaita 1999, 101).

Helpful here is Gaita’s distinction between two approaches to shame and remorse: either as *criteria* for understanding the Aboriginal’s plight and injustice or as *forms* for such understanding (Gaita 1999, 101). I would suggest that with the former the emphasis is on external standards against which understanding is measured. The latter seems to approach the language of virtue, namely, the affective disposition that informs and shapes moral understanding. One could argue that there is an implied call to move from shame as an external point of reference to an internal and personal appropriation of values at the cultural and communal level. Shame, with remorse, inform and infuse the “felt knowing” or affective or appreciative cognition which, for Aquinas and the virtue tradition, describes practical reason.<sup>17</sup> Shame, as an educative force, is a morally praiseworthy emotion that expands our collective moral horizon, deepens our moral sensibilities and refines

---

(Footnote 16 continued)

was “branded on his brain” and that “I was eating myself out from the inside.” See Todd Leopold, “You caused a death. Can you forgive yourself?” See CNN June 23, 2011 at <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/LIVING/06/22/forgiving.yourself/>. Accessed 26 June 2015.

<sup>17</sup>See Maguire (1986, 258) citing Aquinas’ *de Malo*, Q. 16, a 6 ad 13 and ad 8 for the phrase “*ratio practica seu affectiva*.”



our affective responsiveness (and responsibility) to those who have suffered in justice.

This brings us to the spiritual aspect of shame.

#### 4.4 The Spiritual Dimension

In this discussion, “spiritual” is used in an inclusive sense. It is best captured in Sandra Schneiders’ definition of Spirituality, as

the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives (Schneiders 2005, 1).

What is noteworthy in this statement is how broad it is. It could apply to a Christian, Buddhist, Muslim or someone of no religious faith who tries to lead a good life. Secondly, it points beyond oneself to something bigger than oneself—to something or someone ultimate. Third, it involves a conscious decision about the direction of one’s life. Fourth, the phrase “one perceives” suggest that a person is living according to their “lights”, sincerely doing their best.

Finally, the direction and quality of that life is in terms a reaching out beyond oneself in response to the needs of others as an ongoing life-project. The ultimate “goal” is moral—concerning values and goodness that the person lives by and, in reality, by which the person defines and shapes who they are. Perhaps one thing muted in Schneiders’ definition is that it tends to start with the individual rather than the person in the context of relationships—which is where human life starts and develops.

In practice, what does spiritually so understood look like?

Generally, there are three strands to this spiritual quest: firstly, an awareness of deeper levels of reality. It will often entail a needed sense of wonder leading to forms of contemplative awareness about the mystery of life and of the world. Second, there is a desire for personal integration—to somehow become a whole person, to find ways of resisting and overcoming those pressures that can tend to fragment our lives. Third, there is a desire to reach out and be concerned for others. How these three aspects are at work may vary from person to person.

All of this is an expression of the yearnings found in every person, in every culture. There is the quest for meaning—to make sense of the world and of our lives. This search revolves around the big three questions; about origins (“where do I/we come from?”); about identity (“who am I/are we”) and about (“Where am I/are we going?”). At the very personal level, all of this finds its setting in what we all share: the search to be oneself and the desire to being in relationship: to be an individual and to be in communion.

How, then, does one engage the spiritual dimension of our lives, with particular reference to shame?

The key phrase is “be attentive.” It is an attitude of being aware, of “stop, look and listen” about life and the world around us. Without some level of attentiveness

to life, we will not recognize the depth or mystery dimension that surrounds us—in events, people and creation, and, especially, at times of turmoil, suffering and loss. In other words, we will not recognize that something or someone is beckoning us.

This approach here resonates with that taken by David Ranson drawing on the French philosopher and mystic Simone Weil. She considered that all religious practice is *attention animated by desire*. I think she offers us a very helpful approach to what many today refer to as “Spirituality” that complements that of Sandra Schneiders.

Spirituality is certain attentiveness to life — an attentiveness which contains within itself a certain desire, a certain hopefulness, a certain anticipation.

**Spirituality is attention combined with intention.** Attention animated by desire, or attention become intention, awakens within us the awareness of a deepened relationship with ourselves and with others, with the world and with some greater sense of meaning (Ranson 2002, 17).

“Attention with intention” aligns with Whiteheads’ position on shame, guilt and anger, in that they are “troublesome” emotions, yet they are “resources we cannot do without”. It is the pain of negative emotions that “gets our attention” (Whitehead and Whitehead 1994, 92, 178). These authors offer strategies for being “attentive” to these emotional movements and states such that they become our friends rather than remain our enemies. Their four-step strategy in simple terms is to name, claim, tame and aim our negative emotions.<sup>18</sup> This involves time and much patience. It is a journey of “presence and participation” in which, in reality, we allow these emotions, such as shame, to do their job (Whitehead and Whitehead 1994, 176–188). But they need to be consciously engaged, as noted earlier.

In stressing the role of attention, Whitehead and Whitehead (1994) and Weil (1951) join company with Confucius for whom a central virtue in the “moral armory” is “attentive awareness” (*ssü*). It is the consciously cultivated ability to focus, in a specific fashion, on a chosen object (Whitehead and Whitehead 1994, 178). In opening ourselves to what is objectively there, albeit in one’s consciousness and emotional state as affected or moved in some way, we become receptive to the object, as Simone Weil says. We become supple to what is real and can be “penetrated by the object” (Myers 2012, 102).<sup>19</sup> Shame and all our emotions are ultimately interactive responses to objects, people and events beyond the self.<sup>20</sup> Ranson (2002) reminds us that attention to them “implies”, or at least, “includes” what lies outside the “self.” Engaging them with “attention” is a counter to spirituality understood in Cartesian terms as the “search for the true self.” Here, the quest for transcendence is seen as independent of “network of relationships by which personhood must be defined” (Ranson 2002, 81). In that sense, shame has a needed role as a keeping us anchored in the world of the other and the other.

---

<sup>18</sup>It is interesting to find Aquinas adopting a similar approach. For instance, in *ST* 1. 2. 38. 1–5, one finds a five-step strategy to deal with sadness, depression, loss, and grief.

<sup>19</sup>Myers cites Weil (1951) but without a page reference to the original text of her *Waiting on God*.

<sup>20</sup>For a full explanation of the nature of an emotion see Ryan (2001a, b).

Finally, in what way can shame be counter-cultural or subversive and a point of “cross-cultural” learning, historically understood? The instances we have discussed within our working definition of culture and its analogous expressions internationally (L’Arche) and nationally (three issues of justice and injustice within the Australian context) are each a form of resistance to, or within, a surrounding culture. These particular situations highlight that, if shame is to provide a stimulus for changed behaviour at the cultural level, there must be an underlying cognitive and affective shift. In other words, Browning’s “working” definition must be “at work” in real terms. It is not only about how we see the world and others. It is also about being moved to respond accordingly.

In the light of that, we need to remember that history does throw up individuals who, in how they see and respond to their world and cultural life, transcend their personal and social shame while shaping the attitudes of others. In the last century we had Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. In the past, there is Jesus Christ who criticised and tried to relativise the grip of social shame only to die in ignominy—as measured by his own culture. Amongst the young, we look to someone such as 21 years old Sophie Scholl executed with her brother in Nazi Germany for their efforts of resistance. By the standards of her culture she was shamed and died without honour. Now she (with the other students) is seen as admirable, even heroic in living and dying by standards grounded in justice and truth. In her act of self-transcendence, we find the luminous presence of moral beauty and true honour, even if her story had been completely forgotten (Stump 2010, 149, 329).

## 4.5 Conclusion

As has become evident in these considerations about shame, it is a multi-faceted and continuing presence in our lives. It can, as we have seen, take constructive and destructive forms. Our focus has been on the moral and spiritual realms and their underlying relational foundation. At times, these realms seem to overlap in terms of personal well-being and meaning. What can be said is that, without a sense of shame, with all its complexities and variations, we would not be truly human. It is integral to being responsive, responsible and truly loving.

## References

- Aquinas, T. (2016). *SUMMA THEOLOGICA: Home*. Newadvent.org. <http://www.newadvent.org/summa>. Accessed May 29, 2016.
- Browning, D. S. (1976). *The moral context of pastoral care*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Calhoun, C. (2004). An apology for moral shame. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 12(2), 127–146.
- Card, C. (2002). *The atrocity paradigm: A theory of evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Celermajer, D. (2006). The apology in Australia: Re-covenanting the national imaginary. In E. Barkan & A. Karn (Eds.), *Taking wrongs seriously: Apologies and reconciliation*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fowler, J. (1996). *Faithful change: The personal and public challenges of postmodern life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Gaita, R. (1999). *A common humanity: Thinking about love & truth & justice*. Melbourne: Text Publishing.
- Harak, G. S. S. J. (1993). *Virtuous passions: The formation of christian character*. New Jersey: Paulist.
- Hiebert, P. G. (1985). *Anthropological insights for missionaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Higgins, I. (2016). Queensland moves to expunge historic gay sex convictions. *ABC News*. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-13/qld-government-moves-to-expunge-historic-gay-sex-convictions/7086070>. Accessed May 29, 2016.
- Lamoureaux, P., & Wadell, P. J. (2010). *Christian moral life: Faithful disciple for a global society*. New York: Maryknoll Orbis.
- McDonagh, E. (1975). *Gift and call*. Saint Meinrad, Ind: Abbey Press.
- Maguire, D. (1986). *The moral revolution: A christian humanist vision*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Murphy, C. E. (1999). Aquinas on our responsibility for our emotions. *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 8(2), 163–205.
- Myers, B. (2012). *Christ the stronger: The theology of Rowan Williams*. London/New York: T & T Clark.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2001). *Upheavals in thought: The intelligence of the emotions*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Oakley, J. (1992). *Morality and the emotions*. London & New York: Routledge.
- O'Sullivan, P. (1995). *Sure beats selling cardigans: Fostering our relationship with god*. Richmond, VIC: Aurora Books.
- Probyn, E. (2005). *Blush: Faces of shame*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Ranson, D. (2002). *Across the great divide: Bridging spirituality and religion today*. NSW, Strathfield: St. Pauls.
- Rohrbaugh, R. L. (2002). Ethnocentrism and historical questions about Jesus. In W. Stegemann, B. J. Malina, & G. Theissen (Eds.), *The social setting of Jesus and the Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Ryan, T. (2001a). Aquinas' integrated view of emotions, morality and the person. *Pacifica*, 14(1).
- Ryan, T. (2001b). Positive and negative emotions in aquinas: retrieving a distorted tradition. *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 78(2).
- Ryan, T. (2008). Healthy shame? An interchange between Elspeth Probyn and Thomas Aquinas. *Australian Ejournal of Theology*, (12).
- Ryan, T. (2013). Aquinas on shame: A contemporary interchange. In T. B. Mooney & M. Nowacki (Eds.), *Aquinas, education and the east* (pp. 73–100). Heidelberg/New York/London: Springer.
- Schneider, C. (1992). *Shame, exposure, and privacy*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Schneiders, S. M. (2005). Christian spirituality: Definitions, methods and types. In P. Sheldrake (Ed.), *The new westminster dictionary of christian spirituality*. Louisville, KY.
- Sherwin, M. & O. P. (2005). *By knowledge and by love: Charity and knowledge in the moral theology of Thomas Aquinas*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Stump, E. (2010). *Wandering in darkness: Narrative and the problem of suffering*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tomkins, S. S. (1963). *Affect, imagery, consciousness, The negative affects (2)*. New York: Springer.
- Tomkins, S. S. (1995). Shame-humiliation and contempt-disgust. In E. Sedgwick, A. Frank, & I. Alexander (Eds.), *Shame and its sisters*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism. New directions in social psychology*. San Francisco: Westview.
- Tronick, E., et al. (1978). The infant's response to entrapment between contradictory messages in face-to-face interaction. *Journal of Child Psychiatry, 17*, 1–13.
- Vanier, J. (1998). *Becoming human*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press.
- Wadell, P. (1989). *Friendship and the moral life*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Weil, S. (1951). *Waiting for god*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Whitehead, J. D. & Whitehead, E. E. (1994). *Shadows of the heart: A spirituality of the negative emotions*. New York: Crossroad.
- Williams, B. (1993). *Shame and necessity*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Yearley, L. H. (1990). *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of virtue and conceptions of courage*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

**Part II**  
**Culture-Specific Perspectives on Shame**

## Chapter 5

# *lajjA* in Indian Psychology: Spiritual, Social, and Literary Perspectives

Dharm P.S. Bhawuk

**Abstract** The concept of *lajjA* is developed by (i) examining dictionary meanings, synonyms, and antonyms of the word in *sanskrit* and *hindi*, and (ii) analyzing its usage in two popular scriptural texts, the *bhagavadgItA* and *drugA saptazatl*. Following this, its use in literature is examined in *kAmAyanI*, a modern *hindi mahAkAvya* or epic. Further, the use of *lajjA* in daily communication and proverbs is examined. This multi-method approach resulted in a thick-description of the concept, showing that *lajjA* has both internal and external aspects and synthesizes guilt and shame, which have been viewed as distinct and non-overlapping constructs in the western literature. Further, *lajjA* emerges as an important virtue that guides human behavior. The belief that there are guilt-cultures and shame-cultures is challenged, and implications of this concept for global psychology are discussed.

**Keywords** *lajjA* · Emotion · Shame · Guilt · *doSa* · Indian psychology

---

Harvard-Kyoto protocol for transliteration for *devanAgarI* is used for all *sanskrit* and *hindi* words and names, and the first letters of names are not capitalized. All non-English words are italicized.

अ a आ A इ i ई I उ u ऊ U ए e ऐ ai ओ o औ au ऋ R ॠ RR ऌ IR ॡ IRR अं M अः H क ka ख kha ग ga घ kha ङ Ga च ca छ cha ज ja झ jha ञ Ja ट Ta ठ Tha ड Da ढ Dha ण Na त ta थ tha द da ध dha न na प pa फ pha ब ba भ bha म ma य ya र ra ल la व va श za ष Sa स sa ह ha क्ष kSa त्र tra ज jJa श्र zra.

---

D.P.S. Bhawuk (✉)

University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, USA

e-mail: bhawuk@hawaii.edu

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

E. Vanderheiden and C.-H. Mayer (eds.), *The Value of Shame*,

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-53100-7\_5

## 5.1 Introduction

*om lajjAyai namaH!* (# 740<sup>1</sup>)

I bow to one who takes the form of *lajjA!*

*om hrImatyai namaH!* (# 302)

I bow to one who is endowed with *hr!*

*om udArakIrtaye namaH!* (# 848)

I bow to one who generously grants fame!

*om doSavarjitAyai namaH!* (# 195)

I bow to one who is excepted from (or devoid of) faults!

*om icchAzaktijAnazaktikriyAzaktisvarUpiNyai namaH!* (# 658)

I bow to one who is the power of will, power of wisdom, and power of action!

Watson (1913) laid the foundation of psychology away from philosophy and dedicated his life to separate the two disciplines as can be seen in this quote: “Psychology, as the behaviorist views it, is a purely objective, experimental branch of natural science, which needs introspection as little as do the sciences of chemistry and physics. It is granted that the behavior of animals can be investigated without appeal to consciousness. ... The position is taken here that the behavior of man and the behavior of animals must be considered on the same plane; as being equally essential to a general understanding of behavior... In this sense, consciousness may be said to be the instrument or tool with which all scientists work. Whether or not the tool is properly used at present by scientists is a problem for philosophy and not for psychology (p. 176).” I have worked against this separatist movement to be able to tap into the rich Indian philosophical tradition that is full of psychological insights (Bhawuk 2011), and this paper is another step in that direction.

Theory building not only serves to predict future behavior but also aids in understanding behaviors and phenomena. Moore (1967) insisted that “genuine understanding must be comprehensive, and comprehensive understanding must include a knowledge of all the fundamental aspects of the mind of the people [i.e., psychology] in question. Philosophy is the major medium of understanding, both because it is concerned deliberately and perhaps uniquely with the fundamental idea, ideals, and attitudes of a people, and also because philosophy alone attempts to see the total picture and thus includes in its purview all the major aspects of the life of a people (pp. 2–3).” Thus, analyzing the Indian scriptures, which are the depository of Indian philosophical thoughts, has an important role to play in the development of indigenous Indian psychological constructs, which is one of the methodologies used in this paper.

In search of indigenous constructs that did not fit the western mould, Triandis sought help from his international collaborators in the 1960s, which was not successful, much to his disappointment. Professor Terry Prothro pointed out to him that

---

<sup>1</sup>*lalitAsahasranAma* presents 1000 names of *devI*, and the number refers to that list.



western educated scholars found it difficult to examine their culture from indigenous perspectives (Triandis 1994a). To fill this long-standing gap in the literature, I have been developing models from indigenous perspectives without depending on any western theory or findings (Bhawuk 1999, 2005, 2008, 2011). These models are grounded in the wisdom found in the ancient texts that are still being used in India in everyday life.

In this paper, I present the concept of *lajjA* from the perspective of Indian psychology. In *sanskrit*, *lajjA* means shame, modesty, or bashfulness, and is viewed as a virtue of noble people, not only for women but also for men, which guides behavior. I adopt a methodology that can be useful in developing indigenous constructs, which is presented first. This is followed by the examination of dictionary meanings, synonyms, and antonyms of the word in *sanskrit* and *hindi*. I then analyze its usage in two popular scriptural texts, the *bhagavadGItA* and *drugA saptazatl*. These are cultural texts that are used by spiritual practitioners as a part of their *svAdhyAya* or daily studies, and also by people in daily conversations. The author himself studies them regularly and is conversant with the texts. Following this, the construct is analyzed in a literary text, *kAmAyanI*, written in *hindi* by *jayazaGkar prasAd*. Further, the usage of the word in daily conversation, including proverbs, in *hindi* and *urdu* is examined.<sup>2</sup> Finally, *lajjA*'s synonym in *urdu*, *hayA*, which is rooted in Arabic, is examined, providing an intriguing comparison and insight into the construct of *lajjA*. The paper ends with a discussion of the construct as it appears in the Indian cultural milieu and its implications for global psychology. It is hoped that this multi-method approach would provide the development of a thick description (Geertz 1973) of the construct and allow triangulation of its meanings.

## 5.2 Methodology

The lexical approach inspired by Galton's (1884) study of personality is based on the assumption that culturally stable personality characteristics become a part of the language, and single words capture the most important of these characteristics. In their psycho-lexical study of personality or traits using unabridged Webster's New International Dictionary, Allport and Odbert (1936) noted that the correspondence between linguistic convention and psychological truth is mediated by culture, which shapes both our psychology and language. Austin (1964) argued that words are not merely facts or things but tools that can help us sharpen our awareness, and thus understanding, of phenomena in the world. In this research, I examine constructs linguistically through a study of words, which is consistent with what

---

<sup>2</sup>The analysis was done in *nepAlI* and *bengAlI* also, which further supported the findings. These are not included here due to page limitation.

philosophers (Austin 1964) and psychologists (Allport and Odbert 1936) have proposed in the past. I also extend what they have proposed by tracing the development of meaning of the target word by examining multiple texts in various cultural domains.

The synonyms and antonyms of a construct provide the basic framework to begin the search in the scriptures and literary texts. They help broaden the search as they provide the necessary depth to appreciate a construct. They also help to narrow down the research by excluding certain words, as they seem to distract rather than add meaning to the construct.

Sacred texts or scriptures provide the deep cultural roots of a construct, whereas literature (oral or written, poetry or prose) provides the branches of the construct tree, and the size of the branch shows how the construct has grown over the years in a certain domain. Both scriptures and literature constitute archival data and are necessary parts of the symbolic structure of a culture. Therefore, in cultural studies the examination of a construct in the scriptures and literature is essential, as it provides the necessary thick description that defines and presents the construct in multiple contexts or behavior settings. A thick description distilled from the scriptures and the literature in this way can provide the cultural foundation for a construct that is otherwise not available.

Examining the contemporary usage of the construct in proverbs and daily communication is necessary to ensure that the construct is not a moribund or unused concept. Proverbs have been compared to TOPs or Thematic Organizing Packets, as they help us organize our cultural cognitive system (Bhawuk and Doktor 2000). Using more than one text allows to examine if the themes emerging from one text have saturated, as recommended in grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Using multiple methods offers the opportunity to test the validity of the saturation of the categories across different methods. Thus, systematically using multiple methodologies can help develop a rigorous foundation for a construct in a particular culture. The findings of such a research can be used for comparative or cross-cultural research in a much more meaningful way than the current popular pseudo-etic approach in which constructs from western cultures dominate the intellectual pursuit of understanding human psychology and behavior (Triandis 1994b).

### 5.3 *lajjA*: Synonyms and Antonyms

*lajjA* is translated as shame, modesty, bashfulness, embarrassment, or timidity by Monier-Williams in the *sanskrit* to English dictionary, which is available online. *hrI* is a synonym of *lajjA* in *sanskrit*, which means “to feel shame, blush, be bashful or modest, or be ashamed of anyone or anything.” It can also be used to mean “to make ashamed, cause to blush, confound, put to shame figuratively to mean surpass

or excel.” Both words mean “shame, modesty, shyness, or timidity.” “*trapA* and *vrIDA* are two other synonyms of *lajjA*. *apamAnaH*, *duSkIrti*, *kalaGka*, *akIrtihetuH*, *lajjAspadaM* are other synonyms of *lajjA*. The antonyms of *lajjA* are *nirlajja*, *nirvRIDa*, *apatrapa*, and *lajjAhIna*. All these words are used in *hindi*, *nepAlI*, *bengAlI*, and many other Indian languages. *lajjA* also refers to the sensitive plant, Touch-me-not, which is called *Mimosa Pudica* in Latin. It is called *chuumui* or *IAjawanti* in *hindi*, thus providing the shared meaning with shame in English language.

*Chambers's Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Findlater 1900) defined shame as “the feeling caused by the exposure of that which ought to be concealed, or by a consciousness of guilt, the cause of shame, dishonor, the parts of the body which modesty requires to be concealed, very modest, bashful, easily confused, disgraceful, raising shame in others, indecent, immodest, done without shame, and audacious.” As a verb, shame means “to make ashamed, to cause to blush, or to cover with reproach.”

In English language shame and guilt are used as synonyms of each other, and Tracy and Robins (2006) demonstrated how people use them in a confusing manner in regular communication. Lewis (1971) conceptualized shame as having a focus on self (e.g., how bad I am), whereas the focus of guilt is on a specific behavior (e.g., how could I have done that bad action or behavior). Shame is correlated with discomfort, anxiety, depression, and anger. She argued that in the extreme situation shame seems to be viewed as the root cause of all negative interactions. She considered shame as an emotion that causes depression and recommended rooting it out from a person's emotional constitution. Tracy and Robins (2006) adopted this conceptualization and posited that shame and guilt both pertain to internal attributions of failure, but considered shame as stable and uncontrollable whereas guilt as unstable and controllable. Thus, in western psychology, guilt is considered useful for learning and growth, and therefore, is less negative compared to shame. On the contrary, in the Indian *rasa*-theory or aesthetics, *vrIDA* or *lajjA* is one of the 33 *vyabhiAri* or subsidiary *bhAvas* or emotions. It is also not a part or component of any of the eight *rasas* or essential emotional states, namely, *zRGgAr* or erotic, *hAsya* or comic, *karuNA* or pathetic, *raudra* or furious, *vIra* or heroic, *bhayAnak* or terrible, *blbhatsa* or odious, and *adbhuta* or marvelous; or the ninth *rasa*, *zAnta* or quietistic. Thus, in Indian psychology, *lajjA* is a gentle transient emotion but *doSa* is a fault or sin calling for *prAyazcitta* or penance. It is also important to note that unlike in the West where people are known to carry a guilt for years needing much therapeutic counseling, in India, a person does *prAyazcitta* for the *doSa* and moves on, vowing never to make the mistake again. It is no surprise that *dharmasindhu*, a scriptural text that offers guidance for behaviors, presents an entire chapter that enumerates various *prAyazcittas* that are to be used for a variety of *doSas* or infractions.

## 5.4 *lajjA* in the *bhagavadGItA*

In the *bhagavadGItA*, the word *lajjA* does not appear even once. However, its synonym, *hrI* appears once in the second verse of the sixteenth canto, along with the 25 other virtues that are presented in the first three verses<sup>3</sup> as *daivIk sampadaA* (divine wealth or assets). These 26 virtues are also considered *sAttvik vrittis* or positive propensities of the *manas* or mind.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the *manas* can be cultivated to be drawn toward these virtues. These noble virtues are to be acquired through practice by human beings in their life and to be translated into daily living. The opposite of these virtues are called *AsurIka*, or those belonging to the *asuras* or evil beings, and are listed in the fourth verse<sup>5</sup> of the sixteenth canto, and then elaborated upon in the following twenty verses. The *Asurika* assets include six undesirable attributes: *dambha* (deceit, fraud, feigning, or hypocrisy), *darpa* (pride, arrogance, haughtiness, insolence, or conceit), *atimAna* (seeking too much consideration, regard, respect, or honor), *krodha* (anger; *pAruSyA* or roughness, harshness, or violence), and *ajJana* (ignorance). These six *rAjasik* or *tAmaski vrittis* or negative propensities are to be systematically avoided in daily living. It is important to examine the 26 virtues to understand the meaning of *hrI* or *lajjA* as a noble virtue, since its value becomes transparent in the context of these virtues.

In the first verse of Canto 16, nine virtues are presented: *abhayam* or fearlessness, *sattvasaMzuddhi* or purification of the self with goodness (or purification of the self to experience the spiritual essence), *jJanayogavyavasthiti* or constantly situating oneself in the knowledge of the spiritual self (or constantly being aware of the spiritual self), *dAnaM* or charity, *damaH* or restraint of senses, *yajJaH* or spiritual activity (all self-purifying activities constitute some sort of *yajJa*), *svAdhyAyaH* or study of scriptures that helps calm the *manas* or mind, *tapaH* or spiritual austerity including activities like fasting that helps control the body and *manas*, and *ArjavaM* or straightforwardness (i.e., innocence laden simplicity that leads one to speak out his or her mind without holding back any information even if what is said may go against the person).

In the second verse of Canto 16, eleven virtues are presented: *ahiMsA* or non-violence of thought, speech, and deed, *satyaM* or truth (speaking the truth and to lay out the intentions clearly is one aspect of *satyaM*), *akrodhaH* or non-anger,

<sup>3</sup>Verse 16.1: *abhayM sattvasaMzuddhirjJanayogavyavasthitiH, dAnaM damazca yajJazca svAdhyAyastapa Arjavam*; verse 16.2: *ahiMsA satyamakrodhastyAgaH zAntirapaizunam, dayAbhuteSvaloluptivaM mArdavaM hrIracApalaM*; verse 16.3: *tejaH kSaMa dhRtiH zauca-madroho nAtimAnita, bhavanti sampadaM daivImabhiJAtasya bhArata*.

<sup>4</sup>*manas* in *sanskrit* or *mana* in *hindi* is the center for cognition, affect, and behavior (Bhawuk 2008, 2011), and, therefore, it is difficult to translate it in English. Mind is a widely used translation, which only captures the cognitive function of *manas*, but not the affective and behavioral functions. Therefore, I use *manas* in my writing, and use “*manas* or mind” from time to time to remind the readers of the translation issue.

<sup>5</sup>Verse 16.4: *dambho darpo'atimAnazca krodhaH pAruSyameva ca, ajJanaM cAbhiJAtasya pArtha sampadamAsurIm*.

*tyAgāH* or non-attachment, *zAntiH* or peace, *apaizunaM* or non-calumny, *dayAbhuteSu* or compassion for all beings, *aloluptvaM* or non-covetedness (i.e., absence of greed), *mArdavaM* or gentleness (i.e., kindness or leniency toward all beings), *hrIH*, and *acApalaM* or absence of unsteadiness (*capal* means unsteady, wanton, fickle, or inconstant). In the third verse of Canto 16, the final six virtues are presented: *tejaH* or moral power,<sup>6</sup> *kSamA* or forgiveness, *dhrItiH* or steadfastness,<sup>7</sup> *zaucaM* or external and internal self-purification,<sup>8</sup> *adrohaH* or absence of resentment,<sup>9</sup> and *nAtimAnita* or absence of seeking any attention or importance.<sup>10</sup>

The importance of *lajjA* can be seen in its association with the 26 virtues noted above. When one cultivates the 26 virtues, *lajjA* becomes the gatekeeper or the “Go/No-Go” test in the cultivation of each of the other 25 virtues. Am I fearless? If not, then *lajjA* is aroused, and I feel motivated to act in a fearless way. Am I charitable? If yes, then I am on track, but if not, then *lajjA* is aroused, and I am reminded to cultivate charity. When Saint *kabIr* discussed the importance of cultivating these virtues, his disciples complained that it was impossible to cultivate them all. *kabIr* is said to have responded by saying that if one cultivates any one of them, all virtues get cultivated. *gAandhiji* is known to have cultivated *ahiMsA* and *satya*, the two virtues presented in the second verse of the sixteenth canto noted above. It could be argued that cultivating *lajjA* could be that single virtue that could guide one in daily behavior, and lead to the cultivation of all the other 25 virtues.

To further assess the meaning and interpretation of *hrIH* or *lajjA*, various commentaries on the *bhagavadGItA* were employed (Sadhale 1936). *Adi zankara* (788–820 CE) translated *hrIH* as *lajjA* without offering any further elaboration. The meaning of *lajjA* and *hrIH* must have been obvious to scholars in his time. *rAmAnuja* (1017–1137 CE) expounded *hrIH* as *akAryakaraNe vrIDA* (when one considers doing something inappropriate, a prohibitive feeling arises that prevents one from doing such a task; this internal prohibitive mechanism is *hrIH*, *vrIDA*, or *lajjA*). *madhusudan saraswati* (1540–1640 CE) expounded *hrIH* as *akAryapravRtityArambhe tatpratibandhikA lokalajjA* (the moment one thinks about doing an inappropriate task, the negative evaluation that others would make of the act is made salient in the *manas* or mind, thus restricting the performance of such an activity). There is general agreement among scholars about the meaning of *lajjA* as a reflective evaluation process that is automatically called into the cognitive process

<sup>6</sup>Other meanings of *tejaH* are: energetic, inspiring respect, dignified, impatience, fierceness, fiery energy, energetic opposition, ardor, vital power, spirit, the sharp edge of a knife, tip of flame, glow, glare, splendor, brilliance, light, fire, and spiritual power.

<sup>7</sup>Other meanings of *dhrIti* are: holding, seizing, keeping, supporting, firmness, constancy, resolution, will, and command.

<sup>8</sup>Other meanings of *zauca* are: cleanness, purity, purification, purity of mind, integrity, and honesty.

<sup>9</sup>The antonym of *droha* is *adroha*. Other meanings of *droha* are: injury, mischief, harm, perfidy, treachery, wrong, and offense.

<sup>10</sup>*mAna* means consideration, regard, respect, and honor; *atimAna* means excessive regard; *nAtimAna* is the antonym of *atimAna*.

restricting the performance of certain tasks that are considered inappropriate by the *zAstras* or scriptures.

It is important to understand what the *zAstras* are. A modern day enlightened saint, *zrI zrI sitArAm dAs omkArnAth*, said, “Who says human beings have written the *zAstras*? Man is surely the recollector of *zAstras*, but the creator is God alone. God published these scriptures in the hearts of *RSis* absorbed in profound meditation” (Jeeyar 2008, p. 184). He further clarified the purpose of the *zAstras* —“The role of *zAstras* is to help one determine the truth and be one-pointed with the great unity. Man cannot lift himself up with a single leap; he can gain peace by steadily walking on the path of *zAstras*. If it were possible to attain everything through *nAm* [name of God] alone, what is the use of *vedas*, *upniSads*, *samhitAs*, *purANa*, *tantra*, etc.? Their purpose is to develop loving devotion to *nAm*. How can you develop loving devotion to *nAm* without reading *zAstras*? (p. 185). Human mind craves for newness, which is why so many texts have been composed (p. 192).”

As an exemplar, *zrI zrI sitArAm dAs omkArnAth* presents his own experience in support of the *zAstras*, “To make the mind flood with religious feeling, it is necessary to read a religious text daily—a book that will melt the heart. *sitArAm* reads divine drama daily; and reading, in its wake, brings about great thrill in the body. I derive more pleasure in reading scriptures than in meditation (p. 185).” Saints like *zrI zrI sitArAm dAs omkArnAth* interpret the *zAstras* by living the precepts in their lives and also expounding on the meaning when people have doubts about how to use them as a guide in their life. The *zAstras* are living cultural texts that provide meaning to the lives of people, and *lajjA* guides one in following the path shown by the *zAstras*. Thus, one is culturally socialized about activities that are not to be carried out, and *lajjA* guides one not to perform such activities.

The *bhagavadgItA* sheds some light on such activities in the discussion of *karma* in the fourth canto. In verse 4.17, three types of *karma* or actions are presented, *karma* (action), *vikarma* prohibited action (*niSiddha karma* or forbidden actions), and *akarma* (inaction).<sup>11</sup> Actions that are to be performed include *svadharmā*<sup>12</sup> or duties of self (*bhagavadgItA* verse 3.35) that are guided by one’s *varNAzrama*

<sup>11</sup>Verse 4.17: *karmaNo hyapi boddhavyaM boddhavyaM ca vikarmaNaH, akarmaNazca bodhavyaM gahaNa karmaNo gatiH*—as it is difficult to understand the nature of *karma*, it is important to understand what action is, what inaction is, and what forbidden action is.

<sup>12</sup>Verse 3.35: *zreyAnsvadharmo viguNaH pardharmAtsvanuSThitAt, svadharme nidhanaM zreyaH pardharmo bhayAvahaH*—one should perform one’s *svadharmā* or prescribed duties even if it is not attractive, for it is better to suffer doing ones’ prescribed duties than to switch to others’ attractive duties or what is prescribed for others. A person working in an organization often thinks in terms of likes and dislikes. If one is not happy working on an assigned project, the person is likely to consider it unattractive, distasteful, not satisfactory, or not fitting one’s career goal. One suffers while doing such a project or job. One often finds the project assigned to others more attractive. It is advisable to speak to one’s superior about the assignments, duties, or projects before they are assigned, but once a project is assigned, one must perform to the best of one’s ability like it is one’s *svadharmā*, without paying attention to what others are assigned. This is the essence of this verse.

*dharma*, or aptitude and phase (or stage) of life. For example, the first 25 years is the student or learning phase, and one should dedicate time and energy to learn the skills according to one's aptitude. In the second phase of life, up to the age of 50, one should be a householder and pursue *artha* (or wealth) and *kAma* (or pleasure) as guided by *dharma* (or duty), with an eye on the ultimate objective of life, *mokSa* or liberation. This is the relational phase of life in which one raises family and takes care of all social duties. In the third phase of life, one becomes a forest-dweller and cultivates contemplation by focusing on spiritual practices striving for *mokSa* or liberation. And finally, at the age of 75, one becomes a monk or renunciate, and dedicates all effort and energy for the pursuance of *mokSa* or liberation through renunciation. There are some activities that are to be performed and others that are to be avoided in each phase of life, and *lajjA* becomes the internal governor that guides one not only in not doing what is inappropriate, but also in doing what is appropriate, for not doing what is appropriate also arouses *lajjA*.

In verses 23<sup>13</sup> and 24<sup>14</sup> in the sixteenth canto, *kRSNa* instructs *arjuna* about the importance of following the *zAstras* in performing actions. In verse 23, he instructs that a person who abandons the ways of the *zAstras* or scriptures and follows the way of desires does not find happiness or achieve success in either the material world or the one beyond. In verse 24, he emphasizes that one should perform actions in the world knowing the way of the scriptures, what is to be done and what is not to be done. Later in verse 24, 25, and 27<sup>15</sup> in the seventeenth canto he provides *yajJa* or sacrifices, *dAna* or charities, *tapaH* or spiritual austerity, and *karma* or actions as four activities that must be performed without exception. In verse 17.24, he instructs that those who pursue the *brahman*, or are the repositories and communicators of the sacred knowledge, begin all activities—sacrifices, charity, spiritual austerity, and actions—by uttering *om*. In verse 17.25, he states that those who want liberation should pursue *yajJa*, *tapaH*, *dAna*, and actions without pursuing the fruit. And finally in verse 17.27, he glorifies *yajJa*, *tapaH*,

<sup>13</sup>Verse 16.23: *yaH zAstravidhimutsRjya vartate kAmakArataH, na sa siddhimavApnoti na sukhaM na parAM gatim*—a person who abandons the ways of the *zAstras* or scriptures and follows the way of desires does not find happiness or achieve success in either the material world or the one beyond.

<sup>14</sup>Verse 16.24: *tasmAcchAstraM pramANaM te kAryAkAryavyavasthitau, jJatvA zAstravidhAnoktaM karma kartumihArhasi*—therefore, one should perform actions in the world knowing the way of the scriptures, what is to be done and what is not to be done.

<sup>15</sup>Verse 17.24: *tasmAdomityudAhRtya yajJadAnatapaH kriyAH, pravartante vidhAnoktAH satataM brahmavAdinAm*—those who pursue the *brahman*, or are the repositories and communicators of the sacred knowledge, begin all sacrifices, charity, spiritual austerity, and actions by uttering *om*.

Verse, 17.25: *tadityanabhisaMdhAya phalaM yajJatapaHkriyAH, dAnakriyAzca vividhAH kriyante mokSakAGkSibhiH*—those who want liberation should pursue *yajJa*, *tapaH*, *dAn*, and actions without aiming at the fruit.

Verse 17.27: *yajJe tapasidAne ca sthitiH saditi cocyate, karma caiva tadarthIyaM sadityevAbhidhyate*—*sat* or the absolute truth is situated in sacrifices, charities, spiritual austerity, and activities.



*dAna*, and *karma* by stating that *sat* or the absolute truth is situated in sacrifices, charities, spiritual austerity, and actions.

Finally, in the eighteenth canto the same idea that sacrifices, charities, austerities, and actions that are guided by the scriptures are never to be given up is emphasized in verses 18.3 and 18.5 by presenting the argument that such activities help purify the *manas* of the practitioner.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, should one be tempted to neglect sacrifices, charities, austerities, or actions, or feel lazy to perform them, then *lajjA* becomes the cognitive hurdle, and one is prevented from neglecting his or her duties.

As *arjuna* puts down his bow and arrows and tells *kRSNa* at length that he did not want to fight a war in which he would be killing his relatives, *kRSNa* tells him not to think like that since the conch shells had already been blown to start the war. He chides *arjuna* not to yield to impotency, and exhorts him to stand up and fight by getting over faint heartedness. *kRSNa* emphasizes that walking away from the battle field was not an appropriate behavior for noble warriors, would lead to loss of heaven after death, and result in long-lasting infamy (*bhagavadGItA* verses 2.2 and 2.3).<sup>17</sup> Here we notice that *lajjA* mediates *apKIrTi* or infamy, in that *lajjA* is the intrinsic motivation to avoid actions that would lead to infamy. The relationship between *lajjA* and infamy is so important that *kRSNa* emphasize again how *arjuna* would be neglecting his *svadharma* or natural social duty, earn *pApAm* or sin in doing so, be labeled as a fearful quitter by people who respected him as a great warrior, and become a target of humiliating reference for generations. For all these reasons, *kRSNa* concludes that infamy is worse than death, and asks *arjuna* to engage in the battle (*bhagavadGItA* verses 2.31–2.37).<sup>18</sup> Thus, *lajjA* is aroused in

<sup>16</sup>Verse 18.3: *tyAjyaM doSavadityeke karma prAhurmanISiNaH, yajJadAntapaHkarma na tyAjyamiti cApare*—some wise people say that all karma cause bondage and so they should be given up, whereas others say that *yajJa*, *dAna*, *tapaH*, and *karma* guided by the *zAstras* should not be given up.

Verse 18.5: *yajJadAnatapaHkarma na tyAjyaM kAryameva tat, yajJo dAnaM tapazcaiva pAvanAni manISiNAm*—sacrifice, charities, and austerities help purify the *manas* of the wise ones, and, therefore, they should not be given up.

<sup>17</sup>Verse 2.2: *kutastvA kazmalamidaM viSame samupasthitam, anAryajuSTamasvargyamakIrtikara marjuna*—where do you get this bad idea in this difficult time that does not behoove noble warriors, would lead to loss of heaven, and would cause infamy. Verse 2.3: *klaibyaM mA sma gamaH pArtha naitattvayyupapadyate, kSudraM hRdayadaurbalyaM tyaktvottistha parantapa*—it does not behoove you, a master of austerities, to yield to unmanliness; so get over your faint heartedness and stand up to fight.

<sup>18</sup>Verse 2.31: *svadharmamapi cAvekSyA na vikampitumarhasi, dharmyAddhi yuddhAcchreyo nyat-kSatriyasya na vidyate*—considering your natural social duties also you should not vacillate, for there is nothing better for a warrior than to be a part of a fair war. Verse 2.32: *yadRcchayA copapannaM svarga-dvAramapAvRtam, sukhinaH kSatriyAH pArtha labhante yuddhamIdRzam*—warriors are happy to be in a battle like this since it readily opens the gates of heaven for them. Verse 2.33: *atha cettvamimaM dharmyaM saGgrAmaM na kariSyasi, tataH svadharmam kIrtiM ca hitvA pApamavApsyasi*—if you do not engage in this battle for justice, you will be forsaking your natural social duties, be infamous, and incur sin. Verse 2.34: *akIrtiM cApi bhUtAni kathayisyanti te vyayAm, sambhAvitasya cAkIrtirmaraNAdatiricyate*—people will endlessly talk about your infamy, and



both situations, when one is tempted not to do what should be done (or quit a task because it is difficult or challenging), and to do what should not to be done. Therefore, *lajjA* is the inner impediment guided by scripture or cultural norm of appropriateness that leads one to act appropriately. It is a mental process that restrains a behavior or another mental process, i.e., a thought or desire.

## 5.5 *lajjA* in the *drugA saptazatl*

*drugA saptazatl* is a part of *mArkanDeya purANa*, much like the *bhagavadgItA* is a part of the epic *mahAbhArata*. The text consist of 13 cantos and 579 verses, 78, 68, 41, 36, 76, 20, 25, 62, 39, 28, 51, 38, and 17 in the first through the thirteenth cantos respectively (Sharma 1988). The story of *devI* (Goddess), who is the protector of even Gods, and has taken various forms since the creation of the Universe, is narrated by *mArkanDeya RSi*. In the first canto, soon *medhas RSi* is presented as the narrator, who is explaining how *devI* is the creator, protector, and destroyer of the universe to king *surath*, who was on the run having lost his kingdom, and the businessman called *samAdhi*, who had lost his business and had been shunned by his wife and children. In Canto one, the story of how *devI* protected *brahmA*, the creator of the universe is presented. In Cantos two, three, and four, how *devI* came into being by taking the essence of all the Gods to protect them from *mahiSAsura*, and how she destroyed him and his army is narrated. From Canto 5 to 11, the narration accounts for the destruction of the two brothers, *zuMbha* and *nizuMbha*, who had defeated the Gods and dispossessed them of their rights and privileges. In the last two cantos, how the king and the businessman were able to gain their kingdom and knowledge respectively by praying to *devI* is narrated.

There are four long prayers in the text. The first one is by *brahmA* (Canto 1), the creator God, who prays to *devI* to awaken *viSNu*, the protector God, so that he could protect him from the two demons, *madhu* and *kaiTabha*. The second prayer is by all the Gods after *devI* kills *mahiSAsura* and his warriors (Canto 4). The third prayer is by all the Gods to invoke *devI* to protect them from *zuMbha* and *nizuMbha* (Canto 5), and the final prayer is by all the Gods to thank *devI* for destroying the two brothers and their warriors (Canto 11). *lajjA* is used in each of the four prayers to

---

(Footnote 18 continued)

infamy is worse than death for noble people. Verse 2.35: *bhayAdraNAduparataM maMsyante tvAM mahArathAH, yeSAM ca tvaM bahumato bhUtva yAsyasi lAghavam*—not only the great warriors would consider that you quit the war out of fear, but also those who respect you as a warrior would hold you in contempt. Verse 2.36: *avAcyavAdAMzca bahUnvadiSyanti tavAhitAH, nindantastava sAmarthyaM tato duHkhataram nu kim*—what could be more painful than your enemies putting you down and talking ill about you? Verse 2.37: *hato vA prApsyasi svargaM jivA vA bhokSyase mahIm, tasmAduttiSTha kaunteya yuddhAya kRtanizcayAH*—fall in the battle and go to heaven or win the war and enjoy the kingdom; resolve and stand up to fight.

personify *devI*. The verses and the interpretation of *lajjA* by various scholars helps to decode its meanings further.

In the first canto, *brahmA* eulogizes *devI* in 14 verses (verses 54–67). The prayer starts by presenting her as the recipient of all the offerings made in a *yajJa* to the Gods and the ancestors, thus symbolizing her as the epitome of all *yajJas* (*svAhA*, *svadhA*, and *vaSaTkAraH*: *svAhA* is the offering made to any God and the last utterance of every *mantra* in a *yajJa*; *svadhA* is the offering of food made to the deceased ancestors; *vaSaTkAraH* is invocation of the *mantras* that is used to invite the Gods to the *yajJas*). She is vowel and consonants personified. She is the nectar giving life. She is the sound *om* and constitutes it with the three letters a, u, and m. On the symbol *om*, she is the *anusvAra* or point (i.e., period sign), which cannot be pronounced. She is *sandhyA* (morning or evening twilight), *sAvitrI* (the hymn offered to Sun also called *gAyatri*, verse III.62.10 in *Rgveda*), and the Divine Mother.<sup>19</sup>

She holds the universe. She is the creator, protector and destroyer of the universe. She is *mahAvidyA* (the great knowledge or learning), *mahAmAyA* (the great illusory power), *mahAmedhA* (the great wisdom or intelligence), *mahAsmRtiH* (the great memory), and *mahAmohA* (the great ignorance causing power that leads people to be attached to the material world, and the physical identity—I, me, and my), *mahAdevI* (the one who is greater than the *devas* or Gods), and *mahAsuri* (one who takes the form of the great *asuras* like *madhu*, *kaiTabha*, *mahiSasura*, or *hiraNyAkSa*).<sup>20</sup> She divides the *prakRti* or nature in the three *guNas* or strands of *sattva* (purity or goodness), *rajas* (action), and *tamas* (darkness), and she takes the form of *kAlarAtri* (when she ends of the universe), *mahArAtri* (when she witnesses *ziva* to perform *mahApralaya* or destruction of the universe), and *moharAtri* (when she dooms the universe into ignorance covered with “me” and “my”).<sup>21</sup>

In verse 60, following the above eulogy, *brahmA* further personifies her as *zrI* (wealth), *izvarI* (controller of the universe), *hrI* (*lajjA*), *buddhibodhalakSaNA* (wisdom or intelligence), *lajjA*, *puSTi* (nourishment), *tuSTi* (satisfaction), *zAntiH*

<sup>19</sup>*durgAsaptazatI* Verse 1:54: *tvam svAhA tvam svadhA tvam hi vaSaTkAraH svarAtmika, sudhA tvamakSare nitye tridhA mAtrAmika sthitA*. Verse 1:55: *ardhamAtrAsthitA nityA yAnuccAryA vizeSataH, tvameva sandhyA sAvitrI tvam devi janani parA*.

<sup>20</sup>According to *atharvaveda*, *devI* is both *zUnya* and *azUnya*, *Anand* and *anAnand*, *vijJana* and *avijJana*, *brahman* and *abrahaman*, *veda* and *aveda*, *vidyA* and *avidyA*, *aja* and *anaja*, and, therefore, beyond any duality (see *zrIdurgAsaptazatI* (1990), pp.44–45: *ahaM brahmasvarUpiNI. mattaH prakRtipuruSatmakaM jagat. zUnyaM cAzUnyaM ca. ahamAnandAnAnandau. ahaM vijJanAvijJANE. ahaM brahmAbrahmaNI veditavye. ahaM paJcabhUtAnyapaJcabhUtAni. ahamakhilAM jagat. vedo'hamavedo'ham. vidyAhamavidyAham. ajAhamanajAham, adhazcordhvaM ca tiryakAham*).

<sup>21</sup>*durgAsaptazatI* verse 1. 56: *tvayaitaddhAryate vizvaM tvayaitatsRjyate jagat, tvayaitatpAlyate devi tvamatsyante ca sarvada*. Verse 1.57: *visRSTau sRSTirUpA tvaM sthitirUpA ca pAlane, tathA saMhRtirUpAnte jagato'sya jagannmaye*. Verse 1.58: *mahAvidyA mahAmAyA mahAmedhA mahAsmRtiH, mahAmohA ca bhavati mahAdevI mahAsurI*. Verse 1.59: *prakRtistvaM ca sarvasya guNatrivyavibhAvinI, kAlatrirmahArAtrirmoharAtrizca dAruNA*. Verse 1.60: *tvaM zRstvamiZvarI tvaM hRstvAM buddhirbodhalakSaNA, lajjA puSTistathA tuSTistvaM zAntiH kSantireva ca*.

(peace), and *kSantiH* (forgiveness). Both *lajjA* and *hrI* are used. Some commentators interpret *hrI* as the single letter mantra (*hrIM*), others as *lajjA*, and yet others as either or both (see Sharma 1988). *lajjA* is also defined by commentators as (i) the nature of “internal organ” or conscience (*nagojIbhaTT*’s definition: *antaHkaraNavRttivizeSaH*), (ii) self-aborrence of inappropriate behavior and shame about what others may say (*daMzoddhAr*’s definition: *hrIH svata evAkAryato vaimukhyaM lajja lokazaGkayA*; he also provides two other meanings of *hR*: *prANa* or life force and seed mantra—*hrImiti pAThe prANarUpA*. *hRMkAro vai prANaH iti zruteH*. *yadvA hRMbljarUpA*), and (iii) feeling bad about not knowing what is to be done (*caturdharI*’s definition: “*lajja kRte karaNIye param ajJanazaGkayA duHkham*”). These definitions are consistent with the definitions presented in the previous section, and present a shared view that *lajjA* works as both an internal and external preventive mechanism (internal: one does not feel good about not doing an appropriate behavior and feels bad about doing an inappropriate behavior; and external: one is guided by what others would say if one does not do what is expected of the person and if one does what is not expected of him or her). Thus, *lajjA* is an important attribute of *devI*, equal in importance to, and certainly no less in importance than, any of her other attributes. This establishes the significance of the construct of *lajjA*.

In the fourth canto, *lajjA* appears in the fourth verse of the 26-verse prayer offered to *devI* by all the Gods after she destroys *mahiSAsura* and his army. The verse presents how *devI* resides in five forms, as *zrIH* or wealth in the homes of those who perform pious acts, as *alakSmi* or poverty in the homes of those who are sinful or act in discordance with the *zAstras*, as *buddhi* in those who are pure internally, as *zraddhA* or reverence in pious people, and as *lajjA* in people from noble families.<sup>22</sup> This verse provides a nomological network for the construct of *lajjA* as *devI* is associated with noble people as wealth, wisdom, reverence, and *lajjA*; and with ignoble people as poverty.<sup>23</sup> The commentators do not add any new

<sup>22</sup>*durgAsaptazatl* verse 4.4: *yA zrIH svayaM sukRtinAM bhavaneSvalakSmiH pApAtmanAM kRtadhiyAM hRdayeSu buddhiH, zraddhA satAM kulajanaprabhavasya lajja tAM tvAM nataH sma paripAlaya devi vizvam*. We bow to the Goddess, and pray to her to take care of the universe. She is wealth personified for those whose actions are noble. She brings poverty to the sinners. She gives wisdom to those who perform proper actions. She bestows reverence upon those who are pure. She resides in noble people as *lajjA*.

<sup>23</sup>This nomological network is supported in a verse from the *nitizlokaH*: *vidyA dadAti vinayaM vinayAdyAti pAtratAm, pAtratvAddhanApnoti dhanAt dharamaM tataH sukham*—knowledge or wisdom gives humbleness, humbleness gives receptiveness, receptiveness gives wealth, wealth is used to perform duty, and performance of duty leads to happiness. Since knowledge or wisdom gives one *lajjA*, the template that guides one to perform appropriate actions and not do inappropriate activities, *lajjA* is similar to *vinaya* or humbleness. Both *vinaya* and *lajjA* are tender virtues. When one acquires wealth, *lajjA* guides the person to use it toward *lokasaGgraha* or good of the public at large, and that is consistent with following one’s *dharma* or duty. Therefore, *lajjA* appears in this happiness model twice, first explicitly as *vinaya* or humbleness after one acquires knowledge, and later implicitly when one acquires wealth, to guide one to perform *dharma* according to the *zAstras*. Without *lajjA*, one would not use knowledge and wealth appropriately, and, therefore, not be on the path to happiness. The network of virtues in the prayer (*zrIH*, *alakSmi*,

definition, but *nAgojibhaTTa* elaborates his definition as *akaraNIyApravRtilakSaNAntaHkaraNavRttivizeSaH* or volition of the internal organ (*antaHkaraNa* is a term used to include *manas* or mind, *buddhi* or wisdom, and *ahaGkAra* or ego) that prevents the impetus to do an inappropriate action. Thus, *lajjA* is a positive, rather than negative, psychological construct. It is to be cultivated rather than avoided, for it guides our behavior towards nobility.

In the fifth canto, *lajjA* appears in the sixteenth verse of the 27-verse prayer offered to *devI* by all the Gods to invoke her to destroy *zuMbha* and *nizuMbha*. In this verse, *devI* is said to be present in all beings as *lajjA*, or she is *lajjA* personified.<sup>24</sup> *devI* is said to be present in all the beings as *buddhi* (or wisdom), *nidra* (or sleep), *kSudha* (or hunger), *chAyA* (or shadow), *zakti* (or energy), *tRSNA* (or passion), *kSanti* (or forgiveness), *jAti* (or birth), *lajjA*, *zAnti* (or peace), *zraddha* (or reverence), *kAnti* (or glow), *lakSmi* (or wealth), *vRtti* (or motivation to work), *smRti* (or memory), *dayA* (or compassion), *tuSTi* (or contentment), *matR* (or mother), and *bhrAnti* (or illusion). *lajjA* is not a construct limited to human beings, but it is present in all beings, thus animals and plants also have a sense of what is natural (appropriate behavior in human world) and what is not natural (inappropriate behavior in human world), and this guides their behavior. Again *lajjA* is presented as a positive construct along with other constructs. Further, since *devI* is present in all beings as basic needs like sleep, hunger, passion, and birth, it highlights the importance of *lajjA* and the other virtues in a larger framework or worldview.<sup>25</sup>

In the eleventh canto, *lajjA* appears in the twenty-first verse of the 35-verse prayer offered to *devI* by all the Gods after *zuMbha* and *nizuMbha* and their army is destroyed. In this verse, *devI* is addressed as *lakSmi* (wealth), *lajjA*, *mahAvidyA* (or great knowledge), *zraddha* (or reverence), *puSTi* (or nourishment), *svadhA* (offerings to ancestors), *dhruvA* (unmoving), *mahArAtri* (the great night of dissolution of the universe), *mahA'vidyA* (the great ignorance), and *narAyaNi* (the female form of *nArAyaNa* or *viSNu*; in the Hindu trinity, *brahmA* is the creator, *viSNu* is the protector, and *ziva* is the destroyer; *brahmANI*, *vaiSnavI*, and *mahezvarI* are the female forms of the three Gods that are offered prayer in this canto). Most of the constructs except *puSTi* and *dhruvA* have already been discussed above, and as

---

(Footnote 23 continued)

*buddhi zraddha*, and *lajjA*) and this verse from the *nitizlokaH* (*vidyA*, *vinaya*, *pAtratA*, *dhana*, *dharma*, and *sukha*) have a remarkable overlap. It should also be noted that *lajjA* is the mother of *vinaya*, who is the son of *dharma* and *lajjA*. *lajjA* follows *dharma*, as a wife is said to be *sahacArinI*, or one who always travels together. So, wherever we find *dharma*, we will find *lajjA*. *vinaya* is gentle like his mother *lajjA*, hence the overlap between the two models is natural.

<sup>24</sup>*durgAsaptazaiI* verse 5.16: *yA devI sarva bhUteSy lajja rupeNa samsthitA, namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namaH*. *devI* who is present as *lajjA* in all beings, we bow to her, we bow to her, we bow to her.

<sup>25</sup>The only negative attribute used in these prayers is *bhrAnti* or illusion. *medhas RSi* explains that only by praying to *devI* can we get out of the negative mindset that she alone provides. It was also noted above that *devI* is beyond duality, and so she is both positive and negative qualities. As noted above in footnote 21, *devI* is said to be beyond duality, and so the negative construct is used to remind us of that aspect of *devI*.

noted above, *lajjA* is presented as a positive construct and appears in association with other positive constructs.

The glorification of *lajjA* can also be seen in its inclusion in the thousand names of *devI* in *lalitAsahasranAm: om lajjAyai namaH!* (I bow to one who takes the form of *lajjA*, # 740). There are three other names that were presented at the outset of the paper that are related to *lajjA*: *om hrImatyai namaH!* (I bow to one who is endowed with *hrI*, # 302; *hrI* is a synonym of *lajjA*, but as discussed above, it also has some other connotations like *prANa* or life breath); *om udArakIrtaye namaH!* (I bow to one who generously grants fame, # 848; *kIrti* or fame is one of the antonyms of *lajjA*); *om doSavarjitAyai namaH!* (I bow to one who is excepted from faults, # 195; *doSa* means fault or guilt, and since *devI* is excepted from it, it is clearly not related to *lajjA* as noted above). As *devI* is *lajja* personified, and excepted from *doSa* or guilt, *lajjA* and *doSa*, shame and guilt respectively, are different constructs in the Indian worldview.

There are many interesting names in the thousand names of *devI*, but the one that provides insight in the meaning of *lajjA* is, *om icchAzaktijJAnazaktikriyAzaktisvarUpiNyai namaH!* (I bow to one who is the power of will (or desire), power of wisdom, and power of action! # 658). The sequencing of the three names, will (or desire), wisdom, and action, is insightful. When we have a desire, it propels us into action, and since both of these are powered by the same source, *devI*, they would be instantaneous. But she also provides the power of wisdom, which comes between desire and action, and *lajjA* is that wisdom as it guides us to choose desires that are appropriate and reject those that are not. Thus, *lajjA* mediates between desire and action, according to this name of *devI*, which provides a model of how desire, *lajjA*, and action are related.

## 5.6 *lajjA* in the Literature

*kAmAyanI* is a *mahAkAvya* or an epic poem written in *hindi* by *jayazaGkar prasAd* (Prasad 1936). It consists of 15 *sargas* or cantos, and *lajjA* is the sixth canto of the text. The names and the organization of the cantos are psychologically meaningful as the main male character of the epic, *manu*, goes through the fifteen emotional stages: *cintA* (or anxiety), *AzA* (or hope), *zraddhA* (or reverence), *kAma* (or desire), *vAsanaA* (or lust), *lajjA*, *karma* (or action), *IrSyA* (or jealousy), *iDA* (praise or worship), *svapna* (or dream), *saGgharSa* (or struggle), *nirveda* (*vairAgya* or detachment), *darzana* (or philosophy), *rahasya* (or mystery), and *Anand* (or joy). *lajjA* is the emotion that is experienced by, *zraddhA*, who marries *manu*, and is presented primarily as a feminine emotion, but many of its characteristics are applicable to men as well. *lajjA* appears after the canto on *kAma* (or desire) and *vAsanaA* (or lust) and before *karma* (or action) and *IrSyA* (or jealousy), which is meaningful in itself. As noted above, *lajjA* is a guide for action, and so it is presented before *karma*.

*lajjA* is defined in canto six toward the end, but its characteristics or attributes are presented right from the start of the canto. In canto six, 32 attributes of *lajjA* are presented and a formal definition is presented at the end with poetic beauty. The poet presents these attributes as a dialogue between *zraddhA*, the first wife of *manu*, and an imaginary character, *lajjA*, which captures her emotional state at that point in time in her life. *manu* has just proposed to *zraddhA* and she has accepted to enter into a conjugal relationship with him. In a way, this canto is a monologue of *zraddhA*, for she is talking with the imaginary character of *lajjA*. She begins by asking *lajjA* who she is, but in her questions she presents 15 attributes that characterize *lajjA*, which capture her own emotions or feelings. (1) *lajjA* is tender, like a bud hiding in its delicate new petals or a lamp just lit at dusk and seen through the veil of dust raised by the hooves of the cows returning home at the end of the day (*komal kisalaya ke aJcal meM nanhIM kalika jyoM chipatI-sI, godhUII ke dhUmil paTa meM dIpak ke svar meM dipatI-sI*).

When a person, usually a woman, experiences *lajjA*, (2) she puts her finger on her lips (*vaise hI mAyA se lipaTI adharoM par uGgali dhare huye*), (3) she keeps her head down (*sir nIca kar ho gUMtha rahi mAIA jisase madhu dhAra Dhare*), (4) her body becomes soft and supple like melting wax (*sab aGga moma se banate haiM, komalata meM bal khAti huM*), (5) there is a fluid smile on her face (*smit ban jAtI hai taral haMsI*), (6) her eyes shine with playfulness (*nayanoM meM bhara kar bAMkapanA*), (7) she hesitates to touch anything (*chUne meM hicak*), (8) her eyelids are down covering the eyes while looking (*dekhane meM palakeM AMkhoM par jhukatI haiM*), (9) her thoughts mockingly freeze on the lips (i.e., it is not expressed) (*parihAs bhari gUMjeM adharoM tak sahasA rukatI haiM*), (10) she responds in murmurs or her voice is barely audible (*chAyA pratima gunguna uThI, zraddhA kA uttar detI-sI*), (11) there is redness in her cheeks (*lAII bana saral kapoloM meM*), (12) she feels like an adornment or the mascara in her eyes (*AMkhoM meM aJjan sI lagatI*), (13) her ears turn red (*maiM vah halakI sI masalan hUM jo banatI kanoM kI lAII*), (14) she feels she is stooping like a branch of tree laden with fruits (*jhuka jAtI hai man kI DAII apanI phalabharata ke Dar meM*), and (15) she feels as if she is shrinking within (*maiM simaTa rahi sI apane meM parihAs gIta sun pAtI hUM*). These 14 attributes are psycho-somatic expressions of the emotion of *lajjA*, and would be candidates for an examination of what behavior settings generate them in India and other cultures. These emotions arise in the beginning of a relationship in an arranged marriage when the couple have entered conjugal relationship but do not know each other at all.

Then *lajjA* responds to *zraddhA*, and introduces herself. *lajjA* (16) is a restraint that says, “Stop, think about the action you are contemplating to perform (*maiM ek pakaD hUM jo kahatI Thaharo kuch soMca vicAra karo*);” (17) is the flash of prudence that soothes the *manas* (*vaha kauMdha kI jis se aMtar kI zItalata ThanDhak pAtI ho*); (18) teaches the value of dignity (*maiM zAllnatA sikhAtI hUM*); (19) softly reminds one of the impending stumble (*Thokar jo lagane waII hai usko dhIre se samajhAtI*); (20) teaches the value of honor and chastity (*gaurava mahima hUM sikhlati*); and (21) protects the fickle and youthful beauty (*caJcal kizore sundarata kI maiM karatI rahatI rakhawAII*). These definitions of *lajjA* are

consistent with the definitions discussed in the previous sections presented in the *bhagavadgItA* and *durgAsaptazatl*, and are cultural expressions of how *lajjA* guides one through appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

*lajjA* is (22) about *zRGgAra* or adornment, and can be both external or internal (*pulkit kadaMva kI mAlA-sI pahanA detI ho antar meM*—like a garland worn in the *manas*), (23) an experience of being controlled by someone else (*tum kaun! hRdaya kI paravazatA?*), (24) one that plucks away the flowers of independence blooming in life (*sArI svatantratA chIna rahI, svachanda suman jo khila rahe jIvan-vana se ho bIna rahI!*), (25) comparable to the redness of dusk (*sadhyA kI lAlI meM haMsatI, usakA hI Azraya letI-sI*), (26) characterized by innocence, (27) a yearning to do something (*bholA suhAg iTalAtA ho aisA ho jisame hariyAlI*), (28) the bearer of the youth's spontaneity (*maiM usa capal kI dhAtrI hUM*), (29) personification of Venus<sup>26</sup> (*maiM rati kI pratikRti lajjA hUM*), (30) helpless without her own arrows (*maiM deva-sRSTi kI rati-rAnI nija paJcabANa se vaMcit ho*), (31) not content with her past experience (*avazISTa raha gaI anubhava meM apanI atIta asaphalatA-sI, lIIA vilAs kI kheda-bharI avasAdamyI zrama-dalitA-sI*), and (32) like an anklet in a young woman's feet, for the sound of the anklet forewarns that somebody is coming (*matawAlI sundaratA paga meM nUpur sI lipat manAtI hUM*). These 12 attributes, which includes the very first attribute presented in the beginning, are literary expressions of *lajjA*, and are likely to be useful in the analysis of shame in literatures across cultures.

*lajjA* also appears in other cantos of *kAmAyanI*, but its meaning gets quite saturated in this canto, primarily because 47 verses are used to present the 32 attributes. These 32 usage not only converge on the basic meaning of *lajjA* as a forewarning about non-performance of appropriate behavior and performance of inappropriate behaviors, but also present many other physical and psychological attributes of *lajjA*, thus providing a thick description of the construct. Looking at other texts, for example, *tulsi's mAnas* (or *rAmAyana*) did not add any new meaning of the construct, and so it is not reported here.

## 5.7 *lajjA* in Daily Usage

There are some common expressions or proverbs that are used in *hindi* that capture *lajjA* or *zarm* in daily conversations. The following are illustrative: (1) An adult may tell a youngster who is constantly failing to do something that causes embarrassment to the family—*cullu bhar pAnI me dUBa maro* (drown yourself in the water in your cupped hand, meaning the person should be ashamed of himself or herself). This is identical to what *kRSNa* tells *arjuna*, “infamy is worse than death

<sup>26</sup>*rati* the wife of *kAmadeva*, the God of love in Hinduism, symbolizes beauty, grace, fertility, and other feminine qualities. *rati* is comparable to Venus, the Roman Goddess whose functions include sexual love and desire, except that *rati* works in partnership with her husband, and not alone.



for noble people” in verse 2.34 in the *bhagavadGItA* (see footnote 18). In Indian culture embarrassment is avoided at any cost. This is related to the concept of face and face-saving found in other collectivist cultures in China and Japan.

When one is thoroughly embarrassed for not doing something or doing something that should not have been done, the expression *zarma se pAnI-pAnI ho gayA/gayI* is used. The target person is so embarrassed that he or she would like to hide from everybody. This situation is less severe than the previous one, in which one feels so embarrassed that it feels like ending the life may be the only way out. Parents or superiors may use the idiom, “*zarma nahiM AtI hai?*” as a question (Aren’t you ashamed?), which implies that the person should be ashamed of what he or she did. If a child takes more than his share of food on many occasions, then the parents may use this expression to chide him or her. If a worker is late for work many times, or does not complete the assignment on many occasions, then he or she may get it from the boss.

When adults are exasperated by their children’s repeated behavior that causes some problem for them, they may scream, “*are bezarma, kuch to zarma karo!*” (Oh! Shameless one. Have some shame!) When a child or teenager keeps doing something that causes problem or embarrassment to the parents, then they may say, “*is nAlAlyak ne to hame kahiM mUha dikhAne ke lAyak nahiM rakkhA hai!*” (We are in no position to show our face to anybody because of him). Parents of such a child are so embarrassed that they would avoid going to social events. If one says something that is inappropriate in a group, then he or she keeps quiet for some time to make up for the embarrassment, and the idiom *jheMpa gayA/gayI* (or full sentence, *vah/maiM jheMpa gayA/gayI*) is used to describe the person’s situation.

Some idioms are reserved for romantic situations or less severe situations. A newly married couple may feel shy about doing something for their spouse in front of other people. And if they are seen by others doing something, then they may feel shy, and others would say, “*aur vo zarmaA gayA/gayI,*” (and she or he was embarrassed). A person may not show his or her face to some people, and then the idiom, “*zarmaA ke muMha chupA liyA,*” (he or she hid his or her face out of shyness) will be used. In a similar situation, one may simply cast his or her eyes down, “*zarmaA ke AmkheM nichI kar li,*” (Feeling shy, he or she lowered his or her eyes). Sometimes, when people are feeling shy, they scratch the floor with their toes (*paira ke uGgaliyoM se dharatI kuredane lagA/lagI*).

Another word that is used to capture *lajjA* is *lihAz*, which means showing a culturally inspired expression of respect and deference. It is usually shown by younger people in deference to their elders. A son may not smoke in front of his father; a wife may not talk to her husband in front of her in-laws in rural India; a student may not point out the mistake of the teacher; and a service provider may not point out the customer’s mistake; all out of respect for the person(s). These are some of the examples of *lihAz* in daily interactions. Thus, all the ideas captured in the *bhagavadGItA*, *durgAsaptazatI*, and *kAmAyanI*, and all the behaviors identified in these texts, can still be found in use in daily behaviors and communication. Therefore, the construct of *lajjA* is still a useful and relevant construct in India.



## 5.8 *hayA*

In *urdU*, *lajjA* is translated as *zarma* or *hayA*, whose antonyms are *bezarma* or *behayA*, showing how the concept not only spans across languages but also religious beliefs of both Hindus and Muslims in South Asia. *hayA* is derived from Arabic and it is identical in meaning to *lajjA*. *al-hayyee* is one of the many names of *allAh*.<sup>27</sup> This name is not mentioned in the *qur'An*, but the Prophet presents it in one of his narrations—*allAh* is *al-haleem* or forbearing, *al-hayyee* or shy, and *al-sitteer* or covering.<sup>28</sup> *allAh* is perfect and in his perfection he is modest or shy. He is kindness personified and does not expose his devotees' wrong doing so that they do not lose face. Instead he wants them to correct themselves through repentance; and true repentance means not to repeat the action again. He generously forgives the transgressions of the devotees.<sup>29</sup> The Prophet said: "Indeed, *allAh*, is *hayyee*, generous, when a man raises his hands to Him, He feels too shy to return them to him empty and rejected (*jami` at-tirmidhi* 3556)." The implication is that as *allAh* is generous in giving, so should we be. And if we are not, then *hayA* or *lajjA* should correct our behavior gently.

There are many statements and instructions attributed to Prophet Mohammad in *hadiths* that throw light on the meaning and practice of *hayA*. A handful of them are presented in what follows to develop a sense of the construct. The Messenger of *allAh* said:

---

<sup>27</sup>*sAhih al-bukhari* is the *hadith* compiled by imAm *muhammad al-bukhari* (870 CE). It is considered an authentic collection of reports of the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. It contains about 7500 *hadiths* in 97 books. Many of the *hadiths* are repeated across the collection. The translation provided by Dr. M. Muhsin Khan is used in this section. It is available online at: <http://sunnah.com/bukhari>.

<sup>28</sup>When the Messenger of *allAh* saw a man performing *ghusl* (or bath) in an open place, so he ascended the Minbar and praised and glorified *allAh*, then he said: "*allAh*, the Mighty and Sublime, is *al-haleem* or forbearing, *al-hayyee* or modest and *al-sitteer* or concealing, and He loves modesty and concealment. When any one of you performs *ghusl*, let him conceal himself." [*sunAn an-nasa'i* 406].

<sup>29</sup>The Prophet said, "*allAh* will cover up on the Day of Resurrection the defects (faults) of the one who covers up the faults of the others in this world". [Book 1, *hadith* 240]. The Prophet said, "He who removes from a believer one of his difficulties of this world, *allAh* will remove one of his troubles on the Day of Resurrection; and he who finds relief for a hard-pressed person, *allAh* will make things easy for him on the Day of Resurrection; he who covers up (the faults and sins) of others, *allAh* will cover up (his faults and sins) in this world and in the hereafter. *allAh* supports His slave as long as the slave is supportive of his brother; and he who treads the path in search of knowledge, *allAh* makes that path easy, leading to *jannah* for him; the people who assemble in one of the houses of *allAh*, reciting the Book of *allAh*, learning it and teaching, there descends upon them the tranquillity, and mercy covers them, the angels flock around them, and *allAh* mentions them in the presence of those near Him; and he who lags behind in doing good deeds, his noble lineage will not make him go ahead." [Book 1, *hadith* 245].

- “Worship *allAh* alone and do not associate a thing with Him; and give up all that your ancestors said. Perform *salAt* (prayers), speak the truth, observe *hayA*, and strengthen the ties of kinship.” [Book 1, *hadith* 56]
- “You have two characteristics that *allAh* likes: Forbearance and *hayA*.” [Vol. 5, Book 37, *hadith* 4188]
- “Whenever there is *hayA* in a thing, it adorns it. Whenever there is outrage in a thing, it debases it. *al-fuhsh* (obscenity) is not present in anything but it mars it, and *al-hayA* is not present in anything but it beautifies it.” [*al-adab al-mufrad* 601]
- “*al-hayA* does not bring anything except good.” [Book 2, *hadith* 2]
- “Every religion has its distinct characteristic, and the distinct characteristic of Islam is *hayA*.” [Vol. 5, Book 37, *hadith* 4181]
- “*al-hayA*’ and *al-’iy* are two branches of faith, and *al-badha* and *al-bayan* are two branches of hypocrisy.” [*jami` at-tirmidhi* 2027]
- “When a meal is served, a man should not stand up until it is removed, and he should not take his hand away, even if he is full, until the people have finished. And let him continue eating. For a man may make his companion shy, causing him to withhold his hand, and perhaps he has a need for the food.” [Vol. 4, Book 29, *hadith* 3295]
- “O young people! Whoever among you can marry, should marry, because it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty (i.e., his private parts from committing illegal sexual intercourse, etc.), and whoever is not able to marry, should fast, as fasting diminishes his sexual power.” [*sahih al-bukhari* 5066]
- “*hayA* and trustworthiness will be the first to go from this world; therefore keep asking *allAh* for them.” (*baihaqi*).
- “One of the sayings of the early Prophets which the people have got is: If you don’t feel ashamed do whatever you like.” (See *hadith* No 690, 691, Vol 4) [*sahih al-bukhari* 6120; Book 78, Chap. 78]

*hayA* can be classified into three types—spiritual (pertains to our relationship with *allAh*), social (pertains to our relationship with other human beings), and reflexive or personal (pertains to self-observations). We should be shy of everything that would displease *allAh*, which includes not following instructions given in the *qur’An*<sup>30</sup> and doing what is proscribed in the *qur’An*.<sup>31</sup> *hayA* keeps one away from

<sup>30</sup>“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and *allAh* is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty.....” (*qur’an nUr*, 30–31).

<sup>31</sup>“*abdullah bin mas’Ud* narrated that the Messenger of *allAh* (s.a.w) said: “Have *haya*’ for *allAh* as is His due.” We said: “O Prophet of *allAh*! We have *hayA*, and all praise is due to *allAh*.” He said: “Not that, but having the *hayA* for *allAh* which He is due is to protect the head and what it contains and to protect the insides and what it includes, and to remember death and the trial, and whoever intends the Hereafter, he leaves the adornments of the world. So whoever does that, then he has indeed fulfilled *hayA*, meaning the *hayA* which *allAh* is due.” [Vol. 4, Book 11, *hadith* 2458].

sins. *hayA* is faith.<sup>32</sup> This idea is similar to following the *zAstras* that was discussed above.

Social *hayA* guides us to act appropriately toward our parents, teachers, and other relatives. The reflexive *hayA* makes us sensitive to every action we do, and we are constantly aware if our behavior is appropriate, both toward what *allAh* expects of us and what our social roles demand of us. Every lapse is noticed by the self even as they appear as a thought and is avoided. This is considered the highest level of *imAn* or character. Again, this is similar to the idea of *lajjA* discussed above.

## 5.9 Discussion

The two texts, *bhagavadGItA* and *durgA saptazatl*, converge on many ideas about *lajjA*. In both the texts, *lajjA* is presented as a reflective self-evaluation process that guides people in following the path shown by the *zAstras* or scriptures. *lajjA* is a virtue that is naturally present in noble people, and, therefore, it is something that can and should be cultivated. It is presented in the constellation of virtues that are considered *sAttvik vrittis* or positive propensities in both the texts, and is an important virtue. Practicing one of the virtues can lead to the acquisition of all, and *lajjA* appears to be the most basic virtue, since it can be used to test oneself if one is making progress in cultivating other virtues. Thus, *lajjA* is a positive, rather than a negative, psychological construct. It is to be cultivated rather than avoided, for it guides our behavior towards nobility.

*lajjA* is automatically called into cognition restricting the enactment of conducts that are considered inappropriate by scriptures. In other words, *lajjA* is the inner guide shaped by scripture and cultural norm of appropriateness that leads one to avoid inappropriate activities. In each phase of life, there are some activities that are to be performed and others that are to be avoided, and *lajjA* is the internal governor that guides one not only in not doing what is inappropriate, but also in doing what is appropriate. Therefore, should one be inclined to neglect sacrifices, charities, austerities, or actions, or feel lazy to perform them, then *lajjA* motivates one not to do so, and one is prevented from neglecting one's duties.

In other words, *lajjA* mediates between desire and action, and is the wisdom that guides us to choose desires that are appropriate and reject those that are not. *lajjA* is external in that people are socialized in family and society about what kind of conduct calls for social censure or *lajjA*, thus providing external benchmarks for what is appropriate and what is to be avoided. It is external when one is guided by what others would say if one does not do what is expected of the person and if one does what is not expected of him or her. It is internal when one does not feel good

---

<sup>32</sup>The Prophet said: "Faith has seventy odd branches and modesty (*al-hayA*) is a branch of faith." [*sunan an-nasa'i* 5004, 5006] The Prophet passed by a man who was admonishing his brother regarding *hayA* and was saying, "You are very shy, and I am afraid that might harm you." On that, *allAh's* Messenger said, "Leave him, for *hayA* is (a part) of Faith." [*sahih al-bukhari* 6118].

about not doing an appropriate behavior and feels bad about doing an inappropriate behavior. Thus, *lajjA* works both as an internal and external preventive mechanism, mediating desire and action.

*lajjA* also has behavioral markers richly described in literature and captured in *kAmAyanI* presented above. These markers were not available in the *bhagavadgItA* and *durgA saptatItI*. So, it is a unique contribution of *kAmAyanI* and its author *jayazaGkar prasAd*, showing the value of multi-method research. *lajjA* is associated with hesitation of the actor in speaking, touching, or looking directly at the target person. It is also associated with the actor casting one's head and eyes down. It causes redness in cheeks and ears of the actor. It is associated with the actor avoiding others and occupying little or no space, meaning one either tends to bow down or runs away from the target person to avoid facing him or her. These behavioral markers can be used as consequents of *lajjA*, and by presenting behavioral settings to a sample of people, the contextual antecedents of *lajjA* can be empirically determined. From *kAmAyanI* and common cultural knowledge, we know that *lajjA* is experienced between the couple when they are newly acquainted or married. This could be further examined across cultures, providing a foundation for meaningful cross-cultural research on *lajjA*.

From the practitioners' perspective, these behavioral markers can be used as signals to recognize that one is experiencing *lajjA*, and then one can act either to go along with it or to counter it. Therefore, these markers can be used in counseling people, say for people whose social interactions suffer because of excessive *lajjA*. There can be other applications of *lajjA*. For example, a nurturant-task leader (Sinha 1980) can arouse *lajjA* in a follower who is not giving his or her best performance, and since *lajjA* is an internal compass or governing mechanism, the follower will be able to guide himself or herself in the future by keeping an eye on his or her own performance. A nurturant-task leader is likely to be able to employ *lajjA* effectively because of the high moral ground he or she earns for himself or herself by investing in the subordinates' wellbeing, both in the work and the social settings. *lajjA* can also be used as a tool for behavioral correction and developing ethical behavior in the workplace. Since *lajjA* is associated with *zAstra* or scriptures, the code of ethical behaviors used by professional associations and organizations could be used as the "new scriptures" for professional and organizational behavior, and *lajjA* can be aroused in people if the codes are not being used. Thus, *lajjA* can become a tool or mechanism for shaping ethical behaviors in organizations. In view of these observations, it is clear that *lajjA* can have many applications in social and organizational contexts, and these opportunities for novel applications of *lajjA* can provide a rich bed for innovative future research.

*lajjA*, as the tendency to be self-disciplined and act dutifully, is similar to conscientiousness, one of the big-five personality factors (McCrae and John 1992). Various scenarios could be developed to find out if people consider conscientiousness or *lajjA* as the guiding emotion to act appropriately in these situations. A comparison of these constructs could enrich the cross-cultural literature on personality. Since *lajjA* is like our conscience keeper or similar to the superego in Freud's framework (Freud and Bonaparte 1954), it would also be interesting to

compare these two constructs, both qualitatively and quantitatively. These new lines of research can enrich our understanding of *lajjA* and the related constructs found in other cultures.

The development of the indigenous construct of *lajjA* demonstrates that it is possible to develop a construct grounded in culture by using a systematic procedure as adopted in this paper. This paper, thus, contributes to the literature in two ways; first by presenting a methodology that can be used to develop indigenous constructs; and second, by demonstrating that it is possible, and there is a need, to develop indigenous constructs. It provides a foundation and deeper cultural explanation to the work of other researchers (Menon and Shweder 1994) who have found that shame is associated with a heightened awareness and is viewed as a healthy emotion and an antidote to rage (or many other negative emotions).

Using a multi-method approach has resulted in a rich thick-description of the concept, showing that *lajjA* is both internal and external and synthesizes guilt and shame, which have been viewed as distinct and non-overlapping constructs in the western literature (Lewis 1971; Tracy and Robins 2006). Further, *lajjA* is found to be viewed as a virtue that guides human behavior, rather than a negative construct as found in the western literature. The belief that there are guilt-cultures and shame-cultures needs to be revisited, if not buried, in view of the indigenous ideas emerging from this paper. It is clear that “guilt and shame cultures” are western social construction that may not be useful for the large populace of South Asia, the middle-east, and many other cultural regions of the world.

Though shame and guilt are closely associated in western psychology, *lajjA* and *doSa* are not associated in Indian worldview as seen in all the sections of the paper above. *lajjA* is the attribute of *devI* and *hayA* is the attribute of *allAh*, and, therefore, they are similar in that they are attributes of the divine. As *devI* is *lajjA* personified, and excepted from *doSa* or guilt, *lajjA* and *doSa*, shame and guilt respectively, are different constructs in the Indian worldview. *doSa* refers to “fault, vice, deficiency, want, inconvenience, or disadvantage.” It also means “badness, wickedness, sinfulness, offense, transgression, guilt, crime, damage, harm, bad consequence, detrimental effect, accusation, affection, guilt, morbid element, or disease.” Guilt is one of the words used to translate *doSa*. *doSa* appears prominently in Ayurveda, and the three *doSas* are: *pitta*, *vAyu* or *vAta*, and *zleSman* or *kapha*, which refer to bilious humor or heat, windy humor, and phlegm or moistness respectively. The antonyms of *doSa* are *niraparAdh*, *anaparAdhin*, *apApa*, *niSpApa*, *akRtadoSa*, *nirdoSa*, *anagha*, *zuddha*, *pApa-doSa-hIna* (or not guilty, not sinful, or pure). *Chambers's Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Findlater 1900) defined guilt as “punishable conduct, the state of having broken a law, crime, a payment or fine for an offense, to pay, and to atone. Guiltless means “free from crime or innocent.” There is no overlap between the meanings of *lajjA* and *doSa*, unlike shame and guilt in western psychology.

It is clear that in the Western culture a much narrower meaning is attached to shame and feeling shame is seen as serious demotion of oneself. As discussed in this paper, *lajjA*, *zarm* or *hayA* are not seen as negative. *lajjA* covers a much larger conceptual space for emotions, comparable to what Keltner and Haidt have

found in their program of research (Keltner and Haidt 1999), rather than the research stream on shame or guilt (Lewis 1971; Tracy and Robins 2006).

This paper highlights the need for more indigenous research on the construct of shame before we can start making cross-cultural comparison utilizing a framework like the one proposed by Shweder (2003). He argued that emotions are often a mixture of feelings, desires, beliefs, and values, and to analyze complex emotional constructs cross-culturally they should be studied using multiple approaches including a “symbolic,” “cognitive appraisal,” or “meaning-centered” perspective. He presented a framework that included seven factors including (i) situational determinants or antecedents of the emotion, (ii) self-appraisal features that have consequences for target persons’ personal identity, agency, social standing, and self-regard, (iii) somatic phenomenology or physical responses to emotional stimuli (see the list of behavioral markers of *lajjA* presented above), (iv) affective phenomenology or existential feelings, (v) positive or negative social appraisal, (vi) self-management and (vii) communication, both verbal and nonverbal. He argued that such a model is necessary to compare emotions across cultures in some depth. This paper provides the necessary first step, developing a construct in the indigenous space, without which all cross-cultural comparisons are likely to succumb to a pseudo-etic approach (Triandis 1994a), and constructs for the most part become the artifact of a western construct captured by the translation of an instrument in many languages (for example, see personality research summarized by Cheung et al. 2011).

To appreciate how *lajjA* permeates the Indian worldview, it is important to examine an oft-chanted verse from the *mahAbhArata*. This verse appears toward the end of the *viSNu sahasranAma* (thousand names of *viSNu*, the protector God), and, therefore, is chanted by thousands of people from every day to weekly to fortnightly to monthly to a few times a year. The verse is as follows: *sarvAgamAnAmAcAraH prathamAM parikalpate, AcAraprabhavo dharmo dharmasya prabhuracyutaH* (conduct or behavior, as opposed to intellectualizing, is considered the essence of all the *Agamas*, which is defined *nyAya zabdakoSa* as *vedazAstramantrAdi*, or *vedas*, *zAstras*, and *mantras*; conduct is derived from *dharm*a or *dharm*a is the source of behavior; and *acyuta*, one who is firm or unmoving, or does not vacillate from righteousness, which is one of the 1000 names of *viSNu*, is the lord of *dharm*a). The verse connects conduct, *zAstra*, *dharm*a, and *viSNu* in a causal link: *dharm*a is derived from *viSNu*, *dharm*a is coded in *zAstras*, and *dharm*a drives conduct. In this causal link, *lajjA* operates between conduct and *dharm*a. Thus, *lajjA* is implicit in this verse as the link between *AcAra* (conduct) and *dharm*a.

In the Indian mythology, *lajjA* is the wife of *dharm*a, the God of righteousness (see footnote 24). A wife is a *sahacArinI* or one who always travels together with her husband. So, wherever we find *dharm*a or duty, we will find *lajjA*. In other words, *dharm*a and *lajjA* have high positive correlation. As was discussed in the paper above, whenever a person considers not following *dharm*a, *lajjA* appears to dissuade the person from doing so. And whenever a person considers following *adharm*a, *lajjA* appears to persuade the person not to do so. Since *lajjA* is tender, gentle, and a fleeting emotion or *saJcari bhAva*, it is much like the weak tie

(Granovetter 1973) between *dharma* and action (or *adharmā* and inaction). The strength of the character of a person lies in following this weak tie between will and action. When it is ignored, i.e., *lajjA* is ignored—in the words of Prophet Mohammad, “If you don’t feel ashamed do whatever you like”—we proceed toward *Asuri* or evil activities and the creation of an unethical society. The theoretical contribution of this construct lies in that *lajjA* provides a deep and fundamental meaning to Granovetter’s idea of “the strength of weak ties,” which is not a peripheral contribution of indigenous Indian psychology to the western literature. Keeping the instruction of Prophet Mohammad in mind, “*hayA* and trustworthiness will be the first to go from this world; therefore keep asking *allAh* for them,” the contribution of this construct to the world of practice lies in that there is a pressing need to cultivate *lajjA*, and all other virtues will follow as a gift of this weak tie between desire and action.

**Acknowledgements** I would like to thank AcArya Satya Chaitanya, Professors Jai B. P. Sinha, Anand Paranjpe, Arindam Chakrabarty, Shamsul Khan, Dr. Mrigaya Sinha, Dr. Vijayan P Munusamy, Dr. Om P Sharma, Anand C. Narayanan, and Eric Rhodes, for their insightful comments that helped improve the paper. An earlier draft of the paper was presented at the International Congress of International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology, Nagoya, Japan, July 31–August 3, 2016.

## References

- Allport, G. W., & Odbert, H. S. (1936). *Trait-names: A psycho-lexical study*. Albany, NY: Psychological Review Company.
- Austin, J. L. (1964). A plea for excuses. In *Essays in philosophical psychology* (pp. 1–29). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S. (1999). Who attains peace: An Indian model of personal harmony. *Indian Psychological Review*, 52(2–3), 40–48.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S. (2005). A model of self, work, and spirituality from the Bhagavad-Gita: Implications for self-efficacy, goal setting, and global psychology. In K. R. Rao & S. B. Marwaha (Eds.), *Toward a spiritual psychology: Essays in Indian psychology* (pp. 41–71). New Delhi, India: Samvad Indian Foundation.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S. (2008). Anchoring cognition, emotion, and behavior in desire: A model from the Bhagavad-Gita. In K. R. Rao, A. C. Paranjpe, & A. K. Dalal (Eds.), *Handbook of Indian psychology* (pp. 390–413). New Delhi, India: Cambridge University Press.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S. (2011). *Spirituality and Indian psychology: Lessons from the Bhagavad-Gita*. New York: Springer.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S., & Doktor, R. H. (2000, August 4–9). *Cross-cultural managerial cognition: A theoretical synthesis of cognition, culture, and organizations*. Paper presented at the Academy of Management Annual Conference, Toronto.
- Cheung, F. M., van de Vijver, F. J., & Leong, F. T. (2011). Toward a new approach to the study of personality in culture. *American Psychologist*, 66(7), 593.
- durgAsaptazatl*. (1990). *durgAsaptazatl*. Gorakhpur, India: Gita-Press.
- Findlater, A. (1900). *Chambers’s etymological dictionary of the English language*. London, UK: W. & R. Chambers.
- Freud, S., & Bonaparte, P. M. (1954). *The origins of psychoanalysis*. London: Imago.
- Galton, F. (1884). Measurement of character. *Fornightly Review*, 36, 179–185.



- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (pp. 3–30). New York: Basic Books.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380.
- Jeeyar, T. S. M. R. (Ed.). (2008). *Cloudburst of thousand suns*. [English rendering of Sri Sri Omkar Sahasra Vaani]. Translated into English by Raj Supe (Kinkar Vishwashreyananda). Delhi, India: Jai Guru Sampradaya.
- Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (1999). Social functions of emotions at four levels of analysis. *Cognition and Emotion*, 13(5), 505–521.
- Lewis, H. B. (1971). Shame and guilt in neurosis. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 58(3), 419.
- McCrae, R. R., & John, O. P. (1992). An introduction to the five-factor model and its applications. *Journal of Personality*, 60(2), 175–215.
- Menon, U., & Shweder, R. A. (1994). Kali's tongue: Cultural psychology and the power of shame in Orissa, India. In S. Kitayama & H. R. Markus (Eds.), *Emotion and culture: Empirical studies of mutual influence* (pp. 241–284). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Moore, Charles A. (1967). Introduction: The comprehensive Indian mind. In C. A. Moore (Ed.), *The Indian mind: Essentials of Indian philosophy and culture* (pp. 1–18). Hawaii, Honolulu: University of Hawaii press.
- Prasad, J. (1936, 2008). *kAmAyanI*. Allahabad, India: lok-bhAratI prakAzan.
- Sadhale, G. S. (Ed.). (1936). *The Bhagavad-Gita with eleven commentaries*. Bombay, India: The Gujarati Printing Press.
- Sharma, H. K. (Ed.). (1988). *durgAsaptazatl with seven sanskrit commentaries (durgApradIpa, guptavatI, caturdharI, sAntanavI, nAgojIbhattI, jagaccandracandrikA, daMzoddhAra*. New Delhi, India: caukhambA sanskrit pratisThAn.
- Shweder, R. (2003). Toward a deep cultural psychology of shame. *Social Research*, 70(4), 1109–1130.
- Sinha, J. B. P. (1980). *The nurturant task leader*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing House.
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2006). Appraisal antecedents of shame and guilt: Support for a theoretical model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(10), 1339–1351.
- Triandis, H. C. (1994a). *Culture and social behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Triandis, H. C. (1994b). Cross-cultural industrial and organizational psychology. In H. C. Triandis, M. D. Dunnette, & L. M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 4, pp. 103–172). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Watson, J. B. (1913). Psychology as the behaviorist views it. *Psychological Review*, 20, 158–177.



## Chapter 6

# “Dream on—There is no Salvation!”: Transforming Shame in the South African Workplace Through Personal and Organisational Strategies

Claude-Hélène Mayer and Louise Tonelli

*When there is no enemy within,  
the enemies outside cannot hurt you.  
(African proverb)*

**Abstract** Shame is a concept widely researched in psychology and it has been contextualised across racial groups, cultures, nationalities and gender. In the sub-Saharan African context, shame has been studied particularly with regard to HIV/AIDS and cultural traditions. However, it seems that most of the studies conducted do not focus on, firstly, the work context or, secondly, shame as a possible health resource, but rather as a construct that is related to negatively perceived concepts, such as guilt, embarrassment or stigma. In the sub-Saharan African context, there is a dearth of studies providing an overview of the research studies conducted on shame in sub-Saharan African contexts. The chapter provides an overview on research of shame in sub-Saharan African contexts. It further on explores shame experiences in South African workplaces and presents personal and organisational strategies to transform shame constructively. The research methodology used was based on an interpretative hermeneutical paradigm and applied qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews with individuals from various higher education institutions (HEI) and observations at one HEI in particular. The chapter presents new insights and findings on which experiences in the workplaces lead to shame and how employees manage these experiences to

---

C.-H. Mayer (✉)

Institut für therapeutische Kommunikation und Sprachgebrauch, European University  
Viadrina, Frankfurt, Germany  
e-mail: claudemayer@gmx.net

C.-H. Mayer

Department of Management, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

L. Tonelli

Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, University of South Africa  
(UNISA), AJH vd Walt Building Room 3-108, Pretoria, South Africa  
e-mail: leyl@unisa.ac.za

overcome negative impacts of shame on individual and organisational levels. Recommendations for future theory and practice are provided.

## 6.1 Introduction

Shame is a concept that has gained popularity during the past decades and the question of shame and culture has been addressed across psychological sub-disciplines (Markus and Kitayama 1995).

Shame has been researched internationally across higher educational contexts (Wertenbruch and Röttger-Rössler 2011; Qian et al. 2001), cultures, societies and nationalities (Walker 2012), gender (Miller 2002) and personality disorders (Luoma et al. 2008). However, it has been pointed out that culture is often overlooked in research on shame, although “shame is systemic” (Boring 1992, p. 175) and that methodologies in the study of shame, as well as the contexts researched, are often Westernized cultures and thus more research in other contexts is needed (Fessler 2004).

Shame has been described as an emotion that is destructive, negative and immobilising (Tangney and Dearing 2002) and has been distinguished from concepts such as guilt (Wong and Tsai 2007), embarrassment and pride (Tangney and Fischer 1995). Poulson II (2000) notes that there are three key elements of shame:

1. A violation of some role or standard
2. Failure to meet expectations
3. A defect that cannot be easily repaired.

These three key elements differentiate between “normal shame” which is the everyday embarrassments and humiliation we feel for ourselves and others, that is, the first two key elements as discussed, and a “pathological” shame which is an irrational sense of not having crossed to the wrong side of a boundary but having been born there, the last element.

However, shame has also been researched from the perspective of positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000) and resilience (Tangney and Dearing 2002). Feelings of shame appear to last long after the episodes that gave rise to these feelings (Lewis 2004). For shame to exist it appears as though an individual must have developed self-awareness and have other cognitive capacities such as evaluative individual standards and goals which would lead to self-conscious evaluative emotions that include shame (Poulson II 2000). While shame seems to develop through a process of social learning, shame is clearly tied to interpersonal relationships and attachment bonds. Damaging these bonds can be a catalyst of shame (Poulson II 2000).

The focus of shame is mostly from culture-specific perspectives (Westermann 2004) and across cultures (Casmir and Schnegg 2002). According to Poulson II (2000), the differences in shame amongst cultures are particularly distinct when comparing Western and Eastern cultures and may also be seen between individualistic and collectivist cultures.

Poulson II (2000) notes that studies of shame and gender, in particular in the Bedouin of the Negev, seem to associate shame with the feminine and honour with the masculine.

According to Poulson II (2000), in Western culture it would seem that women are more likely to use shame as a means of organising information about the self with individualized responses. It would seem that women experience greater depression as a result of shame while men tend to experience greater rage. Poulson II (2000) postulates that this can be traced back to feelings of powerlessness in childhood the base of all shame. Childhood the root of shame where we are born powerless, Poulson II (2000), appears to grow as life proceeds and have a minimal impact until triggered. However, shame has received little focus in sub-Saharan societies, and even less in Southern African workplaces or HEIs.

This chapter focuses on shame in the workplace in South Africa, particularly in the higher education context, the topics of shame identified in the literature on South Africa and shame in the South African workplace, before presenting the research methodology and the findings. In the end, a conclusion will be given and recommendations for theory and practice provided.

## 6.2 Shame in South African Historical and Contemporary Contexts

Recently, there have been several incidents that are judged to be shameful in the South African societal context, including fraud (Llewellyn 2000), the killing of endangered wild animals (Della-Ragione 2013), the maltreatment of domestic animals (Mail and Guardian 2013), the president’s criminal and political offences (Van Susteren 2015), and bullying and victimisation in schools (Ahmed et al. 2001). In addition, violence, war experiences and trauma are linked to shame in the South African context (Baines 2008; Munusamy 2015a, b).

According to Munusamy (2015a), South Africa is a “place of shame, violence and disconnect” and South Africans are known for their violence which the author defines as shameful, particularly with regard to the recurring outbreaks and spread of xenophobic violence in the country. In another article, Munusamy (2015b) highlights another incident of shame as that of the “Marikana massacre” in which thirty-four miners were killed during strikes in the mining sector. This massacre by South African security forces was the bloodiest since the end of apartheid. However, the concept of shame refers not only to recent violence, xenophobia and killings, but also to the history of the country. Baines (2008, 221) emphasises that former South African Defence Force conscripts have “attempted to deal with guilt and shame by telling their stories”. Obviously, shame is for them connected to the war, the brutality, the victimisation and the traumatic experiences within the Defence Force, however hardly any narrator admits the “complicity of upholding the apartheid system.” (Baines 2008, 222) and many of them would like to get rid of the “shame of being regarded as

vanquished soldiers who lost the war and so ended on the wrong side of history” (Baines 2008, 226).

Bailey (2011) also refers to shame in South Africa in the context of the recent history of the country. She connects the concept of shame with race by referring to the shame of white South Africans with regard to apartheid. So called “white shame” is connected to concepts of solidarity, penitence and vulnerability and, according to the author, an appropriate moral response to the historical context. Tessman (2001) emphasises that there are only two ways for white South Africans: either to live with the shame (and suffer) or to ignore the shame of the past and move on. Dealing with the shame of the past would then lead to hybrid new white identities that are not based on the racial order, but on heterogeneous identities.

Other research has established that shame is also to be found in the construction of “coloured identities” (“coloureds” are historically defined as a mixed race in South Africa) and the treatment of Khoi/coloured women (Wicomb 1998). Wicomb (1998, 91) provides the example of the shameful treatment of Saartje Baartman, a Khoi woman who was exhibited in London and Paris from 1810 to 1815, and on whose body medical research was conducted to establish the “sexual lasciviousness” of black women. Other research (Julius 2004) has found that in a comparison of individuals from the white, black and coloured groups, coloured identity did not have a significant relationship to shame and, therefore, the following has been assumed: This means that if a case has been made for the apartheid-institutionalised shamed coloured individual, that a current non-significant relationship with shame suggests that his group has been re-negotiating a non-shaming self-standpoint that is in contrast with the intended standpoint of the ‘other’ who creates the shaming experience.

Ahmed et al. (2001, 13) highlight the fact that Nelson Mandela, who was shamed by being declared a terrorist and by being detained for almost 27 years of his life, managed to transform his shame through his individual actions. The authors highlight (Ahmed et al. 2001, 14–15) that Mandela managed to transform the experienced shame by opening up through, for example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and by telling his story and hence to reintegrate into society.

Besides historical-political issues of shame and race, shame has been associated with ill health and depression (Lauer 2006; Brown et al. 2010). Jilek-Aall (1999, 382) emphasises that, for example, epilepsy in traditional African cultures (such as is apparent in Tanzanian society) provokes “ambivalent feelings in those witnessing it” and creates “an atmosphere of fear, shame and mysticism”, having mainly been interpreted as caused by ancestral or evil spirits. However, epilepsy not only creates shame in the witnesses but also in the family and the epileptic person him/herself, particularly when treatment does not help (Jilek-Aall 1999). The author maintains that health education about epilepsy should help to dispel feelings of shame, guilt, fear and anxiety in the individuals and families affected.

HIV/AIDS is one topic that is strongly connected to shame in African contexts (Lauer 2006). By measuring AIDS-related stigma in South Africa, Kalichman et al. (2005, 137) were able to point out that AIDS is connected with “shamefulness of the behaviour of people with AIDS” and that AIDS stigma is generally related to shamefulness.

Besides AIDS, rape and domestic violence have been described as being associated with shame, guilt and fear of blame (WHO 1999). In the South African context, Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) have found that a high number of cases of rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and sexual coercion are not reported publicly, which might be related to these feelings of shame, guilt and fear of blame, as well as other highly complex socio-economic circumstances.

Murray (2014) researched the representations of shame, gender and female bodies in selected contemporary South African short stories and emphasises that shame is often connected to the female body. In her analysis she points out that female protagonists are the objects of shame when it comes to, for example, breastfeeding that does not work out as it is supposed to be, or child birth and generally, according to Mitchell (2012, 1), when it comes to “shame’s displacement on female body”. Murray (2014,12) comes to the conclusion that South African short stories reduce women’s femininity to the context of the patriarchal society by reducing women’s bodies and femininity as such “to be shameful”.

Other topics that relate to feelings of shame and guilt in combination with gender and, particularly, femininity and female bodies, are, for example, topics such as the termination of pregnancies in the South African context (Subramaney et al. 2015)

### 6.3 Shame in South African Workplaces

According to Poulson II (2000), when expectations are not clearly communicated to employees, or the psychological contract changes or is violated, when goals are set for employees rather than with them, then the stage is set for shame to be triggered in employees.

Potential triggers of shame responses brought about by organisational practices and policies arise from termination, failure to gain promotion, negative performance appraisals and the like (Poulson II 2000). Informal organisational practices may also have a great impact, as well as behaviour such as bullying, discrimination, harassment and exclusion.

Managerial practices that feed into a manager’s power and an employee’s powerlessness, such as warnings and reprimands, can lead to an individual’s accumulated shame according to Poulson II (2000). Even when programmes are intended to empower employees in the workplace, they are expected to give up key aspects of their power at the door.

With regard to work contexts, Scandinavian research has pointed out that shaming experiences often derive from unemployment (Rantakeisu et al. 1997). Accordingly, long-term unemployed individuals experience more shameful situations than short-term unemployed individuals and the experience of shame contributes to the health-related consequences of unemployment. The authors found that particularly unemployed individuals who live in a more shaming environments show more mental disorders than others (Rantakeisu et al. 1997).

In the South African workplace, little research has been conducted on shame and work contexts. However, a study by Sefalafala and Webster (2013) has shown that shame in the workplace can be connected to low status occupations, for example when security guards hold a university degree and are forced to work for a low income in the dangerous and low status security industry.

## 6.4 The South African Work Context of Higher Education

HE has undergone many changes since the end of apartheid in 1994 (Louw and Mayer 2008), particularly with regard to internationalisation strategies, as well as transformation in terms of cultural, racial and gender policies.

A number of authors (e.g. Bitzer and Botha 2011) have shown that historically shame was used structurally in HEIs to dehumanise individuals of African descent in terms of their cultures and languages. In the present day, research is required on transformation, which needs to be addressed by interviewing students about their experience of the organisational culture.

South African universities have been publicly labelled “universities of shame” owing to the racial incidents that have occurred at universities across the country, highlighting the fact that “pervasive racism”, such as that which happened at the University of the Free State where students forced black cleaners to “run and drink urine”, still exists (University World News 2009).

Another issue that has been identified as shameful in the context of HEIs is the topic of plagiarism (Mail and Guardian 2015). Recently, the Minister for Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande, has highlighted that plagiarism is one of the worst possible assaults on HEIs and needs to be shamed as academic fraud (Mail and Guardian 2015).

Besides the specific topics of shame in HEIs, other issues that are experienced as shameful in the broader society are addressed in the context of HEIs: the Department of Higher Education and Training (2012), for example, released a policy and a strategy framework on HIV and AIDS for higher education to strengthening the comprehensive and effective response of HEIs towards the pandemic and free the HEI sector from the stigma and discrimination related to HIV and AIDS.

## 6.5 Contribution, Aim, Purpose and Research Questions

This chapter contributes to an in-depth understanding of the experience and management of shame within the HE South African work context. It contributes by helping to fill the void in the scant literature on shame within Southern African work contexts.

The purpose of this study was to focus on the concepts of shame in a selected work setting and to understand shame within a situational and cultural context from an emic, in-depth perspective.

The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of shame as an intensive emotional concept in the workplace. The study aims to explore the culture-specific interlinkages of shame experiences and their management in the South African work context to contribute further to the international discourse on culture, emotions and shame.

The research questions leading to the fulfilment of the aims are the following:

1. How do individuals define shame?
2. What situations are experienced as shameful in the described context?
3. What are the personal strategies of individuals for dealing with shame?
4. What are the strategies for dealing with shame on organisational levels?

### **6.5.1 Research Methodology**

This qualitative research study on shame in the South African HE work context adopted an exploratory and descriptive approach. It is located within a social constructivist (Berger and Luckmann 2009) perspective, incorporating the fundamental assumptions of creating of meaning by integrating the participants’ experiences and reflections on shame and the theoretical preconceptions and hermeneutic lenses (Dilthey 2011) of the researcher.

#### **6.5.1.1 The Sample**

Eleven individuals in total participated in this research study. The only sample criterion was that participants should be working in HEIs in South Africa at the time of the interview. All the participants occupied middle and senior leadership positions in HE either in academic or administrative positions.

The participants were purposefully sampled as being information-rich regarding the research objective. The sample comprised a diverse group of men and women from four race groups, as defined in the Employment Equity Act (1998), and included four white, two coloured, two Indian and three African participants.

#### **6.5.1.2 Data Collection**

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and the observations of the researchers at one HEI. The interviews were either conducted face to face or in written form. In the former case, the researchers asked the participants four questions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the latter case, the questions regarding biographical data and the four interview questions were sent to the participants via email in order to elicit a written response. Seven of the interviews were face-to-face interviews, while the responses to the other four interviews being received in written form. With two participants who decided to write down their interview responses, one follow-up session each was held to talk about their responses and explore them on a deeper level.

The researchers used an abductive reasoning approach (Kelle 2005), which diverted from the classical and traditional inductive reasoning perspective (Glaser and Strauss 1967) and theoretical agnosticism (Henwood and Pidgeon 2003). The interview questions were developed based on the concept of shame being explored and on an extensive literature review on shame.

The interviews contained questions on the biographical data, such as age, mother tongue and position in the organisation, as well as five questions on shame, such as “What does shame mean for you? Please define”, “Please narrate a shameful situation that you have experienced in the work context”, or “What are your personal strategies for dealing with shame?” and “How are situations that you experience as shameful in the workplace dealt with on an organisational level? Please explain what you observe and how the organisation could ideally deal with shame in the workplace.” These questions were extended and probed as the dialogue between the researchers and the researched naturally evolved.

### **6.5.1.3 Data Analysis**

The researchers used a constructivist grounded theory (GT) approach to analyse the data (Bryant and Charmaz 2007). In this approach, social constructionist epistemological assumptions are applied while incorporating classical GT methods as a flexible guide rather than a rigid set of methodological rules (Charmaz 2011).

Both researchers analysed the first interview, commencing with line-by-line deconstruction and labelling of text, creating numerous codes. Through constant comparison between data and context, codes were integrated and delimited into meaningful categories and explained by writing of memos. Interviews were added as the analysis progressed and the GT strategies of coding and memoing continued to guide the development of meaning categories across interviews.

Constant comparison between interviews led to data saturation after a number of interviews were analysed and no new categories of analysis emerged. Through intersubjective validation processes between the researchers and subsequent comparison of categories, text and research constructs, the primary themes were arrived at.

The researchers focused on seeking categories and themes reflected in the topic of shame in the workplace. The intersubjective validation allowed an in-depth reflection and analysis of shame in the workplace.

### **6.5.1.4 Research Ethics**

Consent to participate was given by all interviewees. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and could withdraw participation at any point in time. Rigorous analysis was attained through the iterative GT strategy of constant comparison (Charmaz 2011) and the intersubjective validation of the initial analysis (Yin 2009).



## 6.6 Research Findings

With regard to the presentation of the findings, it is important to note that many more individuals were invited to participate in the interviews on shame in the workplace through sampling procedures; however, several of the invited participants declined, stating, among other things, “I do not have experience of shame in the workplace”, “I cannot think of any shameful experiences”, “That is a difficult topic”.

These reactions show that the topic of shame is not an “easy” topic to deal with; it might even be connected to feelings of anxiety, insecurity or irritation.

With regard to the interviews that were conducted, participants stated that they were excited about participating, but were “not sure of what to expect”, that they were a bit anxious, and that shame was not an easy topic to talk about. However, during the course of the interviews and whilst exploring the topic of shame, participants seemed to become aware of various situations that they had experienced as shameful in the workplace.

It is important to note that some participants did not classify themselves according to the generic race group classification system as noted in Table 6.1, but

**Table 6.1** Demographic information

No.	Sex	Age	Mother tongue	Cultural background	Nationality	Position in organisation	Highest level of education
1	Male	48	Afrikaans	Christian	South African	Lecturer	Masters
2	Female	46	Afrikaans	White Afrikaans	South African	Professor	Ph.D.
3	Male	57	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	South African	Professor and HOD	DPhil.
4	Male	42	Arubakati	Congolese	Congolese	Lecturer	Ph.D.
5	Male	52	Tswane	African	South African	Lecturer	Master
6	Male	61	Afrikaans	Dutch Reformed Church	South African	Professor	Ph.D.
7	Male	61	Afrikaans	Dutch Reformed Church	South African	Professor	Ph.D.
8	Female	54	English	Indian	South African	Director	Ph.D.
9	Female	43	N Sotho	Sepedi	South African	Professor and HOD	Ph.D.
10	Female	40	English	Indian	South African	Administrative coordinator	Matric
11	Female	N/A	English	South African	South African	Professor	Ph.D.

rather viewed their cultural backgrounds from a religious, language or South African perspective.

Finally, the feedback after the interviews was such that participants said they had enjoyed talking about these “private issues”, that they could even use the interviews to clarify these issues, that it was the first time they had ever talked about it with someone and that they had increased their future self-awareness with regard to shameful situations and experiences.

### 6.6.1 Defining Shame

In the participants’ personal definitions of shame seven themes were prominent (Table 6.2):

**Table 6.2** Definition of shame

Category of definition	Number of codes/number of statements in codes	Codes
Exposed	5/11	Caught out (3) Vulnerable (3) People talk about (3) Disempowered (1) Unsafe space (1)
Personal	4/8	Self-criticism(4) Reputation (2) Personal reaction (1) Perception (1)
Repressed	7/8	Can haunt you (2) Deepest part of forgotten history Like to forget Buried in the past Not reminded Buried in the past
Error in judgement	4/6	Done something wrong (3) Allowed something to happen Did not behave appropriately derail
Understanding	5/5	Cannot connect Difficult to define Do not have a definition No description of shame Not sure what shame is
Not good enough	5/5	Not man enough Not enough publications Not enough time Not the right journal Too white

During the initial stages of the interview some participants were not sure of their understanding of shame and/or could not connect to shame and found it difficult to define. As the interview progressed, the participants talked through the situations they had encountered at work, how they had dealt with them and how organisations could assist employees. In the end they were able to describe what shame meant to them. In essence, shame was defined as a feeling of being exposed, personal, repressed, an error in judgement and not being good enough.

The intrinsic feelings of shame related to errors in judgement either by feeling they had personally done something wrong or allowed something to happen. Self-criticism and the wish not to be reminded of experiences that were perceived as shameful were often recounted, as is evident in the following statement by participant 1: “I felt deeply ashamed of myself you know at that time I still do I was actually thinking perhaps I must have a conversation with him and ask him whether he still remembers that day.”

Extrinsically, shame is defined as being exposed whether to colleagues, family or the broader community. A number of participants defined it as displaying their vulnerabilities, like participant 6: “Being caught out, found out, exposed, and being vulnerable in unsafe spaces – whether for who I am, for who I am not, for what I did or didn’t do.”

## 6.6.2 *Shameful Situations at Work*

The participants shared a wide range of shameful situations at work both outside the higher education environment and within. These were in the following contexts

- higher education
- military
- corporate
- religious organisation
- school
- university
- statutory body.

Predominantly, the participants relate competence to shameful experiences in the workplace. These experiences refer to inner self-doubt, founded or not, and others questioning their competence. As participant 8 notes:

I was unexpectedly asked to join a Senate meeting by the Vice Chancellor and I had to literally run out of my office and go to Senate with no idea what I was going to be asked. As I entered the room I physically experienced a crushing feeling as a room full of predominantly white men turned around to see me enter the room. I struggled to find one familiar friendly woman or black person other than the vice chancellor. For those few moments I felt dis-empowered. My critical inner voice tries to sabotage me during my address and unbeknown to my audience I had to manage two conversations, i.e. with my inner critic and with members of Senate.

Participant 11 felt she was adding value to the conversation and confident of her own competence; however, her competence was being tested, creating a shameful experience for her in the workplace: “I thought I was making a logical interaction with her, a useful comment, she just looks at me. It was a total disregard of me, and she was looking at me. My experience was in an angry fashion. The fact that she just looked at me, with all my colleagues seeing this, was what was shameful about this. The fact that she was senior was also shameful.”

There is also an element of feeling exposed as the participant notes her senior colleague just looking at her. In another incident, participant 9 experienced shame in that colleagues wanted her to provide details of a case she was working on

I did not know that I would ever encounter something like that. It was just a first case, a first job. I could not even sleep, because I was thinking about it. That such an older and mature person could make such a stupid decision, you know. At the same time I am embarrassed with the fact that the gossips within the office, and some other people, would like to know, from me, whether she admitted things. I was kind of under pressure to say she admitted or whatever because they wanted to know the gory details of what is happening and why.

In other situations participants experience shame when they do not support another colleague.

Participant 1 remarked:

Our colleague was attacked by this group and, we were so shocked, we weren't ready for this, we weren't prepared for this. All of us just kept quiet and there were times when he actually looked at us. He looked back at the audience, at the participants. We did not intervene, we did not say anything. At the end of the session, he again looked at us, and I felt so the deeply, deeply, disappointed, in myself, that I did not stand up, and protect my colleague so to speak. At least help him, because, I could see that he did not know how to deal with a situation.

Exclusion of the individual seems to play an important role, either by informing the individual to physically remove themselves “to go home” or to resign, omitting to invite them to be part of a group or to ignore input from a team member in a meeting.

It is interesting to note that an individual who has felt shame may also use exclusion as a coping strategy for shame in avoiding the situation or individual that has shamed them. Participant 3 recalls “I went out of my way not to have too much contact with her but to let her know that I was not like that in terms of what I did and what I was.”

### ***6.6.3 Personal Strategies to Manage Shame at Work***

The findings reveal that the participants had various personal strategies for dealing with shame in the workplace. Table 6.3 provides an overview.

Altogether five categories could be found within the theme of personal strategies for dealing with shame. These range from inner strategies (attitude), to

**Table 6.3** Shameful work situations

Category of definition	Number of codes/number of statements in codes	Codes
Competence	15/15	Critical inner voice (3) Feel stupid (2) Did I make a mistake (2) Hasty comment(2) Shameful data (2) Check the data (2) Made a suggestion Thought to be logical(1) Useful comment(1)
Exposed	9/9	Looking at me (5) Sitting in a meeting (1) Tell the community (1) Tell the organisation (1) (asking for information) (1)
Not being supportive	7/7	No support (5) Colleague looked at us(1) We kept quiet(1)
Exclusion	6/6	Disregarded me (1) Go home (1) Resign (1) Not included in annual celebratory dinner (1) Stay in tent (1) Avoided her (1)

communication strategies, physical expression strategies and the context to the impact of future actions (Table 6.4).

With regard to inner strategies, it is important in the context of shame to self-reflect, to be positive, to analyse and understand and make sense of the shame experienced. It is important to rationalise constructively, not to let the emotions take over and worry, to sort yourself out and digest the experiences.

Participant 3, a 57-year-old Afrikaans-speaking male professional, stated: “I rationalise constructively by convincing myself that I had a right to act in a certain way. If I cannot do that, I apologise to the person(s) and feel better afterwards.”

In terms of the communication strategy, it needs to be emphasised that taking a third person into mediate and apologising to the person who is shamed are the most important strategies, followed by a statement that others should not be confronted about shameful issues. Further on, discussions are appreciated, action should be taken, discussion with other people about the topic should be held, and people involved should talk in a “good way” to each other. Besides the talking strategies, one participant highlighted the fact that he had to write a report about the experienced shameful situation (participant 1): “I was told to write a report” and “I was to go for a walk”.

**Table 6.4** Personal strategies to manage shame at work

Category of strategy	Number of codes/number of statements in codes	Codes
Inner strategies (attitude)	13/15	Self-reflection (2) Be positive (2) Make sense of shame (1) Analyses (1) Consider implications (1) Rationalise constructively (1) Read books (1) Sort yourself (1) Do not worry (1) Digest (1) Swallow it (1) Denial quietly (1) Blame yourself (1)
Communication strategies	8/13	Take a third person it (3) Apologise (3) Do not confront the person (2) Discuss with others (1) Take action (1) Talk to person (1) Speak in a good way (1) Write report (1)
Physical (expression) strategies	4/5	Cry (2) Sing and hum (1) Walk (1) Breath (1)
Context-bound	3/5	Change context (2) Adjust to context (2) Withdraw from context (1)
Impact on future actions	2/2	Next time, count to ten! (1) Learn from mistakes (1)

Only in four codes is the need for the physical expression of the strategy to deal with shame reported: in crying, singing, walking/jogging and breathing whilst counting up to ten. Another personal strategy is based in the context of the situation: change the context where the shame happens and is experienced, adjust to the context and withdraw from the context (Table 6.5).

Finally, one participant shared that another strategy for dealing with shame is to make plans for the behaviour in shameful situations and to learn from the mistakes made.

**Table 6.5** Organisational impact on managing shame

Category of Organisational context	Number of codes/number of statements in codes	Codes
Leadership	7/9	Should use shame to motivate and change behaviour (2) Decision-making is with the superior (2) Create opportunities to speak (1) Support from superiors (1) Get advice from leader (1) Wrong doers must be confronted (1) Sympathise with “victim” (1)
Personal strategies	5/8	Be self-aware and humble (2) Avoid embarrassing situations by complying with norms (2) Fix it yourself and take account for actions (2) Perform according to standard (2) Wand off negative thoughts/feelings (critical inner voice) (1)
Strategies of organisation	4/7	Disciplinary processes (3) Employees assistance programmes (2) Counselling in organisations (1) Should take a stand (1)
Neglecting of organisation	3/3	Does not deal with shame (1) “Dream on”—no salvation! (1) Does not support to resolve (1)
Colleagues	1/2	Support each other (2)

### 6.6.4 Organisational Impacts on Managing Shame

Having been asked for their view on the strategies of organisations for dealing with shame, the participants referred to five categories: personal strategies for dealing with shame, the negligence of the organisation in dealing with shame, strategies of the organisation for dealing with shame, leadership, and colleagues.

In most of the statements regarding the organisational strategies for dealing with shame, participants highlighted the fact that leadership is important in the context of shame in organisations: in the opinion of the participants, on the one hand leaders should use shame to motivate and change individuals’ behaviour at work and to confront “wrong doers” (participant 3). On the other hand, leaders should create opportunities to talk about shame, support employees in dealing with it, sympathise with the victim, help to make decisions when dealing with shame and support employees emotionally.

Besides the leadership strategies applied in the context of shame, participants felt that they needed to use personal strategies to deal with shame in organisations. They felt that they needed to be self-aware and humble when dealing with shame

and avoid shameful situations by recognising and complying with the norms of the organisations and context. They felt they are self-reliant in dealing with shame in the workplace using their own competences and taking account for their actions. In the workplace, shame is particularly linked to performance, and performing up to the expected standard helped the participants to deal with shame and avoid shameful situations. Finally, another personal strategy within organisations is to “ward off negative feelings” and calming down the “inner critical voice”.

Participant 7, a 61-year-old Afrikaans-speaking professional stated: “Part of my survival strategy throughout my career was to minimise possible embarrassing situations or situations that might lead to me being ashamed.”

Participants felt that organisations should have strategies in place to help employees deal with shame, such as disciplinary processes (particularly when shame is connected to bullying), employee assistance programmes and individual counselling. Finally, participants requested that organisations should take a clear stand in their approach to dealing with shame in the workplace. However, three participants maintained that organisations neglect to deal with shame, that they do not have proper procedures in place and do not deal with shame, even though they should.

Participant 6 emphasised: “Dream on! In this anxiety producing machine we call higher education, there is no “salvation”—and one has to muster courage to live self-aware and humble.”

Finally, one participant shared that colleagues’ support can help in dealing with shame successfully and resourcefully and that colleagues are needed to provide support to deal with shame within organisations. However, in terms of the overall picture painted by the data, most of the participants do not take colleagues as a resource for dealing with shame into account. They see it is a personal and a leadership topic.

## 6.7 Discussion

In terms of discussing the findings in the context of the literature review, there is evidence to show that shame is systemic (Mason 1992, p. 175). However, in the South African workplace shame is often described as destructive, negative and immobilising (Tangney and Dearing 2002; Wong and Tsai 2007). Embarrassment and guilt are often emotions closely related to experiences of shame and not as clearly demarcated from each other, as Tangney and Fischer (1995) and Wong and Tsai (2007) suggest.

In this study there is evidence of the normal shame Poulson II (2000) alludes to in the workplace where shame is often related to embarrassment, and “systemic shame”, to experiences outside of the work environment, which, in turn, is often associated with both culture-specific perspectives and across cultures (Westerman 2004).



In this South African sample the distinction between western and eastern cultures and individualistic and collectivist cultures was not as distinct as Poulson II (2000) suggests. This could suggest that Julius’s (2004) comparisons of individuals from white, black, Indian and coloured groups may currently be in the process of being renegotiated. To a non-shaming self-standpoint across all cultural groups in South Africa for a more inclusive society away from the stigma of South Africa as a “place of shame, violence and disconnect”. There is still much work to be done, where the South African workplace could play a role in “normalizing” South African shame tendencies.

White shame in particular appears to be transforming. It is interesting to observe that only one of the white participants referred to her cultural background as “white Afrikaans” while the other participants referred to their cultural background in terms of language and/or religious affiliation. It is possible that these participants are experiencing the white shame Bailey (2011) mentions with regard to apartheid where the participants experience shame on this level by not identifying with colour and thereby ignoring the shame of the past and moving on—a coping strategy not unlike the voluntary exclusion one participant used as a coping structure for her shame.

In contrast and to confirm Julius’s (2004) research, one coloured participant made it clear that she would not bend the knee to shame and could not identify with the feeling especially in the work context where she was of the opinion people are there to work and need to leave these issues behind.

In this South African context, the social learning on how to deal with shameful experiences by talking them through, such as the former South African Defence Force conscripts did (Baines 2008), thereby vanquishing these feelings and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up in the past to reintegrate society (Ahmed et al. 2001), seem to be reflected in the current South African workplace. Here individuals use communication strategies to deal with shame and guilt from a positive psychology perspective to cope and build resilience towards shameful experiences in the workplace.

From an organisational perspective and, more particularly, in the context of higher education, the findings of this study are inconclusive. The participants of this study refer to individuals coping with shame in the workplace with little emphasis on how higher education contributes, especially in light of the view that historically higher education was used to dehumanise individuals of African cultures and languages from students’ perspectives. In terms of employees, within the system reference is made in the literature to pervasive racism (University World News 2009).

Some participants noted that leadership should use shame to motivate and change behaviour. If shame were seen as a positive factor in motivating the workforce we could also ask ourselves whether this would produce the desired outcome in the South Africa context, where some people will not bend to shame and do not acknowledge that it exists in the workplace.

## 6.8 Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to focus on concepts and experiences of shame in the higher education work setting in South Africa and to understand shame and strategies for dealing with shame on both the personal and organisational level in a situational and cultural context from an emic, in-depth perspective.

The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of shame as an intense emotional concept in the workplace and to respond to the four research questions.

In conclusion the following can be highlighted:

It may be concluded that participants define shame in the work context as a deeply personal feeling of not being good enough, where possible errors in judgement on their part may leave them feeling exposed to shameful experiences. These, even if repressed, may resurface with negative connotations or as a catharsis evident in the participants' positive expressions of the interview as a vehicle for future self-awareness with regard to shameful situations and experiences.

An attack on an individual's/employee's competence both intrinsically and extrinsically, whether founded or not, is of particular importance to the participants of this study and appears to be the predominant trigger for a shameful situation at work.

Not supporting a colleague or not feeling the support of colleagues in a situation that is experienced as shameful also triggers shame within the individual.

While competence and support appear to be the triggers of shame, exclusion seems to be the result of a shameful experience, in essence removing the "culprit" from the situation, thereby enforcing shameful experiences in the workplace. On the other hand, individuals may also voluntarily remove themselves from the situation as a coping strategy.

Other personal strategies to deal with shame include particularly inner strategies of the individual which are not necessarily shared with others or the context. Following inner strategies, communication strategies, which refer particularly to third party intervention and apology, are used. The physical expression in dealing with shame seems to be less important; however, the change of context through withdrawing, adjustment or change of context are considered. Anticipation of the future can also have an impact on the strategies being applied at the present moment.

In conclusion, with regard to the organisation and according to the participants, leadership is very important when dealing with shame in organisations in combination with personal strategies for dealing with it. Participants felt that the organisation should have procedures in place to deal with shame, but were also aware that organisations often do not deal with shame and prefer to neglect the topic. One participant stated that they would like to experience colleagues' support in dealing with shame. Leaders and the self-responsibility of the individual seem to be the main players in the context of shame. Interestingly, participants expected leaders to, on the one hand, use shame to uphold morals, ethics and principles in the

organisation, while on the other hand, expecting leaders to support employees to deal appropriately with shame by providing advice and emotional support.

## 6.9 Theoretical and Practical Recommendations

The topic of shame in the workplace is important for employees working in South African workplaces. It is a topic that is not easily approached as it is linked to feelings of anxiety and insecurity.

On a theoretical level, more research is needed within the organisational context in South Africa with regard to the definition and experiences of shame and shameful experiences. Research needs to address the impact of cultural heterogeneity and shame in the workplace, as well as the differentiation of concepts of shame, guilt and embarrassment in various cultural and organisational contexts within South Africa.

On a practical level, employees and organisations need to increase the awareness of shame in the workplace as well as its impact on employees and organisations. Context- and culture-specific training and programmes should be developed to create awareness and develop strategies for employees (personal) and organisations (programmes) to deal effectively with shame in the workplaces. Such training should approach shame as a resource of personal and organisational development and needs a transcultural and South African-specific approach to dealing with shame by including various cultural perspectives on shame in the South African organisational context. Organisations need to develop their leaders to tackle the topic of shame and acknowledge its existence in the work context to develop an organisational culture that deals with shame on a competent, open, resourceful and awareness creating level.

**Acknowledgements** We thank the participants for contributing insightful information to this research project.

## Appendix: Interview Protocol

The interview was audio recorded with the participants’ written consent. The process started with questions concerning biographical detail:

Sex:

Age:

Mother tongue:

Cultural background:

Nationality:

Position in Organisation:

Highest level of education:

Questions were asked in the following order from all of the participants

1. What is shame for you? Please define.
2. Please narrate a shameful situation that you have experienced in the work context.
3. With regard to shame and culture: Please explain how your culture influences the experience of and the dealing with shame.
4. What are your personal strategies to deal with shame? (What do you say, do, think, and feel?)
5. How situations that are experienced as shameful are dealt with on an organizational level?

The participants were asked if they wanted to add anything after which the interview was concluded and audio taping stopped.

## References

- Ahmed, E., Harris, N., Braithwaite, J., & Braithwaite, V. (2001). *Shame management through reintegration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bailey, A. (2011). On white shame and vulnerability. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 30(4), 472–483.
- Baines, G. (2008). Blame, shame or reaffirmation? White conscripts reassess the meaning of the “Border War” in post-apartheid South Africa. *InterCulture*, 5(3), 214–227.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (2009). *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 22. Auflage.
- Bitzer, E., & Botha, N. (2011). *Curriculum inquiry in South African higher education: Some scholarly affirmations and challenges*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.
- Brown, J. S. L., Casey, S. J., Bishop, A. J., Prytys, M., Whittinger, N., & Weinman, J. (2010). How black African and white British women perceive depression and help-seeking: A pilot vignette study. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 57(4), 274–362.
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, C. (2007). Grounded theory in historical perspective: An epistemological account. In A. Bryant & C. Charmaz (Eds.), *Handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 31–57). London: Sage Publications.
- Casimir, M. J., & Schnegg, M. (2002). Shame across cultures: The evolution, ontogeny and function of a “moral emotion”. In H. Keller & Y. H. Poortinga (Eds.), *Between culture and biology: Perspectives on ontogenetic development* (pp. 200–270). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2011). A constructivist grounded theory analysis. In F. J. Wertz, K. Charmaz, L. M. McMullen, R. Josselson, R. Anderson, & E. McSpadden (Eds.), *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis* (pp. 165–204). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Della-Ragione, J. (2013). Tourists lured to South Africa to take part in shameful trophy hunts. *Express*, 20 April 2015. <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-09-08-south-africas-ships-of-shame-under-fire>. Accessed April 20, 2016.
- Department of Higher Education and Training. (2012). Policy and strategic framework on HIV and AIDS for Higher Education. *HEAIDS*. Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme. <http://heaids>.

- [org.za/site/assets/files/1246/policy\\_and\\_strategic\\_framework\\_on\\_hiv\\_and\\_aids\\_for\\_higher\\_education.pdf](http://org.za/site/assets/files/1246/policy_and_strategic_framework_on_hiv_and_aids_for_higher_education.pdf). Accessed 29 May 2016.
- Department of Labour. (1998). *Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998*. <http://www.labour.gov.za>, 21.09.2015. Accessed May 29, 2016.
- Dilthey, W. (2011). *Selected writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fessler, D. M. T. (2004). Shame in two cultures: Implications for evolutionary approaches. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 4(2), –262.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, OH: Aldine.
- Henwood, K. L., & Pidgeon, N. F. (2003). Grounded theory in psychology. In P. M. Camic, J. E. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design* (pp. 131–155). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.
- Jewkes, R., & Abrahams, N. (2002). The epidemiology of rape and sexual coercion in South Africa: An overview. *Social Science and Medicine*, 55, 1231–1244.
- Jilek-Aall, L. (1999). Morbus Sacer in Africa: Some religious aspects of epilepsy in traditional cultures. *Epilepsia*, 40(3), 382–386.
- Julius, H. (2004). Internalised shame and racialised identity in South Africa, with specific reference to ‘coloured’ identity: A quantitative study at two Western Cape universities. Master of Arts, University of Cape Town, Cape Town. [https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/7996/thesis\\_hum\\_2004\\_julius\\_h.pdf?sequence=1](https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/7996/thesis_hum_2004_julius_h.pdf?sequence=1). Accessed May 29, 2016.
- Kalichman, S. C., Simbayi, L. C., Jooste, S., Toefy, Y., Cain, D., Cherry, C., et al. (2005). Development of a brief scale to measure AIDS-related stigma in South Africa. *AIDS and Behaviour*, 9(2), 135–143.
- Kelle, U. (2005). “Emergence” vs. “forcing” of empirical data? A crucial problem of “grounded theory” reconsidered. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(2), Art. 27. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0502275>. Accessed May 29, 2016.
- Lauer, H. (2006). Cashing in on shame: How the popular “tradition vs. modernity” dualism contributes to the “HIV/AIDS crisis” in Africa. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 38(1), 90–138.
- Lewis, D. (2004). Bullying at work: The impact of shame among university and college lecturers. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 32(3), 281–299.
- Louw, L., & Mayer, C.-H. (2008). Internationalisation at a selected university in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 22(8), 632–645.
- Luoma, J. B., Kohlenberg, B. S., Hayes, S. C., Bunting, K., & Rye, A. K. (2008). Reducing self-stigma in substance abuse through acceptance and commitment therapy: Model, manual development, and pilot outcomes. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 16(2), 149–165.
- Llewellyn, D. (2000). Cronje shame leaves South Africa in crisis. Match fixing scandal: Inquiry launched as captain admits accepting Pound 10,000 from bookmaker but denies throwing games. *The Independent*, 12. April 2000. <http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/cricket/cronje-shame-leaves-south-africa-in-crisis-280309.html>. Accessed September 21, 2015.
- Mail & Guardian. (2013). *South Africa’s ‘ships of shame’ under fire*. 8 September 2013. <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-09-08-south-africas-ships-of-shame-under-fire>. Accessed May 29, 2016.
- Mail & Guardian (2015). *Editorial: Shame academic fraud*. <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-02-12-shame-academic-frauds>. Accessed February 13, 2015.
- Mason, M. J. (1992). Chapter ten: Women and shame. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 3(3–4), 175–194.
- Markus, H. M., & Kitayama, S. (1995). *Emotion and culture*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Miller, T. R. (2002). *Culture, gender, and moral emotions: The role of interdependent self-construal*. Dissertation Abstracts International, 63, 03B. (UMI No. 3045180).
- Mitchell, K. (2012). Cleaving to the scene of shame: Stigmatized childhoods in the end of alicia and two girls. *Fat and Thin. Contemporary Women’s Writing*, 7(3), 1–19.

- Munusamy, R. (2015a, 17 April). South Africa: The place of shame, violence and disconnect. *Daily Maverick*. [http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-04-17-south-africa-the-place-of-shame-violence-and-disconnect/#.Vf\\_TCNutWag](http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-04-17-south-africa-the-place-of-shame-violence-and-disconnect/#.Vf_TCNutWag). Accessed September 21, 2015.
- Munusamy, R. (2015b, 17 April). The Marikana massacre is a tale of utter shame for South Africa. *The Guardian*. Accessed from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/26/marikana-massacre-ramaphosa-lonmin>. Accessed May 26, 2015.
- Murray, J. (2014). "It left shame in me, lodged in my body": Representations of shame, gender, and female bodies in selected contemporary South African short stories. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1–15. doi:10.1177/0021989414538868
- Poulson II, C. F. (2000). *Shame and work. Emotions in the Workplace: Research, Theory, and Practice* (pp. 250–271).
- Qian, M., Liu, X., & Zhu, R. (2001). Phenomenological research of shame among college students. *Chinese Mental Health Journal*, 15, 73–77.
- Rantakeisu, U., Starrin, B., & Hagquist, C. (1997). Unemployment, shame and ill-health: An exploratory study. *Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare*, 6, 13–23.
- Sefalafala, T., & Webster, E. (2013). Working as a security guard: The limits of professionalisation in a low status occupation. *South African Review of Sociology*, 44(2), 76–97.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5–14.
- Subramaney, U., Wyatt, G. E., & Williams, J. K. (2015). Of ambivalence, shame and guilt: Perceptions regarding termination of pregnancy among South African women. *South African Medical Journal*, 105(4), 283–284.
- Tangney, J. P., & Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and guilt*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Tangney, J. P., & Fischer, K. W. (1995). *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride* (pp. 465–487). New York: Guilford Press.
- Tessman, L. (2001). Do the wicked flourish? Virtue ethics and unjust social privilege. *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, 1(2), 59–64.
- University World News. (2009). *South Africa: Universities of shame*. Issue 76. <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=200905170927449>. 17 May 2009.
- Van Susteren, G. (2015). Shame on President Jacob Zuma of South Africa. Does he have no conscience? 3 September 2015 RDM News Wire. <http://gretawire.foxnewsinsider.com/2015/09/05/shame-on-president-jacob-zuma-of-south-africa-does-he-have-no-conscience-first-south-africa-lets-president-bashir-under-indictment-visit-south-africa-and-then-flee-like-a-rat-and-now>. Accessed May 29, 2016.
- Walker, R. (2012). *Cultural conceptions of poverty and shame as portrayed in seven diverse societies: A brief summary of findings*. Synthesis Working Paper 1.
- Wertenbruch, M., & Röttger-Rössler, B. (2011). *Emotionsethnologische Untersuchung zu Scham und Beschämung in der Schule*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Westerman, T. (2004). Engagement of Aboriginal clients in mental health services: What role do cultural differences play? *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 3(3), 3.
- Wicomb, Z. (1998). Shame and identity: The case of the coloured in South Africa. In D. Attridge (Ed.), *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid and democracy* (pp. 1970–1995). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- World Health Organisation. (1999). *Putting women's safety first: Ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- Wong, Y., & Tsai, J. L. (2007). Cultural models of shame and guilt. In J. Tracy, R. Robins, & J. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self-conscious emotions* (pp. 201–223). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. London: Sage Publications.

# Chapter 7

## Canada/North America: Shame Between Indigenous Nature-Connectedness, Colonialism and Cultural Disconnection

Barbara Buch

### EHRFURCHT DEN ALTEN

[...]

Jugend schafft Wertes nur im Warten!

Jugend ist keimbereiter Garten!

Nur bei den Alten reifen die Früchte!

Der Jugend verderben sie lüsterne Süchte!

Jugend kann niemals sich selbst gestalten,

Findet sie Former nicht bei den Alten!

*Jegliches Volk wird sich selbst zum Vernichter,  
bleiben die Alten nicht seine Richter.*

(Bô Yin Râ 1979, 105)

**Abstract** In this theoretical essay, it is examined, what role shame played in parts of past to present-day North American/Canadian society. A simplified shame-pride-continuum-model, related to Antonovsky's health model, is used to reveal basic aspects of shame. Examples of shame in indigenous cultures as well as in European-colonialist-culture, with capitalism and churchly Christian belief system as major influences and consequences of the clashing of these cultures, including genocidal residential schools, are delineated. Furthermore, the occurrence of shame with possible causes within present-day North American society is exemplarily brought up. The implication of shame and its counterpart, pride, can reach from a social and cultural regulative, means of education, to a powerful political tool. It can be used as a health (survival) resource, but also misused for greedy interests: bringing people and cultures up or down. Shame is ambivalent in regards to potential positive or negative effects. Based on salutogenic considerations, including the developing of resources depending on reconnecting and outside

---

B. Buch (✉)

Centre for Salutogenesis, Burns Lake, BC, Canada

e-mail: barbara@salutogenesis-shamanism.com

URL: <http://salutogenesis-shamanism.com>

intervention, shame as major stress factor has the potential to be overcome, leading to empowerment and possibly more health. However, the return to meaningful, supporting communities (e.g. in families) under the guidance of parents or elders, based on health-supporting, non-oppressing culture, values and structure is elementary to counteract present-day undermining influences growing from materialistic media and image-based destructive shame and pride.

## 7.1 Introduction

The main focus here is on Canada, although influences, colonialist history and oppression of aboriginals underwent a very similar history in the United States.

Today in Canada, the obvious consequences from the past, are overwhelmingly present: Addictions, substance abuse, criminality, emotional, physical and sexual abuse, suicide and other health problems, are significantly prevalent in aboriginal Canadians, disparate to the rest of the population (Adelson 2005; Armstrong 2006; Kahá:wi and Gill 2002). For example, as one of the many health consequences present today, there is a high percentage of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in aboriginal children, with severe consequences on learning abilities and the need for continuous efforts in regards to pedagogy and FAS prevention (Salmon 2005).

Besides of other genocide methods of the Canadian government (formed in 1867) (Waldram et al. 2006), the church-run residential schools for aboriginal children, established and running between the 1870s and 1996 (Canadian Encyclopedia 2008), are mainly made responsible for the present-day challenges of aboriginals (Armstrong 2006), as described above.

Apart from all kinds of abuse, in order “to kill the Indian in the child” (Canadian Encyclopedia 2008), one of the main practices applied in these institutions was shame (e.g. Armstrong 2006; McKegney 2013). Shame is known to be a number one source for addiction (Bradshaw 2005). Although this part of shame comes from the past, we still have to deal with its consequences and present-day (intergenerational) shame resulting from it (Armstrong 2006; McKegney 2013).

However, before the racial shame happened through oppressing white colonialists, how did shame occur in precolonialist indigenous traditions and what functions did it have? And which role does shame play today in modern media-dominated-North American society? Can shame in these contexts be healed or does it even have the potential of being a health resource?

This article hopefully contributes to the ‘unraveling of the mystery of [shame]’ (health) (Antonovsky 1987).



## 7.2 General Considerations of Shame

We need to look at the wide range of the meaning and implications of shame. It reaches from an inner emotion or affect with many levels and related terms (from shyness, humiliation, embarrassment, discomfort, rejection, failure, insecurity and behavior-related guilt etc.), consciously or unconsciously triggered in or by the presence of others, to the psychological tool of “shaming”, which can be used in a (health-)supportive way, or misused in a (health-)destructive way: from a cultural regulative for ethical, survival-based behaviors within and outside a group (tribe, community, family), over lynch law, oppression (e.g. women), bullying and cyber-bullying, even to an instrument for genocide, based on envy and greed for wealth, resources and power.

### 7.2.1 The Shame Continuum

To bring light and somehow simplify the diverse, multileveled, complex and hard to grasp phenomenon of shame I will present the concept of shame as a continuum, analogous to Antonovsky’s health-disease continuum.

Shame can be considered as an intense form of stress, which involves the whole integrity of a person and is preceding the shaping of identity according to Munt (2007). Thus it forms the sense of self and identity mainly during childhood (Bradshaw 2005), where it is imprinted into the brain and thus in the behavior patterns and perceptions of reality. Therefore the susceptibility of a person to shame depends on personal traits based on upbringing and self-esteem (e.g. Bradshaw 2005), the cultural (or non-cultural) context of its occurrence, as well as the intention of the naming and shaming entity (person, group, institution).

Shame can be considered as both, a *stressor* as described in Antonovsky’s Salutogenic Model (Antonovsky 1985), and a *coping mechanism*. Showing shame is a mechanism for reintegration into the group: “Wherever you see shame [...], someone is hoping for reconnection.” (Nathanson 2008, 3).

Referring to the dichotomous concept “toxic and healthy shame” by Bradshaw (2005), in this essay, shame is represented as a continuum between “destructive” and “constructive” (consequences of) shame for one’s health, analogous to Antonovsky’s continuum model of health and disease. Healthy shame according to Bradshaw (2005, 160) “[...] is the permission to be human. To be human is essentially limited.” (Fig. 7.1).

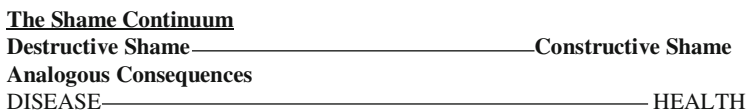


Fig. 7.1 Author’s own construction: The Shame Continuum

### 7.2.2 *Two Sides of a Coin: Shame and Pride*

The saying “pride comes before the fall” (e.g. Giffney 2007, X), the fall meaning shame, expresses clearly the dualistic aspect of shame and its counterpart: Pride. One cannot exist without the other. Pride, as the opposite of shame, is what we strive for, in order to get our need for acceptance and love fulfilled.

Identity is formed by the reflection through others, especially during the formative childhood years (Bradshaw 2005; Munt 2007). Pride and shame as emotions of self-assessment (e.g. Taylor 1985) are triggered by others. Both are crucial for this process and decide about self-worth etc. Also pride can be considered as being a continuum: From “healthy pride”, which goes along with honor and dignity, based on inner values and achievements, which are valued by others, to what I call “toxic pride”, which matches the meaning of false pride, based on outside “shine”, without the inner match.

This is a simplified graphic presentation to help describe certain phenomena, basic elements of shame and pride (Fig. 7.2).

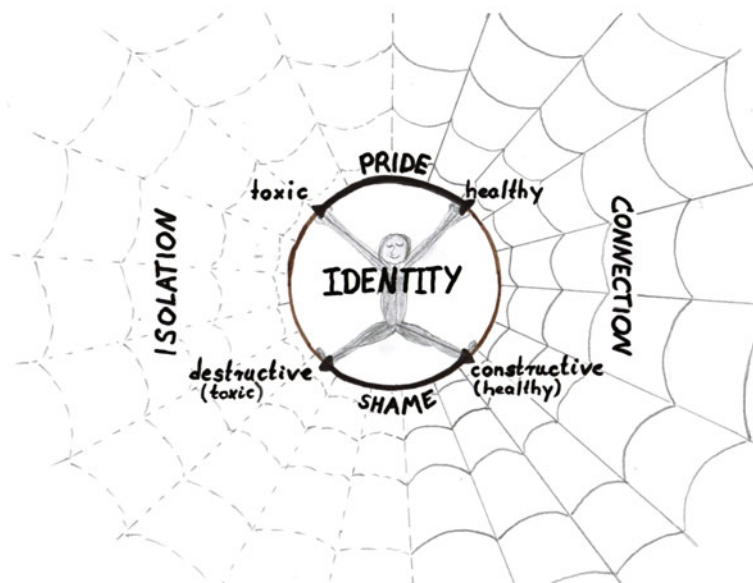


Fig. 7.2 Author's own construction: The Shame-Pride-Model

### 7.2.3 *The Shame-Pride-Model*

Both continua are represented on a circle, enclosing the identity, shaping and redefining it and the sense of self (self-worth) of a person or a collective (e.g. Zembylas 2008; Bradshaw 2005 etc.). The stages in between shame and pride are moments, where neither one is felt within the inner perception.

The net around the person's identity is symbolizing the embeddedness within a system of connections, reflecting the salutogenic sense of coherence (Antonovsky 1985). For example a grown connectedness to people, family, community, group, but also to ancestors, to divine forces (spirituality) etc. The net on the right side is (perceived as) strong, while on the left side it is either not perceived or it is not (strongly) established.

If shame (incidents) occurs more on the destructive (toxic) or constructive (healthy) site depends on our upbringing, experiences (childhood), self-worth and sensibility to shame, but also on the exposure by others, the main culture, people and their intentions, as well as on coping abilities and available resources (compare Antonovsky's Salutogenesis 1985; Bradshaw 2005; Brown 2006). In the salutogenic sense, the degree of feeling shame certainly is influenced by our perception, which is connected with our belief system, but can be influenced or lessened by our learnable awareness and other salutogenic resources.

Healthy shame is connected with remorse and humbleness, and reminds us on our imperfect humanness, only god would be immaculate (Bradshaw 2005). On the other hand, with Bradshaw's words:

[...] toxic shame is a soul murder. Because of it we become other-acted human doings, without an inner life and without inner peace. (Bradshaw 2005, 165).

Healthy pride (honor, dignity) brings people up and fulfills the very essential need for recognition, while shame brings people down.

The left and right side of the model, since being continua, are not clearly divided.

The right side of the model (healthy pride/constructive shame) reflects an embedding in a system of meaningful connection and reconnection (net) within self, a group, family, smaller community etc. with certain moral values and responsibilities, possibly within an ancestral system and based on traditional culture. The basis for a healthy capacity of shame within an individual is developed during childhood by the relationship to trusted caregivers (Bradshaw 2005).

Here shaming is used by parents, elders, the community as a regulative for the correction of "self- and group-damaging" behavior. Interventions by this group-entity support the ashamed, to rise again from his hideaway, possibly even to earn pride or honor and dignity through personal efforts and achievement (e.g. Strickland 1997). In this sense, healthy pride is based on earned honor through recognition by the group (based on its values) through personal achievement.

The left side of the model (toxic pride, destructive shame) lies within an area of disconnectedness (Antonovsky 1985) presented by a missing or weak net, to the self, to the group (community) etc. This is usually based on low or missing

self-esteem (e.g. often developed during childhood by missing trust to and abuse by caregivers and other (sexual) abuse, by inappropriate shaming etc. (Bradshaw 2005) and the lacking of according resources and coping mechanisms, like a reconnective structure. There is no felt meaningful attainable coherent value- or belief-system, morale or ethic, learned during childhood or adolescence. Toxic pride and destructive shame are often based on only outside, superficial and materialistic “values”. This reflects a missing stable societal structure and culture. Accordingly, a possibility for reconnective intervention is or seems unavailable. Instead, there is toxic isolation, hiding, and missing responsibility.

Preconditions for, but also consequences of toxic shame, are disconnectedness of self, others, own traditions, ancestors, value/belief system, spirituality and supporting group. Health effects can be depression, addictions, etc. (see Sect. 7.1) (e.g. Bradshaw 2005).

Based on this model, some major examples of shame—past to present—are presented in the following.

### **7.3 Examples for Sources of Shame in North America— Past to Present**

In order to consider some cultural, past and present aspects of shame within North America and their potential as health resources, I will focus on shame and pride examples within the indigenous people, as the original, culturally and thus environmentally adapted societies in this area as well as on the still dominant European Christian capitalist colonialist shame culture—past and present. Then present-day common shaming occurrences with their possible causes and consequences are described.

#### ***7.3.1 Traditional Aboriginal Laws of Living***

In precolonial times, the indigenous inhabitants of Canada, which are called aboriginal people—the collective of Inuit, First Nations and Metis (Waldram et al. 2006)—had numerous tribes and bands with diverse cultures, languages and other characteristics. However, there were also environmentally and culturally similar cultures, “culture areas” (Waldram et al. 2006, 7). The interdependencies between ecological conditions, resources, culture and language are obvious (Waldram et al. 2006). With the exception of some tribes (agriculturally and prairie-bison based tribes), the social unit was usually comparatively small (50–100 people), with the even smaller nuclear family group at its base, to fall back to in times of distress (Waldram et al. 2006). Therefore survival could only be maintained, if every

individual would function well, with a high and varied level of skills (Waldram et al. 2006).

However, the knowledge on precolonial aboriginal people is very gappy, since much of their knowledge and history has been annihilated (Kroeber 1992; Waldram et al. 2006). Despite of this attempt to shed a little light into some shame customs, we need to be aware, that a single custom—“[...] reveals as little of its functioning as an organ dissected out of the living body” (Kroeber 1992, 6), especially in consideration of aboriginal connected worldviews and ways of living (Strickland 1997). Nevertheless, it helps us to get an impression.

In traditional indigenous kinship-societies, “[...] the people’s life ways and law ways were part of an ongoing, integrated, holistic society”. “Life, law and religion [...] were fused together so that they were indistinguishable.” (Strickland 1997, 1045). This means also shame and pride were intertwined with all aspects of life, law and supernatural forces.

In precolonial functional tribal settings, it can be assumed that shame and pride usually occurred within the healthier (right) side (of the model) as a regulative for community living, its values, rules and proper behaviors, as shown and described in the model above. This tool assured the contribution and responsibility of every individual to community and family survival. Certainly a misuse in single cases by individuals was always possible, but we can hypothesize, that all tribes had a particular “system of social control”, meaning a “value-based jurisprudence that guided tribal and personal behavior.” (Strickland 1997, 1045). In this regard the elders were usually the decision makers or advisers, as well as judges (e.g. Deloria 2006; Strickland 1997):

[...] there was a system of truth-bearers, advisors, deciders and enforcers composed of men, who earned respect through a lifetime of respectable, responsible example and behavior. (Strickland 1997, 1060).

This included certain, more or less strict rules for every member of the group on how to behave towards each other, but also towards the gods (Parsons 1992) the living and non-living things (e.g. Strickland 1997; Deloria, 2006).

In this regard the proper communication with all beings was crucial for the balance of life and health and needed to be re-established, if out of balance (Buch 2006). This happened usually with the help of an elder, medicine person etc. (Buch 2006; Deloria 2006). Since shame absolutely interrupts proper communication with others, this lack also needed to be “fixed” through outside support and intervention. The following examples of shame and pride are all described from different North American tribes, however mostly through the eyes of European observers:

Boys and girls were expected to follow different behaviors and rules, which were honored. However, doing boy-things for a girl and vice versa was considered shameful (Parsons 1992). The same applied for men and women. “Woman’s work” like garden work was considered shameful for a man, while it was for a woman “to do an unwomanly thing” (Parsons 1992, 124). Especially children, but also adults, needed to respect the elders, not doing so was shameful and is still today. It was considered disrespectful and thus shameful for children to go near talking old

people (Parsons 1992). In nature-connected indigenous tribes, like the Nootka tribes, nudity in children was usually considered normal (Parsons 1992) and thus not shameful, which stood in contrast to colonialists Christian values, where it was shamed. In many tribes, warriors were expected to fight with their life to protect the tribe and its honor. They “prided themselves” to endure discomfort and suffering—e.g. like travelling for days without food (Parsons 1992). Showing weakness was considered dishonorable, which equals shameful. A chief was expected to act with other tribes in certain honorable ways, otherwise he would bring shameful “dishonor to his people” (Parsons 1992, 105). Menstruating (and sometimes pregnant) women couldn’t join certain ceremonies and were not allowed to be near hunting equipment, e.g. in The Nootka tribes (Parsons 1992). If this happened by accident—as in a healing ceremony—it was considered shameful or an embarrassment. Here, the shame served important preventional purposes: e.g. to keep germs restricted, and to keep hunting equipment free of the scent of blood, which could scare game (Parsons 1992). These rules and taboos had obviously preventive meanings and ruled the according behaviors (Parsons 1992).

The undertaking of an important public *potlatch*, which is a “giving away feast” and involves [...] “three parties: the giver, the guest or guests, and the person in whose honor the potlatch is given” (Parsons 1992, 315; Buch 2015), implicated many detailed rules within the Nootkas. If it was done right, high social prestige to the organizer (giver) and his family (giving away of their wealth) as well as to the person, in whose honor it was organized (puberty potlatch, birth potlatch etc.) would follow. The social rank and thus honour and pride could be increased by this event. In this sense in the Nootkas the birth of a girl was a special blessing (Parsons 1992, 317). However, if rules were not followed closely, shame would hit the potlatch undertaker (Parsons 1992). The collective consciousness and wellbeing was valued higher than individual well-being, as this highly valued potlatch ceremony practice confirms, because survival and health of each one depended on its working (Waldram et al. 2006).

An example for shame regulating problems with outsiders (other tribes, leaders etc.) was the shame pole. The shame pole was one special variety of the different forms of totem poles, which were built within the tribes on the Northwest Coast (Stewart 1993). Totem poles usually served for display and as symbol of family- and tribe pride in the form of history, origins, achievements, status etc. The shame pole however, was erected to contempt or ridicule someone publicly, as for example a person (or group) who committed some unaccepted behavior or offense towards chief or tribe. If compensation occurred, the pole was taken down (Stewart 1993). A shame pole could possibly avoid wars and killing through public condemnation of a person or group. Simultaneously, the intense work to do the carving and erecting it, can be considered as a kind of anger-management.

From all of these examples, we can conclude that shaming in native cultures probably was common practice and served as a tool to keep the social unit together, protect it against outside threats and ensure the proper functioning of individuals and thus survival in often difficult living conditions, e.g. in winter. The shame pole

was an effort to solve conflicts without war, thus ensuring survival of ones tribe as well.

The survival of a tribal group in the natural environment strongly depended on the acceptance and keeping of rules as part of the culture. E.g. Elders with their life-experience, knowledge and wisdom needed to be respected to ensure future thriving of the tribe. Thus to make someone feel ashamed in front of the whole tribe, because she/he was disrespectful towards an elder was a strong tool to correct his behavior. To make someone feel ashamed was a corrective tool, so this person would never do this mistake again. However, this person then got the chance to rise again, possibly through intervention by an elder or medicine person and through redemption and accepted behavior. Thus shame functioned as important regulative and health resource for the group and its members. A revival of these indigenous traditional shaming practices and values, which led to increased strength, connectedness, survival and thus health of tribe and thus each tribe-member, is e.g. practiced since 1996 in Saskatchewan, Canada as “restorative justice system” (Handel 2007). This approach was introduced, in order to better serve aboriginal people with a traditional aboriginal law and justice system (Handel 2007, 1). Shaming, redemption and then reintegration through responsibility and problem-solving (instead of “stigmatization” and punishment) of wrongdoers and criminals by family, community, peers and the victims, serve as essential elements for behavioural correction (Handel 2007). In most cases, culturally inappropriate behaviour is usually avoided after internal and external shame (Handel 2007).

The external source of shame comes from the disapproval of one’s family and peers, leading to a loss of social status and affection; the internal source of shame comes from a person’s conscience, and a sense of what is right and wrong. Social disapproval from one’s own community is thought to be a more effective deterrent to repeated offending behaviour than punishment meted out by state representatives. (Handel 2007, 1).

Thus crime is viewed

[...] as personal matter between individuals. This approach focuses on: problem-solving; involving victims, offenders and community, as well as responding to their needs; forgiving the offender; and reintegrating the offender back into the community. (Handel 2007, 1).

Here also shame serves as potential (health) resource for reintegration.

Munt (2007) confirms that shame is the ground for behavior-modification-based on penitence, which is expected from criminals. However, without the confrontation with harmed victims (empathy, responsibility) and the direct confrontation of people, who matter, for the criminal, honest penitence is doubtful in an alienated law system as part of a distant, former oppressive line of government. But in the current normal North American (Law) system, if a “wrongdoer doesn’t display appropriate levels of shame, more “righteous punishment” is publicly demanded for” (Munt 2007, 4).

### 7.3.2 *Confrontation with Colonialists and Genocide of Canada's Indigenous People*

When first contacts between European colonialists and North American natives happened, two completely different cultures clashed and many misunderstandings did happen (Waldram et al. 2006). Traditional aboriginal values were different and often opposite to capitalistic Christian colonialists norms, also in regards to shame.

The goal of gaining new resources, land (settlement) and exploitation and lack of understanding led to European Christian colonialists degrade aboriginals as primitives and savages. This racial shaming served as justification to eradicate the traditional North American cultures and people (genocide) (Waldram et al. 2006; Woolford et al. 2014). While (part-) nudity and many other customs in indigenous societies can be seen as a cultural expression of their nature-connectedness, this “shameful” behavior in the eyes of the mostly British Christian and often puritan colonialists with their known prudery, demonstrated “primitiveness”.

In the patriarchal European Colonialist Christian culture, shame is closely intertwined with the female aspect. Notable is first, that in the European language family, the word shame is mostly female, as e.g. in German (die Scham/Schande), French (la honte), Spanish (la vergüenza). Striking in this context is, that the German noun “Scham” not only refers to the emotion of shame, but also anatomically denotes especially the female genital area. Already in the bible story of Adam and Eve, the first woman Eve is the shamed one after tasting the apple, and both Adam and Eve are thrown out of the Garden of Eden (Painting of Masaccion: The expulsion: Morrison 1996, 7). Likewise is blushing connected with shame considered mostly a female characteristic, as already Darwin detailed:

[...]in the grip of shame are principally women, over-sensitive men, idiots, half-castes, albinos, and a myriad of racial and ethnic examples [...].

In his descriptions occurs also nudity in connection with “shamed European women”. Darwin based his statement mainly on information by missionaries (Munt 2007, 6). These examples reflect the patriarchal European Christian society structures, with a degraded female standing in absolute contrast to the mostly matriarchal North American aboriginal societies, where women were usually highly respected (e.g. McKegey 2013). As the Adam and Eve story as well as generally the bible (old and new testament) shows, shame was one of the “guiding principles” in the Christian belief system (Giffney 2007, X; Morrison 1996) presenting humans as original sinners. The confessional box within the Catholic church practically demonstrates the implications of shame in Christianity: The sinner is encouraged to confess in this box, without the fear to be “seen” by the listening priest on the other side. The delinquent can hide and thus might be able to admit his shameful sins. Simultaneously, it accelerates a deep feeling of shame, because a Christian needs to feel shame in order to show humbleness towards god. The confession box serves as a tool, to be able, to be forced, to live and maintain shame. The confessional box can be seen as a symbol for this main aspect of the Catholic Church. Munt describes



the “reinvigorating [of] a sense of shame and sinfulness before the Almighty” as “deeply satisfying rites, sacraments even” for cleansing and renewal (2007, 4).

One further fundamental difference was, that aboriginal traditional kinship-culture with its values, rituals and ceremonies was based on community rather than the individual (Strickland 1997). The “give-away” or potlatch ceremony symbolises this. The well-being of the group ensured survival in adaption of the environment. In contrast, European capitalist colonialists showed exactly the opposite, focusing on individual accumulation of wealth, which led to the ban of these and other important indigenous social events (Waldram et al. 2006).

Aboriginal small social communal wealth and matriarchal kinship-systems, with direct social control and influence of elders (shame as behavioral regulative in order to ensure tribe survival) in the past stand versus deconstructive shame of a capitalist Christian individualistic accumulation system with large hierarchical institutions, and patriarchal power system (e.g. Strickland 1997).

### 7.3.3 Residential Schools

As part of the thoroughly organized genocide of aboriginal people and their culture, through the colonialist new Canadian government (1867; Waldram et al. 2006), many different methods were used (Armstrong 2006). In this context, we look mainly at one: residential schools. These have been the main institutions, to “kill the Indian in the child” as Canadian Prime Minister Harper officially admitted (Canadian Encyclopedia 2008). After the (British and French colonialist) Canadian government was formed in 1867, residential schools existed in Canada from 1870s to 1996 (when the last one closed), under the leadership of churches (“mainly Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian church”, Waldram et al. 2006, 15).

Racial shaming and other horrific practices used by the church, to save the souls of the “wild”, “barbarian” people, indoctrinating the Christian belief system in order to make the “savages” “civilized” (Waldram et al. 2006, 14) led to catastrophic consequences still felt strongly within indigenous people to this day (Armstrong 2006; McKegney 2013; Waldram et al. 2006).

In order to assimilate them within the new Euro-Canadian culture and its Christian belief system, aboriginal children were intentionally and forcefully removed from their families, homes and thus from their traditional upbringing, culture and from their natural landscape (Waldram et al. 2006). Residential schools as government institutions under church leadership used shame as one fundamental characteristic of Christian teachings (see above) not only as a cultural construct, but as a political tool to wipe out an unwanted culture (Armstrong 2006; Leverenz 2012; McKegney 2013; Munt 2007). Different gruesome tools were used for this indoctrination. Reports about torture, emotional, physical and sexual abuse and children, who never returned home from residential schools, are all but too common (e.g. Armstrong 2006; McKegney 2013; Waldram et al. 2006). The children were made ashamed of any aspect of their own culture: severe punishments and torture

followed any expression of aboriginal culture (language, customs, high respect for women etc.) (McKegney 2013). Racial shaming was one main tool to kill culture and kinship in helpless children (McKegney 2013).

If we look at the frequent sexual abuse of indigenous children through priests (McKegney 2013) etc., the common consequences were—beside many others—that the victims felt shame again (McKegney 2013). The personal justification of this shameless behavior through these shamers, sexual abusers and torturers in the form of priests and nuns, contradicting their own teachings, was that the “savage” children, esp. girls, have aroused inner drives, leading to the abuse, therefore they should be made ashamed for this:

It was Father, who said it was woman’s fault. (McKegney 2013, 6).

In the sense of church leaders, who likely have been (toxically) shamed themselves in the past, I have to refer to Bradshaw (2005):

As shame-based people get entrenched in their cover-ups, they become more shameless. They hide their mistakes with perfectionism, *control*, *blame*, criticism, contempt, etc. (Bradshaw 2005, 160)

This can be presented as pride—toxic pride. The main victims of these hiding efforts have been with certainty again the children in the residential schools.

Psychologically, children are the most vulnerable for these “methods”, so that the application of this “deculturalization” tool on native children (Waldram et al. 2006, 15) was very effective. The original connective web (see Shame Pride Model above) based on guidance by the elders was destroyed and instead isolation was promoted in every possible way.

The presence of a trusting relationship to a caregiver during the formative years in children is essential to develop self-worthiness (Bradshaw 2005) and one’s own parental abilities. Therefore residential schools with their schizophrenic combination of Christian capitalist teachings with what the school “caregivers” practically provided, namely the “tools”, contradicting any of those teachings (abusive, shaming, torture etc.), left the (surviving) children not only without connection to their own culture, families, land, but also with no sense of belonging to the Christian/white people either (Waldram et al. 2006) (Left side of the model). The result was and is “[...] serious damage to the lives and cultures of Aboriginal People” with a “direct impact on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of Aboriginal People today”. The so called “residential school syndrome” (Waldram et al. 2006, 15) left lost and shamed individuals, who were never able to develop a “healthy sense of shame” (Bradshaw 2005, 12). As children they never got positive attention or trust and internalized their experienced shame feelings (Bradshaw 2005; McKegney 2013).

Children of residential schools have been robbed of their secure attachments, of their kinship relations, not feeling loved, not able to connect to anyone, with a distorted sense of self (no sense of self-worth), often leading to an internalised abusive parental role later in life, based on mistrust, disrespect, violence, control and abuse (Bradshaw 2005; McKegney 2013).

Here is an explanation for some consequences within aboriginal people still present today (see Sect. 7.1):

Toxically shamed people tend to become more and more stagnant as life goes on. They live in a guarded, secretive and defensive way. They try to be more than human (perfect and controlling) or less than human (losing interest in life or stagnated in some addictive behavior (Bradshaw 2005, 18).

The systematic “Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America” (Woolford et al. 2014) went on for more than 120 years, until only 20 years ago! All the inhumane enforced (shaming and others) actions done to native people (Woolford et al. 2014), should lead to international present-day-shame of the Canadian (and US) government and the involved Christian churches. But instead, western colonialism stories are about glorified first settlers and the white history in America is full of pride only: a chapter of shame not shown, nor talked about (internationally), despite of the official apology in 2008 (Canadian Encyclopedia 2008) or the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (IRS TRC, McKegney 2013) or e.g. the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) to support indigenous recovery (WalDRAM et al. 2006). Simultaneously the felt shame of being “Indian” in the past is still far too common.

## 7.4 Shame and Pride as Political Tools

Shame and pride can be used as extremely efficient psychological and as such political tools (e.g. Tarnopolsky 2004 cited in Zembylas 2008). This can happen in a positive and constructive way, as in the described traditionally evolved communities or in a destructive and toxic way, consciously by design as political or personal tool, as for example in residential schools. So there are “two sides of the coin”.

Shame and pride as political tools play a large role in a broad context to this day. For example, in the ten Christian commandments to kill someone is considered a sin, as such shameful. However, in any mainly Christian society/government, it suddenly becomes a source of pride, when done by a soldier within a war: instead of shame and guilt, now there is pride and soldiers are heroes. Shame and pride are effective tools for oppression and encouragement in any direction:

[...] pride is promoted as a salutary emotion that serves as a legitimate force of nation building. (Tarnopolsky 2004, cited in Zembylas 2008, 264).

A regular celebration of war heroes on Remembrance Day in Canada shall reinforce this pride, to ensure that future generations become soldiers. If a participation in war is always necessary as defense for survival, is questionable. That means that these tools can even override a principal (Christian) value system (permission of the absence of shame), if applied effectively. Munt confirms this:

Shame has political potential as it can provoke a separation between the social convention demarcated within hegemonic ideals, enabling a re-inscription of social intelligibility. (Munt 2007, 4).

When the powerful feelings of shame and pride are misused for hegemonic or oppressing efforts, out of traditional cultural contexts, and shame is not a cultural regulative anymore, it can be used to bring a person or a whole nation down in the long run. It can go as far as (suicide) genocide.

Countless examples of governments and churches worldwide committing crimes on humanity in the name of shame and pride exist in past and present. The German holocaust is one of them, which was doubtless more than a horrific crime to humanity. Racial shame of Jewish people stood versus the pride of being “Aryan”. The result is still—after the 12 year Hitler period, which ended more than 70 years ago—a guilty and shameful identity of Germans and Germany (e.g. Heimannsberg and Schmidt 1993), as a nation within the global community, whose history reaches back far beyond the short Hitler-era. Nevertheless, this shame involves the *entirety* of history, roots, traditions, and celebrations including the ancient Germanic ancestors and finds its expression in being called a “Nazi”—still. An ongoing active genocide in Canada for more than 120 years, until 20 years ago (until 1996, Canada and similarly USA) versus 12 years of genocide, until more than 70 years ago (until 1945, Germany): One nation is still proud of its “glorious” white colonialists history without global mention of genocide as its “price” (although internally, the brutalities were admitted (Canadian Encyclopedia 2008), while the other nation with a millennia long ancient history before these 12 years is still made ashamed of its own roots and history and constantly reminded and stigmatized by the global community...

Traditional indigenous tribes in North America with their particular belief systems had also their warriors to defend the group and their territory in order to directly protect the survival of the tribe. In many tribes, their biggest honour and pride, was to be a good warrior (McKegney 2013; Strickland 1997).

## **7.5 Contemporary Youth Mania Based on Materialism and Consumption**

North American indigenous cultures, spirituality and thus also the aspect of shame-pride, nowadays are often closely intertwined with the Christian colonialist value and belief systems. However, there is a large diversity of indigenous people and communities, so generalizations cannot be made (Waldram et al. 2006). Some indigenous groups and individuals try to revive and live old traditions, often being secretive about traditional ceremonies, as one of consequences of colonialist cultural genocide efforts. Others were indoctrinated as much that these Christians now even oppose to the comeback of old aboriginal traditions, while some are not connected to neither one culture or belief system.

However, recent influences in North America target all members of society equally and they are, like anybody else, exposed and influenced by mainstream society values. Present-day North American mainstream “culture” has its own rules of shame and pride with its unprecedented consequences.

Here we need to look at the exploding massive media-sector, in North America and worldwide, which became not only dominant, but “brainwashing” in daily life, informing values and ethics today in every aspect. The resulting society is based on youth, where peers and their media based opinions and values, matter more than family, parents etc. (Neufeld and Maté 2013). The capitalistic corporation system, creating continuously new and more (media) consumption, is behind this. In this fast pace time—unprecedented in history—children commonly have more knowledge than adults in an area (technical, media), which seems to be an important qualification for our daily functioning, our “survival”, the work-world. Part of this always expanding market is, that technology develops faster than a carrot grows, new media devices occur on a daily base. Screens became easy and cheap babysitters for overwhelmed parents, who seem to be helpless without them. All kinds of game devices, phones etc., in addition to TV-screens built into family vehicles, so the kids are “taken care” of, are the norm. A visit in a restaurant or typical North American pub, a large store or mall, a plane ride is not possible without being permanently bombarded by TV’s or other screens, in addition to the widespread texting or mobile phone-addiction, which repeatedly causes accidents. From toddler age on, most daily time is spent in front of some kind of screens, including subliminal messages, advertisement, violence, sex, music etc. Widespread continuous exposure to media, internet, movies, music, videos, games, and pornography with detrimental messages etc. lead to desensitization and acceptance to normality. An example for this is e.g. the category US “Gangster RAP”, containing messages, presentations and calls to violence, racism, shameless sexuality, sexism, including appeals even to rape and calls to take drugs (Giovacchini 1999). Further examples are computer games, where successful killing and raping are main goals of the game [Wikipedia 1 2016: List of controversial video games (violence, sexism, racism etc.)].

Immorality and unethical—shameless—behaviour (in a traditional sense) becomes the norm in this “everything is possible” present-day North American materialistic society in the absence of (healthy) “traditional” shame as a behavioural regulative for the keeping of norms and values. As Bradshaw puts it: “To be shameless is to play God.” (2005, 161). The according consequences might lead to decay of society, diseases, epidemics, and collapse.

Techno-ecstatic and media-hypnotised kids and adults are constantly connoted all kinds of image—needs, they do not really have. In this almost inescapable “brainwashing”-system, society members are degraded to the everlasting consumer: Always on the look for the newest shopping “kick”, trying to fill our inner void, created by the unreal cyber(screen)-life we live.

All this replaces real life experiences, encounters and interactions.

Within North American youth today, there is a rising orientation on peers and peer pressure, when it comes to values, behavior and identity, increasingly

destroying family and community influence by elders and their coherence (Neufeld and Maté 2013). Neufeld and Maté delineate this youth—peer—media-based “self-determination” as destructive for health and family cohesion, fostering “a hostile and sexualized youth culture” and to bring about children who are “overly conformist, desensitized, and alienated” (Neufeld and Maté 2013, backside). Sax confirms this tendency of youth declining in achievement and with rising severe psychological and other health issues (Sax 2015). The increasing lack of achievement in adolescents (Sax 2015) may reflect the widespread lacking shame about bad work performance.

Detrimental consequences are described by Sax (2015), Neufeld and Maté (2013). Spitzer talks about the “digital native” (born after 1980) in this context (2012, 204), who does not even develop proper social abilities, not to mention (mental) health problems, addictions etc.

Adolescents, based on their brain structure (Spitzer 2012) are the easiest influenceable target group, where imprinting in order to base self-worth only on materialistic outside “values” (the perfect consumer!) happens without much effort.

Many, if not most people submit to current society’s main rules and values, where image and outer appearance, based on what others might think, triggers now basic survival instincts and defines destructive shame and (toxic) pride in the absence of meaningful cultural based connections.

Therefore the most common and widespread sources of shame and pride (see model, left side) are based on the ever present media-advertisement for never stopping needs and consumption. Main aspects here are body-image (cosmetic surgeries for “beautification” become the norm, designer clothes, (brand names), “cool sunglasses”) and social status, based on what you have (pride) or not have (shame) etc. These influences often undermine and replace more traditional social values like the admiration, honor and pride of essential community members and their (work) achievements for example.

Capitalism with its corporations, which are at the base of this shameless game of consume, greed and growth, are and act shameless. Employees in large institutions usually do not feel personally responsible, because they are deliberately unable to see through different hierarchy levels and decision-making. Thus the countless shameless acts regarding humanity, but also nature and environment, of many large institutions (from corporations, churches, governments etc.) create a shameless society without any traditional values, ethics or morals in order to ensure functioning, health and reconnecting as in naturally grown traditional cultures.

### ***7.5.1 Cool Is the New Pride***

In the context of youth, shame and pride, the common North American term “cool” can be seen as a typical example in the realms of language. In present-day North American youth mania society, “being cool” matters more to youth than anything else (Neufeld and Maté 2013).

Cool can mean anything—often it includes doing shameful things—although the attempt of being accepted by a group (media influenced peer group) is at its root. “Cool” is the new “being proud of” on the personal emotional need level, which is hoped to fulfill the need for acceptance, recognition and love. It is usually based on image, body-image and outer appearance, but anything can be included. Shameful, or being “uncool” is the opposite: outer appearance, which does not go with mainstream media images. In this sense “coolness” is often based on disconnect- edness from self, culture and ethics. Simultaneously the potential for healthy pride is missing or degraded, because it would be based on culture, connection, honor, traditional-non-oppressing-communal values, morals and ethics. This goes along with the youth-mania, where parents and elders are not respected anymore.

In this sense anything to be of value for youth today needs to be “cool”. Many adults, teachers, especially advertisement etc. adapted to this term and use it, in order to be accepted by teens. We should rethink this term and its implications.

One contributing factor for mainstream cultural disconnection in present-day North America could be also, that certain Christian values might not fit any more to many people. Priests and other representamen of Christian churches for example, are often disconnected from real life issues. Traumatic (shaming) experiences caused by Christian churches and the complete loss of old, ancestral former traditional values, which had evolved in cultural adaption to the environment by ancestors long before forced Christianity, still might create a disconnectedness, and unfulfilledness, also in other than indigenous North American cultures. Current multicultural mobile Canadian society consists of many individual(ist)s without close group connections, who are seeking connection. Children of these grow up even more disconnected, without structure, values, without community of like-minded culture/traditions, ancestry. Media-connected youth mania seems the only massively offered option in lack of no elder leaders or “judges” (Bô Yin Râ 1979).

### ***7.5.2 Present-Day Public Shaming and Lynching***

Misuse of shame and pride became widespread phenomenons in this cultural disconnected society, as rising incidents of bullying, and especially cyberbullying reflect (Bullying Statistics 2016).

Bullying in schools is a big subject nowadays in Canada/North America: single persons are made ashamed by others, because they are different, doing different things, having special interests, not wearing designer clothing. Jealousy, envy and insecurity of the bullies are often the base motives. The Internet offers a global platform to exponentiate the potential destructive effects of (cyber-) bullying with countless examples, often leading to suicide or mental problems of the victims (Bullying Statistics 2016). Online means are countless to (mostly) unjustifiably globally shame a person: e.g. showing intimate, personal pictures or creating rumors, spreading lies or wrong accusations about someone, in order to harm or



destroy this person. Bullying is often done “behind the curtain’ of the Internet, where the performers can seemingly hide. Often in combination with other media, cyberbullying as destructive shaming, represents a form of lynch law and can have deadly consequences (Cavanaugh 2011). Despite of the lack of positive structures in society, the breakdown of parental influence is supporting this development (Neufeld and Maté 2013; Juuls 2016).

The Canadian/North American law system and society are not up to date concerning these bullying and lynching actions. General focus is only on schools and schoolkids. Outside of this frame, there are no help or protection agencies, and no snatching law. For example, character assassination as one form of (cyber-) bullying, can only be successfully prosecuted, if financial losses can be proven (Glen Greene, personal communication, April 2015). How can you measure mental or other health effects from shame financially? It seems that destructive ways of public shaming, based on jealousy, envy, and greed of others are not strived against effectively by the Canadian law system and society.

## 7.6 Shame as Health Resource

In the following the potential of shame for positive health outcomes in the salutogenic sense is considered. Can shame be or become a positive health resource within the considered contexts? How can the effects of shame and shaming be transformed into a positive health outcome? Potential resources for turning shame into a health resource are listed, some of which are also described by other authors (e.g. Brown 2006; Bradshaw 2005).

Shame is stress in isolation and Salutogenesis means reconnection. Shame is a reaction to a stressful event and causes stress. The perception of (what is) stress varies from person to person. People react differently and where some people feel shame, others do not. This depends mainly on upbringing, former experiences and self-worth (Bradshaw 2005). Stressful shame can be caused by an intrinsic feeling only, not intendedly caused by another group or person, but it also can be intendedly triggered by others, justified or not. Nevertheless, all forms are perceived as stress, as an attack on the whole person, who feels ashamed.

The normal basic biological stress response to an attack would be the generally known “fight or flight” reaction described by Walter Cannon (Williams and Bracha 2004) in the thirties. In case of shame, however, neither flight nor fight is possible, due to the need to be part of the ashaming group. Humans evolved as social beings for survival and thus always strive to be accepted, recognized and loved by their particular group. Therefore the shamed tries to hide, and the physical stress reaction is going inward instead of supporting a fight or flight response.

We can consider shame as the ultimate stressor in the salutogenic sense, which reflects a feeling of disconnectedness and asks for reconnection (Nathanson 2008). The salutogenic model has the perceived sense of coherence (feeling of connection) at its foundation. Felt shame is the opposite of this. It is hiding and isolation. It’s



central (stress) aspect for our daily lives, playing a role in almost any behavior, is also expressed in its label as “master emotion” by Scheff and Retzinger (1991, cited in Zembylas 2008, 266). “Shame and pride may be the most powerful forces in the human world” according to Scheff (1994, cited in Zembylas 2008, 266). This goes along with being often at the source of other stress factors like anxiety, depression (Lewis, cited in Morrison 1996, 3) and other psychological challenges leading to addictions etc. (Bradshaw 2005). Therefore shame should play a larger role in therapeutic treatments, as possible root cause of other symptoms, so that they can be treated more effectively (Lewis, cited in Morrison 1996, 3). Thus, former unrecognized shame might turn into a source for healing.

According to Antonovsky, stressors—and thus shame—can potentially be overcome with the proper resources, leading to more health (Antonovsky 1985). Resources need to be present, activated or created. Potential resources for coping with shame are mainly about restoring relationships (sense of coherence)—to self, to others, to nature, to the divine (a greater power than humans) and belief system. These have been destroyed by toxic shame. As Bradshaw describes the metaphoric fall of Adam in the bible, shame is about restoring

the relationship with God, the relationship with self, the relationship with brother and neighbor (Cain kills Abel) and the relationship with the world (nature). (Bradshaw 2005, 160).

Munt confirms that “[...] shame can incorporate some latent, positive effects” (Munt 2007, 4). She describes, how shame as painful feeling, can be transferred into positive energies, as happened during the “social liberation movements”, which were based on “the binary opposition of pride/shame [...]” (Munt 2007, 4).

In small tribal communities the tool shame represented an important behavioral regulative for the benefit of the community (survival) and thus also for its shamed member (e.g. revived in the restorative justice model, Handel 2007). It can be compared to the parental tool of discipline, to shame a child in order to change, adapt or improve its behavior. Then it can function as a contribution to the (family) community survival and for its own sake. This ideal form of healthy shame is beneficial for both, the whole group, and the individual to improve. In this sense, shame contributes to the individual’s health, by becoming more functional, achieving better results and by getting higher social recognition, wealth and acceptance of the group (Salutogenesis). Thus a former shamed person may become more successful, accumulate more resources in the salutogenic sense (money, recognition, community) and become healthier (Salutogenesis). However, in order for salutogenic shame to work and be constructive (healthy), a designated communal process needs to be in place for the potential of reconnecting in a wise, supportive, interventional way.

1. This potential first resource is “reintegrative” instead of “stigmatizing” shaming, as Handel puts it (2007, 3): Shaming of damaging or destructive behavior including reconnection within a close social group (based on leadership of the

- “old”) as meaningful behavioral regulative for the support of the group and its members. The recognition that everyone has shame issues helps to reconnect.
2. Second Resource: Recognition, that everyone has shame issues! I am not alone with this (feeling of connectedness). Essential for the empowering process is the conscious discovering and acknowledgement of own vulnerabilities for shame (Morrison 1996; Brown 2006).
  3. Third Resource: Acknowledging one’s own shame and vulnerability. Connected with vulnerability is the importance of revealing personal hidden shame issues and sharing them openly (Bradshaw 2005; Brown 2006). The ability to talk publicly about own experiences of shame is also evidence for the overcoming of shame (Bradshaw 2005). This “self-disclosure” is “one of the principal methods in healing shame” according to Morrison (1996, XI). It can be perceived as liberation from traumatic shame experiences and particularly lead to a new (lost) feeling of power and connectedness, through the agreement and support of like-minded people, who underwent similar shameful experiences—as in the case of indigenous people in North America. Sharing leads to connection with other people. From understanding and opening up one’s own shame comes empathy for others, which again connects. The connection may be even stronger, if the same or similar culture is shared and can be reactivated (see resource 2). As Bradshaw describes the effect: “The interpersonal bridge was being repaired.” (2005, 160). “When you no longer care that you are being shamed, particularly when horizontal bonds formed through communities of shame can be transmuted into collective desires to claim political presence and a legitimate self, that new sense of identity can forge ahead and gain rights and protection. There is also a certain joy that can be liberated by slipping out from underneath shame that was historically in the early eras of the Black Civil Rights Movement, Gay Liberation Front, and the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1970s”. “To be released from shame can produce elation, [...]” (Munt 2007, 4) or with a different word: empowerment. Munt (2007) describes how this opening up can lead from shame to pride and even bring social change. Since shame is a group-related emotion, we also need to realize that we nowadays need our own consciously chosen cultural or other like-minded group to keep up our values.
  4. Fourth resource: Sharing personal shame issues openly.
  5. Fifth Resource: Connecting with like-minded people and groups, who underwent similar shame-traumata (Brown 2006).
  6. Sixth Resource: Showing empathy to other (shamed) people (Brown 2006). The central aspect of Antonovsky’s model is the sense of coherence, based on the feeling of connectedness. Cultures developed in adaption to environment and living circumstances. We never should be ashamed of our own roots—on the contrary—using shame as a health resource—we need to realize how crucial, important own roots and traditions are. Within aboriginal groups, the (re)connection to tradition and culture is one of the main practical empowerment tools, even in absence of a close and stable social living community (e.g. in urban aboriginal groups and in present-day North America mainstream

society) (Hunter et al. 2006; McCormick 2007; Schiff and Pelech 2008). Also the connection to a divine power and in this sense spirituality is essential to feel connected. Bradshaw describes the divine reconnection as: “The restoration of a bond of mutuality with God has enormous power to heal toxic shame.” (Bradshaw 2005, 160). These reconnections, including to ancestors, can be especially meaningful for the healing of destructive, toxic, unjustified and intergenerational shame, in connection with support of consciously chosen culturally like-minded groups. Reconnection to each other through culture contributes to empowerment and to the courage to become an “alpha leader” (Juels 2016) for the young. Louth (2012) describes how the overcoming of the “shame”-factor can empower “Indigenous people to share and celebrate their culture with the wider community” (Louth 2012, 1) on an Australian example, where indigenous people went through very similar past colonialist experiences. Shchetinin, the founder of the Tekos-School in Russia, claims that children, in order to reach their full potential, need to be tied “to the collective ethnic soul” and “to their ancestors“. They must be “enrooted in the nature of their homeland” (translated from German, Rotter 2013, 1; Shchetinin 1989).

7. The potential seventh resource is (re)connection to our roots: tradition, (non-oppressing) culture, ancestral connections, and divine power (spirituality/spiritual beings), and nature etc. in form of ceremonies, rituals etc. In order to heal our own shame, we must consciously look at the source of shame, at the origin, and its purpose. We must be made aware of who is (or was) shaming us and why? Why do I feel shame? Is shame used to correct individual behavior for a healthier community or as tool for oppression out of greed, envy or jealousy, respectively as consequences of toxically shamed caregivers? Was it only perceived as shame? Does/did it originate from a foreign source, unrelated to me and my true inner values? What are those values? Is it used within a meaningful cultural tradition or as part of my culture? Shame and shaming have been used as tool to eradicate culture and replace it with the oppressors “culture” (colonialists, Christian church), and it also is still used in different cultures to oppress women. For the feeling of shame to occur, it doesn’t matter if I only imagine something as shameful or embarrassing or if it really occurs. Even if people try to shame me, but I do not notice it, it is all about my own perception. Perception is based on former experiences, upbringing (e.g. blushing, fear of speech) and thus on self-worth and belief system (Bradshaw 2005). For shame having the potential as health resource, the source of shame and thus our belief system about our experienced shame needs to be clear. It possibly needs to consciously be readjusted (belief system as health resource, Antonovsky 1985, resource 8), necessarily with support of a like-minded community (compare resource 6). The learned awareness, that shame was unjustified (e.g. racial shame), can help to empower. Especially in toxic shame situations, where “there is no reason or justification for being stigmatised by shame” (like racial or homosexual shame) one coping strategy by individuals and groups can be that “shame is transmuted into pride [...] to reverse the discourse”, where the degraded shamed person turns out into a

proud person (Munt 2007, 4). Pride can be based on one's ancestors and culture, especially in combination with reconnection to culture, cultural community and ancestral traditions (resource 2).

8. The potential eighth resource is the awareness of the Who, Why and How of shaming. A thus gained new perspective of the shame issue can empower. One further example to develop a different view is through constellation work. This is especially meaningful for the healing of intergenerational transmission of shame. In this approach e.g. present-day personal (shame) issues are linked to wider webs of connection and understanding: e.g. community, family and ancestors, and can be possibly resolved to a certain degree (Boring 2012; Mayer and Hauser 2015). The importance of ancestral connections for the reestablishment of harmony and health on the example of (family) constellation work is also described in Mayer and Hausner (2015) and Buch (2015). Mason Boring (2012) demonstrates these connections within Native American perspectives. This particular group method, as well as Virginia Satir's methods (Bradshaw 2005), which validate and foster participants, can assist in the solution of "unresolved issues in [the] family of origin", for reducing shame and transforming it from toxic to healthy (Bradshaw 2005, 169). Family constellation exemplifies also the crucial meaning of ancestral relations for our sense of coherence (connectedness) and healing and can influence our innate belief system (Salutogenesis). Perception can be changed through consciousness and a modified belief system. Further examples are absolute love and trust in a bigger entity (God), as well as connecting with one's ancestors. Regarding oneself as a descendant of a line of ancestors can create a sense of connectedness (Antonovsky 1985).
9. Ninth resource: Changing the perspective on shame and thus the belief system with different methods: For example constellation work and other interventions, as well as through accepting a power higher than oneself (Bradshaw 2005).
10. Tenth Resource: Reducing shame by changes in one's life (transforming destructive/toxic to constructive healthy shame). Bradshaw's (2005) example is switching from alcohol dependency to e.g. group dependency and resolving family-of origin, respectively childhood traumata issues, by finally "growing up" (Bradshaw 2005). Louth (2012) describes a case of the empowerment of formerly shamed Australian indigenous people (comparative history to North American Indigenous People),<sup>1</sup> leading to a sense of pride through a traditional cultural celebration event, where respect and involvement by the local community und educational institutions played a crucial role. A result was an increased sense of connectedness with the local community and its education system. Important for this "overcoming of "shame" factor" (Louth 2012, 1) and the transformation into empowerment were: the wish and initiative came from the community itself, and the respect for the cultural presentations.

---

<sup>1</sup>An article of Sharon Louth can be found as well in this book as Chap. 8.

11. Eleventh resource: Reconnect with others: neighbors etc. re-establish relationships (Bradshaw 2005). The welcoming of others, especially concerning former shaming groups (white people), is crucial for this step.

From this and the success stories of healing and empowerment by reconnection, learning, being involved in personal traditional cultural practices as well as the central aspect of the Salutogenic Model: the sense of coherence/connection—we may conclude that the reconnection to and rediscovery of ancestral traditions, history, families etc. can play a major role for health. This is not only valid for North American aboriginal traditions and their healing of shame. Each person has ancestral roots, connections, some going back far in history, family, traditions, back to the cultural origins. Culture always evolved in interaction with a specific environment and living conditions for survival. This aspect becomes more important, when we look at the intergenerational passing on of shame. The reflection of where particular origins of cultural traditions are might go beyond Christianization, which unfortunately mostly happened forcefully, without the natural integration and retention of former cultural traditions and belief systems. Certain traits and characteristics might be still part of a person's mentality, originated as part of cultural adaptation for survival. These traits still can have an enormous meaning for who we are today and for the contribution to global life, for the evolvement of the future world. If we manage to rediscover, recognize, value, honor, and contribute these, we could meaningfully be proud of them in a connective sense of a nation. However, NOT as something to overrule others, but instead as something valuable to contribute. Because of the rising lack of cultural structure and connection, the awareness of ancestral connections could create more connected and thus "global" responsible, self-aware citizens. In this sense shame and pride acted in many traditional cultural societies as social regulative for keeping the group with its value- and belief-systems together, also in distinction to other groups.

Toxic shaming occurred in the form of racial shaming, as e.g. in residential schools towards aboriginal people or towards black people and other cultural groups—and is still happening today (Leverenz 2012). Parents, who have been toxically shamed themselves and were not able to develop a healthy sense of self still continue this path (Bradshaw 2005). With intervention and help from the outside, it might be able to be transformed in empowerment. The challenge in this form of shaming also is, that it is intergenerational, so that the offspring has to deal with similar issues, if not resolved. Interventions for reconnecting with assistance of therapist, elders and like-minded groups, can be based on reviving old traditions (ancestors) and group support, as well as reconnection to the divine, as spiritual connection (Bradshaw 2005). In the case of North American aboriginal people, this has already successfully been done in many cases, e.g. sweat lodge ceremonies and others (McCormick 2007; Waegemakers Schiff and Pelech 2008).

Shaming based on missing intrinsic values, but instead on image, materialistic, "youth manic" values, implanted into brains through continuous media exposure, needs interventions for potential empowerment above all based on awareness, consciousness, connection with cultural values and structures and the above

mentioned aspects. As preventional means to protect our children from the image based destructive shaming, I agree with Neufeld and Maté (2013), Sax (2015) and Juuls (2016): Parents need to take back responsibility to offer structure with love for their children, be the leader “of the family-pack”. So the empowerment from parents to be real parents and lead their children is of outmost importance.

Shame is not anymore a survival (health) enhancing cultural regulative. In our contemporary North American society the diverse original cultural values are increasingly undermined by health harming values. Traditions with the original regulative shame function in a good sense to keep our group functioning have been lost in many ways. However, there are also many other worldwide cultures, where shame is used to oppress certain members, like e.g. women.

The positive relict of shaming to help someone to learn proper behavior (proper meaning survival and health enhancing for group and individual) would need to be recultivated within our own values and roots. In order to regain its original power within a community, attempts similar to the restorative justice system (Handel 2007) should be integrated into the system.

## 7.7 Conclusions

Humans are social beings as part of their original survival strategy. Shaming as inherent tool with the imperative reintegration/reconnection after, works within interactive, *reciprocally* connected meaningful group systems: Community with individual member support, where all are dependent on each other for survival. Here shame and pride serve as essential keepers of values, morals, ethics and skills in every needed member. The reconnecting process through outside intervention is an imperative part of shaming; it is necessarily inherent to this *reciprocal* community-based system.

In contrast, modern individualistic (capitalistic) North American society is characterised by large distant anonymous institutions (governments, churches, corporations) without real meaningful close connections to the individual, which pursue only *one-sided exploitation* of their members. A similar structure was already in place with the early Canadian colonialist government, only back then, colonialists profited on the base of exploiting aboriginal people. The toxical shaming of indigenous people in North America—in order to make them submissive (McKegney 2013) was only possible, because the most vulnerable, namely children, have been toxically indoctrinated in residential schools. A similar process happens today—mostly unnoticed and subtle in a new technical dimension. Back then in residential schools and today in media world, easy influenceable children and adolescents were and are the main target for indoctrination of profit and power supporting shame and pride “values”, in order to satisfy greed and jealousy and turning them into effective sickening and destructive tools.

Today’s indoctrination goes freely through media, influencing mind-sets and language. Governments even recommend the prematurely use of media (computer,

smart phones, I pads etc.) for toddlers and preschoolers against better scientific knowledge (Spitzer 2012).

On top of that in modern social media based society (“cyber-world”), people lose the ability for essential, real meaningful social connection. Cyber-connections become increasingly an addictive illusion, since the need for real-life social interactions cannot be fulfilled through distant, anonymous technical superficial connections (e.g. Spitzer 2012). Isolation and addiction are connected with shame. Cyber-bullying is one form of abuse of shaming. One likely consequence in cyberspace is that shamed or bullied people eventually themselves become bullies and shame others, to deal with their anger and rage.

Instead of conducting useful actions against shameless behavior, the hierarchical structure of anonymous institutions in modern society encourage themselves shameless actions of individuals for personal gain, power or satisfaction. Examples are too common, like environmental destruction or violence of human rights through large corporations and raping priests in the case of the Catholic Church (McKegney 2013, etc.)—all accepted, without serious consequences, for more profit and control.

Simultaneously the old are neglected and ridiculed in “youth mania”, instead of being respected as leaders and important advisors.

In the traditional reciprocal beneficial societies as well as in the modern exploitative systems, shame and pride were and are used as powerful psychological political tools, in charitable, constructive respectively in selfish, destructive ways. Indigenous people lost their elder leadership and guidance through genocidal actions as many young people lose it through current media “brainwashing”, where peers and cyberspace connections are valued more than family, undermining parental influence (Neufeld and Maté 2013; Sax 2015).

Shame and pride in modern society exist as a misused emotional social relict, but are *not* an integral element of modern individualistically based societies. The reintegration of an individual after shaming is neither needed anymore for group-survival nor wanted. Thus there is no system-inherent self-interest or motivation to intervene and help the shamed—bullied, lynched—person. Therefore there is no system immanent way for empowerment or shame becoming a health resource.

Is this form of individualistic versus community-oriented society even the origin of destructive shaming, which then is carried on intergenerationally, with the described consequences?

A way out is building real-life meaningful connections, based on shared life (experiences), on relations, family, ancestors, culture-values etc. The core of this is the family unit, which needs to be re-established. We need to first heal own personal shame and then focus on re-establishing parental leadership (as the core group) with structures and meaningful values in family.

Generally speaking, shame is not “all bad” and destructive, as past research often stated (Tarnopolsky 2004, cited in Zembylas 2008). It is neither “good nor bad, but ambivalent” (Zembylas 2008, 277) and dualistic: like a knife, which can be used for survival (harvesting and preparing food) or killing (death). However, as the still



common hiding, denial or missing acknowledgement of this subject might suggest (e.g. Zembylas 2008), in reality, we are all “stung” by it somewhere or sometime and “cultural, political and educational uses of shame” (Zembylas 2008, 263) are present in all realms of life. In this sense “Helen Block Lewis [...] believed, that shame overlooked in treatment (“by-passed shame”) was a major cause of failure in psychotherapy.” (Morrison 1996).

Thus shame is a normal part of everyone’s life. This acknowledgment can be a salutogenic reminder of our connectedness through shame. Shame is an emotional feeling and expression of a social being, who wants to be part of a group, wants to be acknowledged and contribute. Its foundation is the asking for community, for reconnection (Nathanson 2008). “[...] Shame can also be productive [within the politics of intercultural education] – in so far as it adds something to social and cultural encounters providing new understandings of how different cultural groups inhabit society.” (Zembylas 2008, 265).

Important steps for shame being transformed into empowerment and leading to more health are: acknowledging one’s own shame, becoming aware of the reasons, why shame occurred and reconnecting to self, to other human beings/community, to the divine/supernatural, ancestors, culture and the world (nature). Thus the sense of coherence (Antonovsky 1985) can be rebuilt in form of “responsive, affirming relationships” (Morrison 1996, 113).

Only with the proper resources and support, are we able to rise above shame, and see this friction of shaming as an overcoming of an obstacle, that may give meaning to our live. The (made) available resources (Salutogenesis) then could act as a lubricant to reduce the friction.

Within the context of a positive or “constructive politics of shame in intercultural education” within a multicultural society as Canada, Zembylas suggests teachers leading their students to an awareness and openness to the ambivalence of shame, including vital examinations of past occurrences which can then lead to “a deeper understanding of otherness, identity and past historical trauma.” (Zembylas 2008, 271). Also on the political level, we need to become conscious about the ambivalence of shaming and always scrutinize the context of its use. For shaming to work as a salutogenic behavioral regulative, we need built-in reconnective structures in present-day society. The restorative justice approach in Saskatchewan (Handel 2007) is a positive example, where lessons can be learned hopefully for society as a whole. Although it is not needed for survival anymore, the possible and actively supported reconnection after shaming should be a social human right.

The mainstream North American society with rising problems of their youth, expresses the need for healthy shame in form of reconnection of the young to our elders, but also their indispensably required dedication: (empowered) parents, elders with wisdom, traditions, needing to be revived (Juuls 2016; Neufeld and Maté 2013). These values of the elders need to be the basis for the judgement of the young and their behaviour: what is shameful and needs to be corrected, so it can grow possibly to honor and pride.

To return to my initial quotation “Respect for the Old”, the essential aspect in all of this are the older, more experienced and wise, their knowledge, culture,



traditions, their ancestral connection and their needed leadership. Their influence has been destroyed and undermined in the past and in the present. Bô Yin Râ expressed in his poem the symbolism of letting youth shape itself (with their own chosen values—based on “lustful crazes”, which easily can be activated and raised), which describes the starting collapse of a people.

Jugend schafft Wertes nur im Warten!  
 Jugend ist keimbereiter Garten!  
 Nur bei den Alten reifen die Früchte!  
 Der Jugend verderben sie lüsterne Süchte!  
 Jugend kann niemals sich selbst gestalten,  
*Findet sie Former nicht bei den Alten!*  
*Jegliches Volk wird sich selbst zum Vernichter,*  
*bleiben die Alten nicht seine Richter.*  
 (Bô Yin Râ 1979, 105).

Youth creates value only by waiting!  
 Youth is a garden ready to sprout!  
 Only among the old do the fruits ripen!  
 In youth they are ruined by lustful crazes!  
 Youth can never mould itself,  
 Unless it finds moulders among the old!  
 Every people becomes its own destroyer,  
 If the old no longer are their guides!  
 (engl. Transl. by Posthumus Projects).

If we finally manage to overcome one of the hardest obstacles—toxic shame—we might even feel healthy pride.

## References

- Adelson, N. (2005). The embodiment of inequity: Health disparities in aboriginal Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96 (Suppl. 2: Reducing Health Disparities in Canada), S45–S61.
- Antonovsky, A. (1985). *Health, stress, and coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.
- Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.
- Armstrong, S. (2006). *The shame of our home and native lands*. <http://www.everythingzoomer.com/the-shame-of-our-home-and-native-lands>. Accessed Nov 20, 2015.
- Boring, F. (2012). *Connecting to our ancestral past*. Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books.
- Bô Yin Râ (1979). 2. Aufl. (1. Aufl. 1931). *Über dem Alltag* (pp. 140) Engl. Transl. by Posthumus Projects: The standard-translation, Book 28: *Above the Everyday/Über dem Alltag* (p. 32). Bern: Kober Verlag AG.
- Bradshaw, J. (2005). *Healing the shame that binds you* (revised edition) (pp. 316). Deerfield Beach: Health Communications, Inc.
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 87(1), 43–52. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.3483.

- Buch, B. (2006). *Salutogenesis and shamanism*. Master Thesis University of Flensburg, Department of Health Psychology and Health Education.
- Buch, B. (2015). "All my relations und Gesundheit"—nordamerikanische Perspektiven. In C-H. & S. Hausner (Eds.), *Salutogene Aufstellungen. Beiträge zur Gesundheitsförderung in der systematischen Arbeit* (pp. 95–111). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & CoKg.
- Bullying Statistics. (2016). *Anti-bullying help, facts, and more*. <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/bullying-statistics.html>. Accessed Feb 17, 2016.
- Canadian Encyclopedia: Government apology to former Students of Indian Residential schools (2008). Accessed 1 Jan 2016
- Cavanaugh, M. A. (2011). *Cyberbullying can have deadly consequences*. <http://aspeneducation.crchealth.com/article-cyberbullying-consequences/>. Accessed Feb, 2016.
- Deloria, V. J. (2006). *The world we used to live in. Remembering the powers of the medicine men*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing.
- Giffney, N. (2007). After shame. Series editors preface. In S. R. Munt (Ed.), *Queer attachments: The cultural politics of shame*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Giovacchini, A. M. (1999). *The negative influence of gangster rap and what can be done about It. Poverty & prejudice: Media and race. EDGE ethics of development in a global environment*. [https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty\\_prejudice/mediarace/negative.htm](https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty_prejudice/mediarace/negative.htm). Jan 31, 2016.
- Glen Greene, Personal communication, April, 2015.
- Handel, M. B. (2007). Aboriginal justice. University of Regina and Canadian Plains Research Center. [http://esask.uregina.ca/aboriginal\\_justice.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/aboriginal_justice.html). Accessed Nov 20, 2016.
- Heimannsberg, B., & Schmidt, C. (Eds.). (1993). *The collective silence: German identity and the legacy of shame*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hunter, L. M., Logan, J., Goulet, J., & Barton, S. (2006). Aboriginal healing: Regaining balance and culture. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 17(1), 13–22.
- Juuls, J. (2016). *Leitwölfe sein. Liebevoller Führung in der Familie*. Landsberg: Beltz-Verlag.
- Kahá:wi J., & Gill, K. J. (2002). Substance abuse among urban aboriginals. Association with a history of physical/sexual abuse. *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse* 1(2).
- Kroeber, A. L. (1992). Introduction. In E. C. Parsons (Ed), *North American Indian life. Customs and traditions of 23 tribes*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Leverenz, D. (2012). *Honor bound*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Louth, S. (2012). *Overcoming the "shame" factor: Empowering indigenous people to share and celebrate their culture*. [www.aumii.com/proceedings\\_Phuket\\_2012/Louth.pdf](http://www.aumii.com/proceedings_Phuket_2012/Louth.pdf). Accessed Dec 30, 2015.
- Mayer, C., & Hausner, S. (2015). *Salutogene Aufstellungen*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- McCormick, R. (2007). Aboriginal traditions in the treatment of substance abuse. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 2000(34), 25.
- McKegney, S. (2013). "Pain, pleasure, shame. Shame": Masculine embodiment, kinship, and indigenous reterritorialization. *Canadian Literature* (216), 12–33.
- Morrison, A. P. (1996). *The culture of shame*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Munt, S. R. (2007). *Queer attachments: The cultural politics of shame*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Nathanson, D. L. (2008). Foreword. In S. R. Munt (Ed.), *Queer attachments: The cultural politics of shame*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Neufeld, G., & Maté, G. (2013). *Hold on to your kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Parsons, E. (1992). *North American Indian life*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Rotter, D. (2013). *Die Tekos-Schule: 11 Jahre Schule in einem Jahr*. <https://www.sein.de/die-tekos-schule-11-jahre-schule-in-einem-jahr/>. Accessed Feb 2, 2016.
- Salmon, A. (2005). Beyond guilt, shame, and blame to compassion, respect and empowerment: young aboriginal mothers and the first nations and inuit fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects initiative. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0055618>.
- Sax, L. (2015). *The collapse of parenting: How we hurt our kids when we treat them like grown ups*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0055618>

- Scheff, T. (1994). *Bloody revenge: Emotions, nationalism and war*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Scheff, T. J., & Retzinger, S. M. (1991). *Emotions and violence: Shame and rage in destructive conflicts*. D.C. Heath: Lexington.
- Schiff, J. W., & Pelech, W. (2008). The Sweat Lodge Ceremony for spiritual healing. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*, 26(4).
- Shchetinin, M. P. (1989). On the pathway to man. Contemporary pedagogy. In S. Amonashvili et al. (Eds.), *Krasnodar: Knizhnoe izdatel'stvo* (pp. 381–401). (Translated by John Woodsworth).
- Spitzer, M. (2012). *Digitale Demenz. Wie wir unsere Kinder um den Verstand bringen*. München: Droemer Verlag.
- Stewart, H. (1993). *Looking at totem poles*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Strickland, R. (1997). Wolf warriors and turtle kings: Native American law before the blue coats. *Washington Law Review Association*, 72, 1043.
- Tarnopolsky, C. (2004). Prudes, perverts, and tyrants: Plato and the contemporary politics of shame. *Political Theory*, 32, 468–494.
- Taylor, G. (1985) *Pride, shame and guilt: Emotions of self-assessment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Waldram, J., Young, T., & Herring, A. (2006). *Aboriginal health in Canada: Historical, cultural, and epidemiological perspectives*. (Second edition) Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.
- Wikipedia 1: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_controversial\\_video\\_games](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_controversial_video_games). Accessed Feb 01, 2016.
- Williams, A. E. & Bracha, A. S. (2004). Does fight or flight need updating? *Letters Psychosomatics*, (45:5), p. 448.
- Woolford, A., Benvenuto, J., & Hinton, A. (2014). *Colonial genocide in indigenous North America*. (pp. 360). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Zembylas, M. (2008). The politics of shame in intercultural education. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 3(3), 263–280.

# Chapter 8

## Indigenous Australians: Shame and Respect

Sharon Louth

**Abstract** This chapter examines the shame factor within Australian society and specifically draws on perspectives from the cultural context of Australian Indigenous people. Initially shame and respect will be examined in terms of valuing oneself and the impact of shame and respect on the constructs on oneself, those being self-confidence, self-concept and self-efficacy. These terms will be explored by understanding how these constructs of self are valued and measured within Australian society and how they are linked to respect. Discussion will then focus on how these values and measures are applied within Australian society and the effect these measures may have on an individual's perceptions of self. Strategies which can be employed to increase self-confidence, self-concept and self-efficacy will be examined, along with the notion of employing these strategies to enhance group confidence, group identity and group efficacy, drawing on examples from projects which have focused on Australian Indigenous people. It is hypothesized that if these strategies can be applied to other cultural communities within Australia then they may be translatable to assist other communities to successfully value culture, reduce shame and develop respect across cultural contexts.

### 8.1 Introduction

Oh miss, that's shame for me miss, when you talk about my people, my dancing, my drawings, my music, that's shame, I don't want them to make fun of me, because I am part of it, that's me. (Louth 2012)

Experiences of shame occur as a wound to one's self-esteem, a painful feeling of a sense of degradation excited by the consciousness of having done something unworthy of one's previous idea of one's own excellence (Lynd 2013). It has been

---

S. Louth (✉)

School of Education, Fraser Coast Campus, University of the Sunshine Coast,  
P.O. Box 1149, Hervey Bay, QLD 4655, Australia  
e-mail: slouth@usc.edu.au

suggested that shame develops when one is unprepared and feel they are exposed, looked at, from all around (Erikson 1994). The above quote from Beck, a young Australian Indigenous woman, embodies these definitions of shame by clearly articulating how her own sense of self would be wounded and how she would feel disgraced in the eyes of others. Beck's words conveyed her sense of exposure and perceived inferiority to others since discussing Australian Indigenous culture heightened her sense of vulnerability and humiliation. The *shame* Beck referred to vocalised the effects of the colonisation of Australia on its Indigenous peoples and their sense of self, individually and collectively.

The post-invasion history of Australia's Indigenous peoples is chequered with racial discrimination, oppression and marginalisation which have occurred across several generations. The long-term negative impact of this on Australia's Indigenous people can be seen in the areas of health and education (Andersen and Walter 2010). Poor health impedes attendance at school, which in turn inhibits learning and educational achievement (Harrison 2011). These factors perpetuate the cycle of poverty and disadvantage within the Indigenous population. As self-esteem is affected by the social context and social comparisons available (Bandura 1977b), it should come as no surprise to understand how both individual and collective sense of self within Australia's Indigenous peoples is low.

A sense of *self* (or identity, character) refers to the awareness of one's own place in the social world. This self is closely connected with what others think of them (Holstein and Gubrium 2000), or how they are perceived by others. Learning to value oneself is a critical tool in enhancing self-esteem and raising one's aspirations for the future (Bandura 1977a). One develops a sense of self through various experiences, personal or professional in nature or in an academic or social context. Children and adolescents develop their sense of self-based on a range of perceptions they amass from others and their experiences. When the terms "race" and "culture" are used as a form of social comparison, it can typically marginalize some people, whilst providing others with power and control (McMaster and Austin 2005). When reviewing ways to value one's self and one's group and create a positive vision for the future, it is essential to consider restorative practices to reduce the negative effects of shame. One such practice is to generate respect for culture through providing opportunities to increase knowledge, understanding and experience of culture. Respect has been identified as admiration felt or shown for someone or something who you believe has good ideas or good qualities (Le Messurier 2010). The importance of developing respect within disadvantaged populations was similarly highlighted through Paulo Friere's work with teachers in Brazil. He stressed the need for both humility, to listen to all that come to us regardless of their circumstance; and tolerance to co-exist with the different (Friere 1998).

When considering how to generate a positive sense of individual and collective *self* for Australia's Indigenous people, it is pertinent to consider the context of the Australian population. Forty percent of Australia's Indigenous population are aged below 15 years, compared with 20% of the non-Indigenous population, with young

Indigenous people making up around 5% of the school aged population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). Two thirds of Indigenous children live in rural or remote locations where they are isolated from educational services. In socio-economic terms, marginalisation, poverty, poor health and other disadvantages cumulate to restrict access to and participation in education (Andersen and Walter 2010). The reduced levels of education increases the divide between the dominant educational cultures, with its demand for respect, which is embedded in Australian society, with Indigenous culture which attracts little cultural capital.

This chapter explores shame through the constructs of self, culture and identity as it relates to Australian Indigenous people, in terms of valuing one's self and valuing one's people. Examples from projects within a regional community in Queensland, Australia, conducted by and with local Indigenous people, will be drawn on to provide some insight into the notions of shame and respect within the context of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

## 8.2 Constructs of Self

### 8.2.1 *Definitions Relating to Constructs of Self-identity*

Who we are, what makes us unique and who we believe ourselves to be lies at the core of our view of *self*. Our perceptions of self are multi-dimensional and are affected by our interactions with people and our environment. Often words like self-confidence, self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy are used as inter-related terms or synonyms to describe our understandings of self. These words demonstrate the different dimensions of self and as such will be defined to provide clarity for further discussion.

Self-confidence relates to how assured one feels about particular abilities, so this can change depending on the ability under examination, and the group in front of whom the ability is to be demonstrated (McClelland et al. 1953), in other words it is task and audience specific. Like self-confidence, self-efficacy is also task or skill specific, however it is an individual's sense of being able to manage a task effectively and successfully in a particular domain. Neither self-confidence nor self-efficacy is used as holistic terms here, but skill and task specific, that is, it can change in different contexts.

Self-concept is an individual's collection of information, ideas, attitudes and beliefs they have about themselves, their perception of the traits they have as a human being, while self-esteem is one's evaluation of one's worth as a person and is affected by the social context and social comparisons an individual makes. All of these terms influence a person's self-worth, that is, the value an individual places on themselves in terms of their perceptions and attitudes towards themselves, and how they see themselves and feel about themselves as a result. These perceptions and attitudes of self ultimately affect an individual's health and well-being. When this

occurs negatively within a cultural community, for example Indigenous Australians, then there can be generational impacts on the health and well-being of such a cultural community.

### ***8.2.2 Impact of Shame and Respect on Self-identity of Indigenous Australians***

How someone feels about their self and how they value their self is a cyclical relationship which can affect how a person responds within particular contexts. Such is the relationship between self-confidence and self-esteem and how these combine to affect a person's motivation to improve their performance (Woods 2001). Seminal work around achievement and motivation by McClelland et al. (1953) gave rise to the McClelland-Atkinson Model of Achievement Motivation which is based on two motives: one being to avoid failure and the other, to achieve success. This theory can be applied to educational settings, where observing the behaviours of children may give an indication as to the underlying motives which drive their actions and behaviours.

For many Indigenous Australians, their behaviour within educational settings is often driven by the motivation to avoid failure rather than seek success (Harrison 2011). A common example of avoidance behaviour is non-participation, as this enables one to dodge embarrassment caused by making a mistake in front of a group of people, or "avoiding shame". Avoiding shame greatly influences self-confidence and self-esteem, as it "dominates how many Aboriginal children think, talk and behave in the classroom" (Harrison 2011, 54).

Research has shown that Indigenous children usually focus on "who they have to talk to, what they are expected to talk about, who is watching and what might cause them embarrassment if they say the wrong thing". They often focus on the people around them and are very reluctant to "have a go" and make mistakes (Harrison 2011). Some research suggests this is a result of stories that have been passed down through the generations about what has happened in the past. These stories tell of Aboriginal children being removed from their families to be trained as domestic servants and labourers and how, not very long ago, Aboriginal people had to apply to marry, could not own property or access their bank account without permission from the government, lived on reserves and had to apply for permission to leave, and were forbidden to speak their own language (Phillips and Lampert 2005). Government policies continue to impose laws and regulations without widespread negotiation with the communities at which they are directed and consequently many Aboriginal children know that their families have historically been subject to white authority for most of their lives. Fear of failure greatly influences a person's willingness to take risks, while education relies on children having a go and taking a risk to try to get something right. When considering fear of failure and avoidance of shame, along with generational marginalisation, it is understandable that Indigenous children would rather watch than rush into a novel situation.

For Australian Indigenous people, the avoidance of shame is often exhibited in their behaviour (Hughes et al. 2004). For example, they may be hesitant to have a go at something in public unless they know they have got it right. They may appear unenthusiastic to hide their fear and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, how they behave in an educational context is very much dependent on who is looking and listening to them (Harrison 2011). Contemporary education theories rely on the learner taking risks and evaluating the outcomes (McGee and Fraser 2011). Indigenous people will approach these gradually and can often get left behind as a result. The lower educational achievement of Indigenous children then perpetuates the cycle of decline in their educational attainment.

The “Birrbam Gambay: Learning Together” project (Louth 2012) demonstrated the effects of shame on young Indigenous people and their sense of self. Initially Indigenous children were hesitant to join in activities, especially dance, as they thought of it as “shameful”. These students stood at the back of the small activity groups, which consisted of approximately 30 children, with their heads down and shoulders slumped forward. They were reluctant to participate in the dance activities and possessed little self-confidence relating to their Indigenous heritage. At the end of the festival, the local Indigenous dance group concluded events with more dancing and asked for volunteers to dance with them. All Indigenous children came forward to join them and dance in front of over 350 people, along with some non-Indigenous children. Their body language communicated confidence and pride in their culture. For example, their heads were held high, shoulders were back and there were smiles on their faces. This change in body language is evidence of an increase in a sense of self-confidence in their abilities. When interviewed at the conclusion of the day, Indigenous children all commented on how it was a “deadly day” and they were “proud to be part of it”. All children asked if the event would be conducted again next year and offered to be involved again in the running of the event.

The marked differences in attitudes and demeanour these Indigenous children demonstrated during the course can be ascribed to the positive experiences they received from others when they shared their culture. It can be said that by participating in the “Birrbam Gambay: Learning Together program”, the Indigenous children exhibited greater self-confidence and higher levels of self-esteem which had a positive effect on their sense of self.

The increased sense of value these Indigenous children experienced is further evidenced by their willingness to participate in facilitating future events. The children had experienced so much success through participating in the program that they were keen to play a more active role in future programs. Their behaviour was no longer driven by the motive to avoid failure, avoiding shame, but by the motive to achieve success and be part of future events. Achievement motivation theories (McClelland et al. 1953; Woods 2001) have found low achievers are driven by avoidance motives, whilst high achievers are driven by success motives. Hence it would seem programs that increase self-confidence, self-esteem and promote a



positive sense of self can change a person's motives to participate, thereby greatly influencing their ability to become a high achiever for future success and establish positive perceptions of self.

## **8.3 Constructs of Group**

### ***8.3.1 Definition Relating to Constructs of Group Identity***

When studying the interactions and relationships that exist within groups, psychologists consider the key features of groups are: feelings of interpersonal attraction between members; a collective identity in which they view themselves as a unit, distinct from other groups; and a sense of shared purpose (Woods 2001).

Humans seem to have a natural tendency to categorise themselves and others into groups by aligning with individuals they feel possess similar key features to their own (Tajfel 1978, 2010). One's understanding of *self* is deepened through their relationship with others and their environment. The systems of knowledge, beliefs, values and behaviour shared by a group of people is termed culture and plays a critical role in determining how we view ourselves, how we relate to others, and what we value. Ethnicity is a form of group membership based on race, nationality or religious background, leading to a cultural awareness within that group. Culture is something which defines all people and shapes how they think, behave and view the world. These ways of knowing, doing and speaking become highly valued by the group and are passed on to all group members and taught to younger or newer generations. This is the process of socialisation (Hyde et al. 2014), where cultural beliefs, knowledge, values and behaviour among members of a group are passed on.

### ***8.3.2 Impact of Shame and Respect on Group Identity of Indigenous Australians***

When groups are examined across cultural contexts, unique perspectives on self and identity arise, where views of *self* differ across cultures (Purdie et al. 2000; Wang 2004). How these differences relate to Australian society and their impact on an individual's concept of self, can best be explained by categorising cultures into "individualistic" and "collectivistic" cultures (Krause et al. 2010).

Individualistic cultures focus on the individual self, which is autonomous and unique, where individuals pursue their own goals. Western societies, such as Australia, is a typical example of an individualistic society. In contrast to individualistic societies, collectivist cultures are more group centred, viewing individuals in terms of their relationships with others in a cohesive community

group. Indigenous Australian culture is an example of a collectivist culture, where research found young Indigenous Australians base their identity on factors such as their kinship group, sense of communal history, language, traditional practices and place (Purdie et al. 2000). Other studies involving Indigenous Australian youth (Louth 2012; Shweder and Haidt 2000) found Indigenous children defined themselves in terms of roles, responsibilities and relationships within their community, to the extent where focusing on their own personal goals lead to embarrassment or *shame*. These studies demonstrate the collectivist nature of Indigenous Australian culture which is so contrary to the individualistic culture of the dominant Australian society.

The Australian education system is one of the primary socialisation agents within Australian society and operates within a culture of individualism, where independent learning and competing against peers are deeply ingrained ways of learning and succeeding academically in schools. Several researchers noted (Harrison 2011; McInerney 2003) that Australian Indigenous children rarely seize the initiative or maximise their own chances of success, particularly not at the expense of others in a very competitive and highly disciplined education system. In fact Hughes et al. (2004) support the proposition that many Australian Indigenous children view independent learning as manipulative and selfish and are reluctant to engage in problem solving activities. Further to this, activities that encourage children to judge and be critical of others are often avoided by Indigenous children as this would be seen to be disrespectful and would damage their relationship with those people.

Research by Hughes et al. (2004) found that Indigenous Australian children work better in groups because they learn from each other and the better children within the group will support the less able ones. Cahill (1999) found that Indigenous Australian children are more likely to take risks when they are working within a group because there is perceived safety in numbers and the group engenders confidence to take risks. These factors were found to be present in several projects conducted by Louth (2011, 2012, 2013) where children avoided shame and embarrassment by working within small groups, across multiple ages and abilities, with others who shared their culture. Certainly the implications of shame and embarrassment for Indigenous peoples on their participation and learning, need to be considered so that the cycle of shame and failure is understood and can be broken for future generations.

## 8.4 Strategies to Increase Respect and Reduce Shame

Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for Australian Indigenous employment in our society (Hyde et al. 2014, p. 74)

Poverty, poor living conditions and health problems for many Indigenous children mean they are severely disadvantaged in terms of Australia's education

system and are predisposed to fail. Their fear of failure results in behaviour which avoids shame, and in education, this means non-attendance, lateness and unwillingness to participate in classroom activities. These behaviours set the scene for further failure for Indigenous children and confines them to the cycle of economic and social disadvantage and inequality within Australian society. For these reasons and those exemplified in the above quote, strategies to overcome shame and increase respect discussed in this section, will focus on building a positive sense of self, both individually and collectively, specifically relating to Australian Indigenous peoples.

It is crucial to nurture respect for Indigenous people and their culture, in order to generate positive self-esteem (Louth 2012). Several studies have drawn positive connections between self-identity for Indigenous children and improving educational outcomes (McRae 2002; Purdie et al. 2000). It is essential then to develop community-wide respect for Indigenous culture so that it can create opportunities to enhance self-esteem within the Indigenous community. This is supported by Garrett and Wrench (2010) in their study on inclusion where they found affirmations of respect for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people fostered a positive sense of self-efficacy (Garrett and Wrench 2010).

One strategy used by Louth (2012) was to encourage local Indigenous people to share and celebrate their culture with local educators to increase understanding of local Indigenous culture. The question of how to share Indigenous knowledge sensitively and respectfully within local communities needed to be addressed carefully and thoughtfully, in order to avoid shame and increase respect for the local Indigenous people. Two main factors were considered to be crucial in celebrating Indigenous culture: respect for culture and sharing from within the Indigenous community. Sharing and celebrating Indigenous culture would only be possible if the local Indigenous community was willing to communicate their knowledge and skills to others. This is also only possible if respect for Indigenous people is actively nurtured and cultivated by the power brokers in educational circles. No longer can educators demand respect, for this is something that must be earned, especially within the Indigenous community. The second factor is “within community” where any celebration or sharing of culture must come from within the community, not thrust on the community by an external source intent on achieving their own performance indicators. Sharing and showcasing Indigenous culture from sources outside the local community can lead to further frustration and resentment by all parties. For a project to come from within the community, that community needs to develop a sense of ownership, which brings with it commitment by the whole community to the program objectives (Garrett and Wrench 2010).

The Birrbam burunga gambay project (Louth 2013) successfully cultivated respectful relationships between the local education community and Indigenous community and achieved the following outcomes:

- provided a platform for local Indigenous elders to share their knowledge and expertise;
- celebrated the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the region;
- hosted a festival which brought all participating schools together and replaced the many smaller disparate events run by individual schools;
- fostered networks between local educators with local Indigenous people and resources to create further opportunities to share and celebrate Indigenous culture;
- built trust between the Indigenous community and the local education providers; and
- raised Indigenous children' motivation to complete their high school studies and aspire to tertiary education.

These outcomes were achieved through the creation of respectful dialogue, where respect was generated through many meetings and discussions with facilitation teams to ensure attitudes to the project were consistent with the overall aim of the project—"Birrbam burunga gambay"—to learn and play together. Respect for all facilitation team members was further enhanced with a grant which enabled payment for their services. This demonstrated a respect for Indigenous knowledge by attaching western values associated with respect, those being time and money, to the facilitators for their expertise.

The impetus for the project grew from listening to the needs of disparate groups within the community and synthesizing ideas and activities that addressed these needs. The project established sound links within the community by enhancing communication and developing relationships built on trust and respect between the University, schools within the surrounding community and local Indigenous community groups. This supports the findings of McRae et al. (2000) who found that positive partnerships were a crucial element in establishing a sense of pride and connectedness within communities. The "Birrbam burunga gambay" project successfully planned and delivered activities in conjunction with Indigenous facilitators. Their contributions were recognised by incorporating specialist Indigenous tutors to deliver activities to children at the festival. This established ownership, pride and a sense of belonging to the community, which gave rise to a sense of connectedness to the university.

To recap: The sense of connectedness the project generated within the community can be attributed to key principles on which Birrbam burunga gambay was organised. Primarily, that it was developed from an identified need from within the target group and members of this group were actively involved in the planning and delivery of the event. Secondly, that value was given to Indigenous knowledges by formally recognising the specialist skills and knowledges that people within the community possess. In taking this approach, a level playing field is developed, where respect and value is cultivated and empowers Indigenous people to share and

celebrate their culture. These circles to success should underpin any event whose outcomes involve establishing credible pathways to reducing the negative effects of shame for Australian Indigenous people.

The strategies used by Louth (2013) reflected those used by Thompson (2010) that were recommended by Indigenous elders, social-epidemiologists, psychiatrists and sociologists to assist in developing greater knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture within the community. These strategies are outlined as follows: create opportunities to strengthen connections with country; establish cultural activities; legitimise traditional systems; recognise the need for connectedness, hope, efficacy, safety, calm, dignity, responsibility, truth, empathetic listening and working together (Thompson 2010). Earlier studies have identified similar successful strategies to share Indigenous culture in schools (Garnett et al. 2009; Kreig 2009; Spencer 2000). Hyde et al. (2010, 2014) developed these ideas further in relation to building learning environments that are responsive to the unique requirements of Australian Indigenous people. His findings echo similar messages of consultation, customisation, localisation and recognition as being critical factors in establishing successful learning experiences for Indigenous children.

Further strategies to increase knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture through educational institutions have been proposed by Harrison (2011) which include involving parents and the wider community in the decision making processes within these institutions.

- Form a school committee for Indigenous parents that is managed and run by the parents.
- Talk with all parents about the local Indigenous Education Consultative Group.
- Establish a drop in centre for parents.
- Organise cultural excursions for all members of the school community.
- Run professional development sessions for parents.
- Hold a dinner off site to show parents what their children are learning at school.
- Arrange for parents to purchase Indigenous resources on behalf of the school.
- Fund National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) projects.
- Invite Indigenous guest speakers to the school.

Strategies to enhance educational outcomes for Indigenous children which acknowledge, recognise and support Indigenous culture inevitably help to build skills and expertise. When these experiences are enjoyable children experience positive emotions that motivate them to participate, to pursue goals and increase their confidence in their ability to succeed. When children have enjoyable experiences, their attitudes and perceptions relating to their participation and abilities are constructive, so they are more likely to experience positive influences on their self-efficacy.

## 8.5 Future Directions for Australian Indigenous Culture and Identity

The strategies provided above may offer a blueprint on which to work towards sharing and celebrating Australian Indigenous culture. Federal, State and Regional governments have moved legislatively to close the gap and overcome Indigenous disadvantage in Education and Health in Australia. Many challenges exist for government sectors, particularly education, since directives are put in place with limited strategies or resources provided to reduce shame and increase respect for Indigenous people within Australian society.

The importance of showcasing Indigenous perspectives to the wider community is evident through several projects referred to earlier (Garrett and Wrench 2010; Louth 2012, 2013), in that these programs foster a deeper understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Such programs stimulate a sense of pride for Indigenous people and their knowledges, whilst developing a sense of connectedness with schools and universities. Overcoming the shame factor empowers Indigenous people to share and celebrate their culture with the wider community.

Educators at the grass roots level who can have a direct impact on reducing shame and increasing respect for Indigenous children within local communities by considering a number of issues:

- How can districts heighten awareness of Indigenous culture and knowledge at local levels to support a more culturally aware community?
- How can respect for Indigenous culture and knowledge be generated within the whole community?
- How can communication and collaboration be nurtured within the community?
- How community-based activities can be structured as building blocks to give power back to Australia's Indigenous people?
- Will this enable Australia's Indigenous people to improve their education and health prospects?
- What type of community project can promote respect, generate connectedness and develop pride and a strong sense of self within the local Indigenous community?
- How can this be showcased to the wider population whilst retaining respect for Indigenous people and their culture?
- If self-esteem is crucial to motivation and performance, then recognising and celebrating Australian Indigenous culture and overcoming the "shame" factor is imperative to improving educational outcomes.

Overcoming the "shame" factor to empower Indigenous people to share and celebrate their culture relies heavily on cultivating a two-way respect between Indigenous people and the education community. A crucial factor in overcoming the shame factor is the need to stimulate such events to come from within local communities. This creates a sense of ownership by local Indigenous people and

enhances their commitment to the project. Engaging local Indigenous communities through consultation helps to establish a collective identity and creates common vested interests within the Indigenous and Education communities to sharing and celebrating their unique Indigenous culture. Addressing the needs of local education communities ensures schools are prepared to commit time and resources to support Indigenous children, their families and communities.

So let us return then to the constructs of self, culture and identity as it relates to Australian Indigenous people. The idea of bringing shame on oneself for Australian Indigenous people is directly linked to bringing shame on one's Indigenous culture and heritage. Relationships with others and the environment are crucial factors in the formation of self, culture and identity for Australia's Indigenous people. Their experiences of dominant Australian culture and ideology have historically been negative, as their interventions were conducted from a deficit model. For generations now, Indigenous Australians have been individually and collectively exposed to disrespect and humiliation, causing a great deal of damage to their confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem. The long-term effect of being marginalised and shamed has had a negative impact on how Indigenous Australian's value themselves, their people and their culture. This is why the negative impact on the collective identity of Australian Indigenous peoples should be a major concern within Australian society. As only when the threat of disrespect and humiliation is fully eliminated can shame be overthrown and pride and respect take its place within Indigenous Australians' individual and collective sense of self.

## References

- Andersen, C., & Walter, M. (2010). Indigenous perspectives and cultural identity. In M. Hyde, L. Carpenter, & R. Conway (Eds.), *Diversity and inclusion in Australian schools*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011). *Census of Population and Housing*. Canberra.
- Bandura, A. (1977a). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191–215.
- Bandura, A. (1977b). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Cahill, R. (1999). *Solid English*. Perth, WA: Education Department of Western Australia.
- Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: WW Norton & Company.
- Friere, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers: letters to those who dare teach*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview press.
- Garnett, S. T., Sithole, B., Whitehead, P. J., Burgess, C. P., Johnston, F. H., & Lea, T. (2009). Healthy country, healthy people: Policy implications of links between indigenous human health and environmental condition in tropical Australia. *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 68, 53–66.
- Garrett, R., & Wrench, A. (2010). *They should talk to us inclusivity and physical education. draft*. Adelaide: University of South Australia.
- Harrison, N. (2011). *Teaching and learning in aboriginal education* (2nd ed.). Sydney, NSW: Oxford University Press.

- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2000). *The self we live by: Narrative identity in a postmodern world*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hughes, P., Moore, A. J., & Williams, M. (2004). *Aboriginal ways of learning*. Adelaide, SA: Paul Hughes.
- Hyde, M., Carpenter, L., & Conway, R. (Eds.). (2010). *Diversity and inclusion in Australian schools*. Sydney, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Hyde, M., Carpenter, L., & Conway, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Diversity, inclusion and engagement* (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.
- Krause, K., Bochner, S., Duchesne, S., & McMaugh, A. (2010). *Educational psychology for learning and teaching* (3rd ed.). South Melbourne, VIC: Cengage Learning.
- Kreig, A. (2009). The experience of collective trauma in Australian indigenous communities. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 17(1), 28–32.
- Le Messurier, M. (2010). *Teaching tough kids*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Louth, S. (2011). *Promoting healthy communities through an active curriculum*. Paper presented at the Australian Council for Health and Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) International Conference Adelaide, South Australia.
- Louth, S. (2012). *Overcoming the ‘shame’ factor: Empowering indigenous people to share and celebrate their culture*. Paper presented at the International Conference of the Australian Multicultural Interaction Institute (AMII), Phuket, Thailand.
- Louth, S. (2013). *Mentoring indigenous secondary school students to raise educational aspirations*. Paper presented at the 6th Annual Mentoring Conference, Albuquerque, NM, United States.
- Lynd, H. M. (2013). *On shame and the search for identity* (Vol. 145). Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.
- McClelland, D. C., Atkinson, J., Clark, R., & Lowell, E. (1953). *The achievement motive*. New York: Appleton-Century-Croft.
- McGee, C., & Fraser, D. (Eds.). (2011). *The professional practice of teaching* (4th ed.). South Melbourne, Vic: Cengage Learning.
- McInerney, D. (2003). *Motivational goals, self-concept and sense of self—What predicts achievement? Similarities and differences between Aboriginal and Anglo Australians in high school settings*. Paper presented at the AARE Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.
- McMaster, J., & Austin, J. (2005). Race: A powerful axis of identity. In J. Austin (Ed.), *Culture and identity*. Pearson: Frenchs Forest, NSW.
- McRae, D. (2002). *What works. Improving outcomes for Indigenous students*. Canberra: Department of Education Science and Training.
- McRae, D., Ainsworth, G., Cumming, J., Hughes, P., Mackay, T., Price, K., et al. (2000). *What works? Explorations in improving outcomes for indigenous students*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association & National Curriculum Services.
- Phillips, J., & Lampert, J. (2005). *Introductory aboriginal studies in education: The importance of knowing Frenchs Forest*. NSW: Pearson Education Australia.
- Purdie, N., Tripcony, P., Boulton-Lewis, G., Gunstone, A., & Fanshawe, J. (2000). *Positive self-identity for indigenous students and its relationship to school outcomes*. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs.
- Shweder, R. A., & Haidt, J. (2000). The cultural psychology of the emotions: Ancient and new. In M. Lewis & J. Haviland (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (2nd ed., pp. 397–414). New York: Guilford.
- Spencer, D. J. (2000). Anomie and demoralization in transitional cultures: The Australian aboriginal model. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 37(1), 5–10.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. London: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H. (2010). *Social identity and intergroup relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- Thompson, S. (2010). *Aboriginal perspectives on physical activity in remote communities: Meanings and ways forward*. Casuarina, NT: Menzies School of Health Research.
- Wang, Q. (2004). The emergence of cultural self-constructs: Autobiographical memory and self-description in European American and Chinese children. *Developmental Psychology*, 40 (1), 3.
- Woods, B. (2001). *Psychology in practice: Sport*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

# Chapter 9

## Shame and Resilience: A New Zealand Based Exploration of Resilient Responses to Shame

Samantha Brennan, Neville Robertson and Cate Curtis

**Abstract** Shame can be a powerful and evocative experience. It can contribute to the development of mental illnesses, such as depressive, anxiety, and eating disorders. Shame can also contribute to social problems, such as violent crime. However, shame is experienced by almost everyone, and not everyone experiences such long-lasting negative effects. This chapter explores responses to shame, with an emphasis on resilience. We address the key question of why and how some people are devastated by shame, while others become resilient in the face of shame. Our research was conducted in New Zealand, and the findings represent the experiences of a selection of Pākehā New Zealanders.

### 9.1 Introduction

Shame can be a powerful and evocative experience. It is seldom discussed openly, and when it is spoken about, conversations may become emotional very quickly. To introduce this chapter, we have chosen a few particularly emotive quotes from the interviews that were conducted as part of our research study. Reflecting on shame, participants said:

John: I just think it's so big. I think it's the motivator, I think it's the killer, I think it's the thing that breaks marriages, I think it's the thing that continues to make humanity [suffer] over and over and over again. Blame, shame, point the finger, disconnect, lack of intimacy, lack of vulnerability, have to hide, keep safe.

---

S. Brennan (✉) · N. Robertson · C. Curtis  
School of Psychology, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105,  
Hamilton 3240, New Zealand  
e-mail: samantha@coastpsychology.co.nz

N. Robertson  
e-mail: scorpio@waikato.ac.nz

C. Curtis  
e-mail: ccurtis@waikato.ac.nz

Lucy: [Sigh] Oh, it's just the worst... [Laughter]. The worst feeling you can ever have I think. Emotional distress is hard to process and experience, but shame - I would have to qualify that as the absolute worst emotional experience.

These brief excerpts illustrate the potential depth and darkness of the emotional experience of shame. For many people, shame is a significant motivator, influencing a person's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours. Often unspoken and unexamined, shame can have a profound effect on a person's ability to thrive in life.

Some of our research participants depicted shame and resilience as contradictory constructs. Participants described that it is difficult to recover from an overwhelming experience of shame—but not impossible. Some participants also described positive outcomes from shame experiences. A participant recounted feeling intense and immediate relief when finally choosing to vulnerably confess to a friend a secret that had been plaguing her thoughts for years. Another participant described reuniting with his mother after finally acknowledging the shame of his past violent and disrespectful behaviour. While shame held significant power for these participants, shame's power was diffused by the subsequent positive choices that they made. These participants chose to respond resiliently, rather than reactively, to shame, and the result was emotional relief and restored relationships.

Our study sought to understand both shame and resilience, with a view of integrating these constructs into a comprehensive understanding of shame and resilience. The findings hold numerous practical implications for the positive management of shame experiences.

## 9.2 Previous Research

Shame has historically been an under-recognised trigger of poor psycho-social functioning. However, the proposition that shame is an underlying factor in mental and public health issues is receiving growing attention, as supported by a number of quantitative and qualitative research studies. Recent studies have identified shame as a contributing factor in anxiety disorders (Fergus et al. 2010), post-traumatic stress disorder (Beck et al. 2011), depressive disorders (Gilbert et al. 2010), and eating disorders (Unikel et al. 2012). Shame has been found to negatively correlate with a person's level of physical health, and shame appears in the psychological literature as an important influence in trauma, for both victims and perpetrators (Persons et al. 2010; Sweezy 2011). Shame has significant power to influence negative psychological and social outcomes; hence, shame is certainly a topic that warrants further investigation.

When confronted with the negative effects of mismanaged shame, it is tempting to view shame as an entirely negative construct. Some theorists (e.g. Brown 2006) have proposed that shame is bad and that eliminating shame from society would have an entirely positive effect on levels of mental health. Other researchers propose that shame has an adaptive value, and our research supports this opinion. Our

participants described shame as being a powerful, hidden, enduring, and sometimes debilitating experience. However, many participants also described the potential benefits of shame. As Lucy said,

But on the positive side, I think my experiences with shame have motivated me to do a lot of work on myself...

In addition to acting as a motivator for personal growth, our participants described shame as a key ingredient to the development of healthy pride. Healthy pride encompasses a grounded sense of self-respect, dignity, and the ability to take pride in one's achievements. Without an awareness of one's limitations, participants suggested that it would be impossible to acknowledge their personal strengths. Furthermore, our participants described shame as a mechanism that protects a person from social harms. This perspective echoes the positions of a number of shame theorists, including Scheff (2003). As Scheff describes, shame increases our awareness of disruptions to our sense of pride, letting us know that our social bonds are under threat. Underpinning the shame literature is the unwritten assumption that being connected in healthy relationships is essential for healthy, law-abiding functioning. Shame has the potential to provide valuable social feedback, which can help us to maintain social bonds.

### 9.3 Shame in a Pākehā Cultural Context

A powerful quote by Jean-Paul Sartre (cited in Alison 2005, p. 6) illustrates the relational nature of shame:

Yet although certain complex forms derived from shame can appear on the reflective plane, shame is not originally a phenomenon of reflection. ...it is in its primary structure shame before somebody.

Shame is a complex construct and the existing research base is lacking in a clear consensus regarding its nature, definition, and expression. Our research sought to clarify this conceptualisation of shame. However, it is clear that shame is largely social in nature, arising from and interpreted within particular social and cultural contexts. Our research was based in New Zealand and was focussed on investigating shame within a New Zealand social and cultural context. Therefore, it is important to note that our research process and findings have been interwoven with the values, beliefs, and customs of New Zealand culture.

When considering shame in a New Zealand context, it is also crucial to remember that there is no single, universal cultural experience among New Zealanders. New Zealand is a multi-cultural nation, made up of Pākehā, Māori, Pacific Islanders, Asian and several other sub-cultural groups. As it was impossible to effectively cover such a wide variety of cultural experience of an already broad topic, we chose to narrow the focus of the investigation to a particular cultural group, namely Pākehā New Zealanders.

## 9.4 The Key Question: What Are the Resilient Responses to Shame?

Current research suggests that virtually everyone experiences shame; however, for only a small number of people, shame becomes a causal factor for debilitating social and mental health problems (Brown 2010). While shame causes serious psychological and social problems for some people, others experience shame with no lasting negative effects. We sought to understand why and how some people are devastated by shame while others become resilient in the face of shame.

A clear and consistent conclusion of the resilience literature is that 50–70% of people under adverse conditions typically fare well (Jain et al. 2012). Thus, resilience is not just an abstract concept, but the genuine possibility of a good outcome, even for those people who experience significant risk factors. Our research questions included the key questions of: How do Pākehā New Zealanders respond to feelings of shame? And, what are the resilient responses of shame, for Pākehā New Zealanders?

In our qualitative study, we interviewed seventeen Pākehā participants, who shared their lived experiences of shame and resilience. These interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the data was analysed using a thematic analysis.

### 9.4.1 *Understanding Shame*

We will begin by clarifying our general understandings of shame and resilience, which will form the basis of our discussion throughout this chapter. Among the participants we interviewed, shame was described with a number of specific characteristics. Shame is described as being: invariably negative, powerful, intrinsically human, hidden, enduring, often debilitating, physical, social, and sometimes unremarkable. Many of these characteristics align closely to research findings from other Western cultures. Because shame can feel so horrible, many people (researchers included) are sceptical that it can provide any benefit to humanity. The powerful nature of shame is implied in research findings that link shame with significant psychological and social problems (e.g. Beck et al. 2011; Gilbert et al. 2010). This demonstrates a need to further explore the power associated with shame, how it debilitates people, and why it is such an enduring and pervasive experience for some.

We asked questions about the sources of shame—and found enormous variety in situational triggers for shame. Shame was found to be particularly prominent in childhood, where shame resulted from the negative influence of parents, other family members, school teachers and peers. Participants reported that shame, in childhood or adulthood, could be triggered by the actions of others, usually outspoken shame or rejection, or by one's own actions, which might include moral transgressions, failure, or a felt sense of responsibility for disappointing or hurting

other people. The source of shame cannot clearly be identifiable as either internal or external. Rather, internal and external influences merge to create a sensation of shame that exists within a socially and culturally grounded experience. A single, underlying source of shame was identified by all participants which was common to their experiences of shame, that being judgement. Specifically, shame was found to be associated with judgements that targeted one's identity or threatened the security of one's relationships. The judgements that trigger shame may be held internally, communicated by others, or both.

In contrast to the guilt-theorist philosophy that shame is universally unhelpful (e.g. Ahmed 2001; Brown 2006), our findings suggest that shame can sometimes be beneficial. While some researchers (e.g. Deonna and Teroni 2008) describe shame as a construct synonymous with the statement "I am bad" and guilt as a construct synonymous with the statement "I have done a bad thing," we would argue that these links are flawed, as they are not universally accepted expressions. While internalising shame as the negative core belief "I am bad" is certainly unhelpful, this does not mean that shame itself is never useful. Our participants described shame as a painful experience, but one that is experienced in various intensities and can be responded to in different ways. Shame can serve as the felt awareness of a severed or threatened social bond, or as the felt awareness that one's identity is being called into question, perhaps by behaviour that violates the morals of oneself or society. It was found that in attuning to shame, rather than dismissing and avoiding it, we can benefit from increased social awareness, which may ultimately result in strengthened social bonds.

### ***9.4.2 Understanding Resilience***

As the primary focus of our investigation was uncovering the resilient responses to shame, it is important to briefly explore the nature of resilience. Resilience is a complex and flexible construct. Our participants gave descriptions of resilience as bouncing back from adversity. Subtle complexities were revealed when questions were asked about what bouncing back or being resilient looked like. When analysing the data provided by participants, the notions of true and false resilience were identified. Participants contrasted a false veneer of strength, with true resilience, which is deeper, often messier, and more painful to attain.

A key finding related to resilience, is that resilience is birthed from struggle. Previous research corroborates many of the descriptions of resilience provided by participants, as well as factors that affect resilience, including biology, upbringing and positive and supportive relationships (e.g. Bonanno 2004; Masten 2001; Montpetit et al. 2010; Peters et al. 2005; Roisman 2005). However, the necessity to endure struggle in order to build resilience was not explored in any of the previous research that was reviewed. This appears to be a significant gap in the phenomenological understanding of resilience, and this study's findings provide a starting place from which this feature of resilience can be further explored. The

importance of this finding is apparent when specifically relating shame to resilience. Shame was found to be invariably negative; its experience is accepted as being a hardship or struggle. While some researchers argue that its painfulness is unquestionably devastating and destructive, we counter this argument. We propose that while shame is painful, it is useful and sometimes necessary. It is experienced as a struggle, but as our resilience findings suggest, struggles are often opportunities for growth. As a result of struggling with shame, we can ultimately become more self-aware, more socially grounded in stable relationships, and more resilient.

## **9.5 Responses to Shame: Insights from Pākehā New Zealanders**

Shame and resilience are both worthy topics of study in their own rights. However, our aim was to link these two important areas of study—to fulfil the ultimate goal of discovering and exploring resilient responses to shame. When exploring resilience, we found that it is possible to bounce back from adversity, but the process of developing resilience is not an easy one. It involves experience overcoming struggle, along with other factors such as personality, relationships, and mental perspective. Resilience is a dynamic construct that develops in supportive relationships, over time, through struggle. With regard to shame, we found that shame was described as an invariably negative experience, but that the struggle with shame can, in some circumstances, be beneficial. Shame has countless situational triggers, but ultimately, the source of shame is closely linked with judgement. The remainder of the chapter will integrate our understandings of shame and resilience in a discussion that aims to answer the key question: What are the more resilient responses to shame for Pākehā New Zealanders?

These questions were discussed in depth with participants who volunteered for our study. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed six key themes, related to participants' responses to shame. These key themes regarding responses to shame can be separated into two groups.

First, we will describe the “natural” responses to shame. These are the responses that occur frequently and effortlessly in response to feelings of (or anticipation of) acute shame. The term “natural” in this instance is not intended to imply biological determination. Rather, it is intended to reflect the common and inherently human aspect of these particular responses. The natural responses to shame include avoiding shame, escaping from shame, and succumbing to shame.

The second group of responses—the “resilient” responses to shame—are to be vulnerable to shame, be present with shame, and to be willing to change as a result of feeling shame. While it may be tempting to categorically split these responses into good and bad, or right and wrong, the chapter will explore the possible benefits of each response. While the latter group may be more likely to develop resilience in

the long term, there are times when avoiding and escaping from shame can be the most fitting response.

## 9.6 Natural Responses to Shame

The natural responses to shame are to avoid situations that might trigger feelings of shame, to escape from shame when it is felt, and to succumb to shame, often ending in it crippling one's mental and social well-being. It is important to highlight the name we have chosen for this group of responses—"natural", not bad or wrong. Shame is complex, and its responses are varied. The following responses may be natural defences against, or effects of, shame. These responses can be problematic, but in some situations they may be protective.

### 9.6.1 *Avoid*

The first response to shame that will be explored is avoidance. "Avoid" is a word that arose multiple times during interviews, when participants were asked how they coped with or responded to shame. Most people, if it was possible, would not only avoid shame, but would in turn avoid any situation that might evoke shame. Lilia introduces this theme in the following exchange, where she is reflecting on shame she felt as a result of cheating on her boyfriend:

Researcher: How did you cope with the shame in that situation?

Lilia: I totally avoided him. [Laughter] And everything to do with him, and just went [cutting off gesture] and cut it and tried never to think about it again.

Researcher: And how do you feel that worked for you?

Lilia: Well, I wouldn't say it worked. [Laughter] I think you can probably only avoid stuff for so long.

Lilia avoided shame both physically and mentally. She avoided her former boyfriend, thus, avoiding any situations in which she would be reminded of her actions, the broken relationship, or her feelings of shame about the break-up. She also mentally "cut off" from shame, refusing to allow herself to acknowledge the shame because of the deep pain that it brought. While this temporarily silenced her shame, it did not help her to grow or learn from the situation.

Like Lilia, Peter avoids shame by physically avoiding situations where he will encounter people who he perceives will judge him. Peter says, "There are certain shops, areas that I won't go into, because I'll find more people who give me more judgement." Peter clearly links his shame to the judgements of others, and by avoiding situations where he could potentially be judged, he avoids shame.



While many participants described physically avoiding situations where they might feel shame, Charlotte provides a different example of avoiding shame. In the following excerpt, Charlotte describes perfectionism as a mechanism for avoiding shame. Charlotte is reflecting on the effects of being excessively, outwardly shamed by her mother when she says:

It created in me to put high expectations of myself which were always unrealistic. So to never praise myself for the work I had done, but rather to go, it's just not good enough.

Charlotte describes developing very high expectations of herself. This is, in part, the result of internalising her mother's high standards, but it also serves as an attempt to avoid shame. In response to shame, Charlotte constantly tried to work harder and do better, in order to avoid the feeling of not being "good enough." Avoiding shame appears to be an understandable, human response to an emotional experience that can sometimes be deeply distressing.

Many people used the word "hiding" when describing their responses to shame. Elisabeth says: "How else do I deal with shame? Definitely hide." Peter expands the theme of hiding from shame to reveal how he physically hides his face through the use of sunglasses, to avoid being recognised and consequently feeling shame in exchanges with others he may encounter. Peter says:

If I'm in that space, if I have to pop into the supermarket, I'll go to a different one, or I'll wear my sunglasses. Not that... I'm tall, people will still spot me, but I feel I'm hiding.

Peter finds comfort in feeling like he is hiding. His sunglasses provide a barrier between himself and others, which provides a perceived sense of protection from shame. While hiding in this way helps Peter emotionally, it would also serve to exacerbate his social isolation.

A number of participants described an interesting way of hiding from shame—hiding behind a mask. Kathleen says, "You learn to put on masks. Which is bad—it's bad, I know, it's not good. But it's your coping mechanism. You know?" Rather than withdrawing and hiding physically and socially, Kathleen continued to be socially involved, physically visible, and connected. However, she refused to let her true thoughts and feeling show; she refused to be vulnerable. By putting on a "mask" Kathleen was able to protect herself from shame, but at the cost of true connection with others. Kathleen constructs this response as "bad." It is possibly due having realised the isolating effect of this response that Kathleen believes her response to be wrong or unhelpful, even though it is still a response she is driven toward.

Elisabeth elaborates on the concept of hiding from behind a mask by saying:

I thought I was hiding, but to other people, I was the crazy up front girl. I threw myself in situations where I was the life of the party, but to me, I was hiding, because they weren't seeing my fear, they weren't seeing the language inside my head, they weren't seeing the fact that I was just desperately hurting. They were seeing this bright and bubbly person, but to other people it probably wasn't perceived as hiding.

Like Kathleen, Elisabeth felt she was protecting herself from shame by refusing to reveal her true feelings of fear and failure. She created a false persona, which was

liked by others, but which prevented her true, vulnerable self from being known, and therefore, from being loved and supported.

A final method of avoiding shame is hiding through shrinking and making oneself less visible. Mark says that as a child, to avoid shaming situations, he would “survive through being quiet and trying to just be invisible or quiet and not make too much trouble.” If he was not noticed, he could not be shamed, and so hiding through “invisibility” was a protective coping mechanism for Mark.

Finally, concluding the discussion on avoidance as a response to shame, Mark describes the effects of avoiding or hiding from shame. He says, “So I’ve always been hiding something. And that hiding or being alone, being alone in your own stuff—no one really knows what’s really going on for you.” As Mark describes, both, avoiding and hiding from shame, often results in the avoidance of relationships—or at least the avoidance of authentic relationships. Responding to shame in this way ultimately inhibits and prevents interpersonal connection. This can result in short term protection from social dangers; however, widespread avoidance of shame can leave a person chronically isolated and unable to connect with or receive support from others. This ultimately hinders the development of resilience, which is greatly enhanced by supportive relationships.

### **9.6.2 *Escape***

Most participants described a desire to avoid feeling shame—sometimes at all costs. However, when people are unable to avoid shame, the next natural response is to escape from shame. This can happen in many ways.

Many times, people respond to feeling shame by physically fleeing. For example, when Kathleen was asked how she copes with feeling shame, her response was:

Mainly sitting down and withdrawing. I withdraw; I run away. That is my... You know the fight or flight? I literally pull back.

When Kathleen feels shame, her immediate response is to flee—to withdraw. It is interesting to note the contrast in Kathleen’s actions and her description of the emotional process involved. While physically she responds by simply sitting down or withdrawing, a passive, low energy response, the emotional description of the fight or flight response is a very high energy response. Kathleen describes sitting down and pulling back—emotionally removing herself from a dangerous situation. This may leave a very high level of emotional volatility—unvented energy, which could then contribute to numerous other problems, such as anxiety or aggression.

Kathleen’s description of running away from shame brings an image that is reminiscent to the image of hiding described earlier. When Kathleen has been in a situation where she was emotionally exposed and left vulnerable to shame, feeling shame causes her to immediately withdraw back into hiding. She dodges the feeling, as much as she is able, and returns to a vigilant state of shame avoidance.

More than one participant described moving to another country to escape from shame. Lilia describes her experience in the following excerpt:

I ran away. [Laughter] I moved. I moved and avoided [my parents]. Seems to be what I do... I've done that my whole life, since I was old enough to get away [...] I started to recognise the feeling when I was a bit older, and it would be the same pattern. Something would happen and then I'd want to run away. And I'd, start looking for somewhere else to live in a different country to move to, and you know, I'd blimmin move country. [Laughter] ...I went to America once, went to Aussie another time, went to China.

Lilia created a pattern of repeatedly running away from shame by relocating to new countries. This is likely to have left her isolated, and unable to establish adequate support networks.

Another means by which it is possible to escape from shame is through numbing shame. Many participants referred to having escaped from shame by numbing their shame—most commonly through the use of substances. John introduces this theme by describing a process of emotionally escaping from shame to various hiding places. John says,

Whenever I've had something like that happen in my life, I'll hide. And I used to have several hiding places, which were, alcohol, food, girls... So, I will just go into hiding.

Hiding as a response to shame was discussed earlier, when discussing avoidance as a response to shame. When a person is confronted with acute feelings of shame, a natural response is to escape the painful feeling by fleeing to the security of hiding places. Hiding through escapism differs from the hiding discussed earlier, in that to escape from shame back into hiding often involves a more active effort to flee from or numb the feeling of shame. Peter, when describing ways of coping with shame, mentioned,

Yes, and in between all of that there's just numbing yourself - alcohol, weed.

Often people consume substances to achieve this emotional numbing. John refers to alcohol and food, as well as girls, as places he goes, or methods he uses to hide.

Max continues the discussion of substances as an escape from shame in the following quote. He is referring to first being exposed to drugs when visiting his father's house as a young teenager.

Me and my cousin, and there was this green stuff lying around, and we knew what it was, and we started smoking that, and then boom! That was it. We were both hooked. Yeah, we both thought it was amazing; it was just the perfect escape.

Max refers to the feeling of getting high for the first time, as “amazing,” “the perfect escape.” For some participants, substances gave them freedom from the harshly painful experience of shame, allowing them to escape into some form of relief of happiness. However, this escape is temporary and carries significant dangers, such as inappropriate behaviour or addiction. Participants also reflected on the pain, difficulty, and long-term consequences they endured as a result of abusing substances to escape from their shame.

Another, less notorious but equally common escape that participants mentioned was through eating. When asked how she coped with feelings of shame, Elisabeth said:

What else do I do? Eat, I eat. I eat a lot. [Pause] Damn mechanism of eating when you're feeling bad. [Laughter].

Elisabeth describes excessive eating as a mechanism of escaping from shame, and other bad feelings. Like drugs or alcohol, eating can also provide comfort and sooth painful emotions in the short term. However, overeating has its own negative long-term outcomes, which can exacerbate, rather than help, feelings of shame. A number of participants referred to feeling shame about their bodies related to being overweight.

A final method of escaping from shame through substances is introduced by Jennifer. Jennifer refers to numbing shame through prescribed antidepressant and antianxiety medications. Answering a question about the emotional experience of shame, Jennifer says:

I think it just like pulls you down really. Like a big blanket over your head or something. But like I say, because I haven't really dealt with it, it has come in other ways. I've been to multiple doctors, as you can imagine, over the years. But it's never been dealt with. It's been covered up. [Whispering] Drugs! [Laughter].

It may be controversial to suggest that medically sanctioned treatments may actually be an escape mechanism. However, it is interesting to note Jennifer's thoughts on the issues. Her experience is that drugs covered up, rather than dealt with, the issues she was facing. Prescribed medications provided temporary relief from acute feelings of shame, but she positions the doctors and the drugs as being unable to help her with her shame. Years of medical treatment kept her shame well-hidden, but she was aware that the shame, along with other negative emotions, was still there lingering under the surface. The medication provided an escape from shame, not a cure.

Another way that participants described escaping from shame is by unloading their own shame onto someone else through blame. Elisabeth introduces this theme when she says,

Some ways I cope with feeling shame... so, ignoring, shaming others [laughter] or blaming others - in myself, not actually to them!

Elisabeth describes shaming, ignoring, or blaming others as defensive responses to her own feelings of shame. While she qualifies that she does this in her own mind, not overtly toward the other person, it is reasonable to assume that sometimes people are overtly blamed as a result of another person's shame. Similarly, Drew responded to a question on coping with shame by saying:

I think I have the need to blame and shame Steve, because I feel he could have left much better and all of this could have been avoided. [...] I'd like to punch him in the face because that would hurt him, or blow his car up or something nasty. [...] Yeah, he's the person I've disliked the most in my life. So, that's been difficult. There must have been a lot of shame tied up in that...

Again, Drew refers to his internal fantasies, rather than physical actions of violence, but he clearly blames Steve for his own shame. Drew's words display a physical building of energy, as his shame transforms into anger, which he gets emotional release from by imagining violent attacks.

Michelle provides another example of responding to shame with anger when she says:

As a result of being so horrible at school, or, being the horrible one at school, being the loser that nobody liked, got picked on, beaten up... As a result, when I was at home with my brother and sister, I was a bully. I was real mean, very physical, very angry.

Michelle is referring to the effects at home of being bullied at school. The shame she felt was redirected and misplaced onto her brother and sister. Michelle suggests that she was physically violent to her siblings as a way of expressing her anger about the shame she endured from her peers at school.

Escaping from shame is a natural response, which can lessen the immediate negativity of feeling shame. However, escapism can have long term negative consequence. Escaping from shame through substance use can lead to addiction; both physical and emotional routes of escape can lead to social isolation. When someone escapes from shame, rather than acknowledges it, he or she is unable to attend to the feeling, to learn from it, and to deal with it constructively.

### 9.6.3 *Succumb*

The final natural response to shame is to succumb to shame. Jennifer introduces this theme in the following exchange, where we are discussing childhood memories, which are saturated with both past and ongoing feelings of shame:

Researcher: How did you cope with them when you didn't talk about them?

Jennifer: By having anxiety and not sleeping for years and years and years and years!  
[Laughter] So, I didn't cope with it.

Jennifer reports simply not being able to cope with shame. Anxiety and chronic insomnia were physical symptoms of her shame, which overwhelmed her for many years. Similarly, Sarah refers to her response to shame when she says: "Cause I used to not cope at all. I used to get depressed, chain smoke." Depression and a severe addiction to cigarette smoking were effects that Sarah attributed to her inability to cope with shame. Jennifer and Sarah speak with a sense of futility and helplessness about their past responses to shame. They had no means of dealing with shame, and it eventually overcame them.

A particular way in which participants reported succumbing to shame is by internalising shame. The internalisation of shame involves owning negative judgements about the self, and incorporating them into one's sense of identity. Elisabeth describes having internalised experiences of shame in the following text:

[Shame] probably has had detrimental effect on my marriage, for example, in that I've often doubted whether we will be given normal. I have an underlying assumption - and it's a misbelief and it's wrong. When I'm irrational, I think that I don't deserve normal, and therefore at some point he's going to leave, or things are going to change, or something is going to happen.

Elisabeth describes believing at a fundamental level that she is abnormal or unworthy of a "normal" life. When stressed, she doubts that her husband will stay with her, or fears that other bad, unforeseen changes will negatively affect her life and her family. This links back to a revelation Elisabeth made earlier about her feeling shame as the result of her father dying when she was very young. She felt ashamed because her family was not "normal." Elisabeth internalised this shame, which resulted in a long lasting image of herself as being different from others and her future security as being anomalous. This example illustrates the long term impact of succumbing to shame through internalising shame. In Elisabeth's case, responding to shame in this way continues to affect her relationships well into adulthood. The internalised negative judgements about herself and her identity, believing that she is unworthy of a normal life, serve to inflict further, ongoing shame and fear. This may predispose Elisabeth to feeling shame in situations where others might have very different emotional reactions. For example, if, in the future, Elisabeth's husband were to leave her, it appears very likely that she would feel an enormous amount of shame. In contrast, another person with a different background might respond with another primary reaction, such as anger.

Caleb expands the discussion on internalising shame by saying:

And so, with whatever happened to me, my weaknesses turned into... as if they were terrible things. I'm fundamentally flawed and defective rather than I'm just needy, and I just need help, or I don't know how to do something, and it's a bad thing, it's bad about me.

Looking back on his life, Caleb describes how he internalised shame, believing that his weaknesses were terrible character faults, rather than normal human limitations. He believed that there was something "bad" about him, when he was unable to accomplish a task, rather than realising that needing help is an ordinary and acceptable feature of humanity.

Similarly, a previously quoted conversation with Charlotte illustrates how shame can be internalised and therefore create ongoing pain and insecurity. Charlotte describes internalising the shame she felt when her long-term boyfriend left her, saying:

When my ex and I split up I felt a lot of shame, because he decided there was someone better. [Laughter] There's a lot of shame there. That probably also echoed a lot of those same feelings - like, well I'm obviously not good enough, I can't be what you need me to be. A lot of that hopelessness again. It echoed a lot of my mum's voice. [...] Yeah, that was probably quite a shaming season of life really. Had to spend my time trying to figure out if really I did have anything to offer. That shame probably created a sense of insecurity in me, like going, "Am I really that bad? Am I really that unlovable?"

As a result of her ex-boyfriend's behaviour, Charlotte concluded that she was "obviously not good enough" and was incapable of meeting his needs. She

described a sense of insecurity that lived inside her. Charlotte provides a real example of the hypothetical scenario that was discussed earlier regarding Elisabeth's fears. Some degree of shame is a normal response to a severed relationship. However, Charlotte's shame was likely exacerbated by the internalisation of negative judgements about herself that occurred earlier in her life as a result of her mother's harsh and shaming parenting style. Questioning one's identity is an expected reaction to shame, but when those questions are chronically repeated, being internally answered with unrealistically negative appraisals, shame may have been internalised. This could lead to long-lasting insecurity that damages one's mental health and affects future relationships.

## 9.7 Resilient Responses to Shame

Avoiding, escaping, and succumbing are natural responses to shame, and in some cases, they can be protective. However, when used excessively and unbalanced, these responses hinder rather than help the development of resilience. In our analysis, we identified a group of responses to shame that more readily lead to the development of resilience. These responses are to be vulnerable, be present, and be willing to change.

### 9.7.1 *Be Vulnerable*

The first of the resilient responses to shame that were identified in our analysis is vulnerability. Our participants reported a natural tendency to avoid any situation that might evoke feelings of shame. However, participants also acknowledged that avoidance can result in social isolation and, eventually, in depression, anxiety, or despair. Alternatively, when people are willing to be vulnerable and risk experiencing shame, their social connections can be strengthened and their well-being tends to increase.

The first means by which a person can be vulnerable is proactive vulnerability. Rather than avoid any situation that might possibly cause shame, a person can choose to take risks, which leave himself or herself open to the possibility to feeling shame, but which provide experience that enhances growth and resilience. John provides insight into this form of vulnerability in the following text:

I see people who are motivated by shame quite often in training. "I better train so I can finish the race, because if I don't finish the race, I'm going to be ashamed." Or, I observe it in a different way, I deal with quite a few people, and they won't train, or they won't study, so that when they fail, they can say, "Oh, I didn't train anyway, so I don't really care." I see that a lot. It's a funny thing to me because I have a need for achievement, but I've seen that more than I ever expected to see it. I saw it in young people, and now I see it in adults. "Oh, I didn't train anyway; it didn't mean that much to me." But I really know it did. So it's like

they use their shame to keep them safe so that they never have to experience what is possibly unbearable for them - failure or whatever the case may be.

John describes many slightly different examples of shame avoidance. He describes people avoiding taking risks, such as public speaking, in order to avoid the possibility of shame. He also describes people training hard or over preparing for a presentation as a means to avoid the shame of not finishing or failing. Conversely, he describes people choosing not to train or not to study as a means of protecting themselves against the full experience of shame. By not preparing for the event at hand, they block out vulnerability, and are able to rationalise and justify a failure, which can reduce the associated shame. John contrasts this behaviour with his own need for achievement, suggesting that one consequence of avoiding shame, rather than allowing oneself to be vulnerable, could be a lack of achievement and progress. Another consequence could be an inability to grow and develop resilience.

John echoes the position of many other participants in depicting pain as unquestionably uncomfortable, but it is not necessarily harmful. Participants clearly constructed resilience as being born out of struggle, and of positive experiences overcoming struggle. Feeling shame is unpleasant, but it can strengthen a person. Avoiding shame at all costs results in avoiding achievement, connection, growth, and learning. In contrast, being vulnerable carries a risk of feeling shame, but it is also empowering and enhances resilience.

Another way that being vulnerable to shame can occur is through responsive vulnerability. Some participants suggested that when they feel shame, it can be helpful to admit the feeling of shame to oneself and to others, and to be vulnerable in connecting with others. Lucy introduces this theme in the following quotation:

And I think being in connection over it, with other people, definitely helps reduce it. [Laughter] And I don't think I used to do that. I would just try and deal with it by myself, rather than talk about it. [It's] still difficult to go there, but I do believe it's helpful. And, to read about it. To recognise that it's actually a really basic part of human experience, and it's not just me.

Lucy acknowledges the difficulty involved in vulnerably sharing feelings of shame with others. However, she also constructs vulnerable connection as “definitely helpful.” Lucy describes the helpfulness of being vulnerable with others as coming from being enabled to recognise shame as a normal and natural part of humanity. Our findings on resilience indicated that positive and supportive relationships foster resilience through creating a sense of knowing that you are not alone in your struggles. Likewise, being vulnerable with regard to shame allows Lucy to connect with others, to share experiences and understandings, to realise that she is not alone, and to ultimately build resilience.

Caleb says:

You can't heal what you can't feel. You can't do it by yourself; it has to be a non-shaming face. It's through relationship that we get shamed, and so it has to be through relationship that we get healed [...]. You actually have to be loved by somebody in whatever it is that



you feel shame about - and see it in their face, and see it in their demeanour, and hear it in their voice. You can't intellectualise your way out of it.

Caleb starts by saying, "You can't heal what you can't feel." This insight relays an acceptance that avoiding shame at all costs is not useful, as avoidance ultimately prevents a person from listening to shame, learning from shame, and healing shame. In contrast, when someone acknowledges their shame, and divulges it to another person, their shame can be reduced. Caleb speaks about relationships having healing power. He says that being genuinely loved and accepted by someone else is the only true means by which someone can be released from being stuck in shame. Shame has earlier been described as a social emotion—the emotional awareness of a severed or threatened social bond. Shame is triggered by judgement, which can include the fear or imagination of someone else's judgement. Freedom from shame can result if a person chooses to be vulnerable, to expose a part of themselves for which they feel shame, and they receive acceptance and love in response, rather than rejection and shame. As Caleb says, no amount of intellectualisation or rationalisation on a cognitive level can compare to the power of secure social bonds in building resilience to shame.

### ***9.7.2 Be Present***

The next resilient response to shame to be explored is to be fully present with shame. Caleb says, "The only way to heal the shame is to feel the shame." Our research revealed that shame gains a great deal of power from its silent and hidden nature. Often, through escapism, people hide shame even from themselves. As mentioned in the previous section addressing vulnerability, Caleb suggests that if one does not allow himself to feel shame, he will never heal from shame. Similarly, when asked to describe the most resilient response to feelings of shame, Lucy says:

There would have to be acknowledging first. I guess this is talking about processing and having a cognitive awareness of that and the ability to step out of it, and not be overwhelmed by it. And deliberately using skills to integrate it. It would be nice to say I've got to a point where shame [laughter] is not really a factor any more, I'm that resilient to it. But, I don't think that's realistic. I think the most resilient response is working through it to a point where it's managed, accepted, and it doesn't define you.

Lucy highlights the importance of acknowledging shame, proposing that being consciously aware that she is feeling shame is important for being able to positively move forward and out of the experience, rather than to deny or escape from it. Lucy suggests that to be unaffected to shame is an unrealistic goal. In contrast, she proposes a healthy expectation for dealing with shame is accepting its influence, but refusing to allow it to define her identity.

Max further comments on the necessity of accepting shame in the following quotation:

You just have to ride the roller coaster sometimes and say, “Yes, I did that, and I did that,” when it comes up. Because certain things will trigger it off, and will trigger a thought and you’ll remember that and then the emotions and stuff will come with that. Just gotta accept what you’ve done and then let it float out of your mind, just like it floated into your mind. ‘Cause I mean, if you start obsessing about it, it’s just really not going to help you at all. It’s just going to further ruin your confidence and stuff like that. There’s no point dwelling on the past too much. Sure, we all do things we are ashamed of, but it’s learning how to accept it and move on and let it, it can be a positive thing, like something positive can come out of it if you let it. Not remould you, just learn from it - upwards and onwards.

Max says that the ideal response to shame involves simply acknowledging shameful memories or passing feelings of shame. He says that acceptance is the key to coping with shame positively. Rather than obsessing over feelings of shame or denying shame, if he can sit with shame and let it pass, Max believes shame can have positive effects. It can foster learning, understanding, and growth.

When asked to describe the most resilient response to feelings of shame, John says:

It is what it is. I have no need to judge it, to fix it, explain it, or control it. I can observe, I can learn, I can grow, I can use it to be a blessing to myself and to others as I experience, I can empathetically observe others and myself within it. But the moment I blame, shame, judge, split, I’ve gone right back into that shame thing. So, it is what it is.

Similarly, Michelle says:

Feel the feeling. Feelings aren’t going to kill you, it’s just a feeling.

John and Michelle both describe a simple state of letting shame exist. John describes being present with the emotion without trying to escape through fixing, explaining, projecting, or controlling it and without succumbing to it and internalising negative judgements. These accounts attribute a sense of power to the acceptance of shame. John describes that when one tries to escape from shame (for example, through blaming) he ultimately brings himself more shame. When one accepts shame, he can offer empathy to himself and others, and he can grow.

### ***9.7.3 Be Willing to Change***

The final resilient response to shame is to be willing to change. This is closely related to being present with shame. Liam connects the discussion on being present with shame with being willing to change as a result of shame. He says:

Shame is quite a negative emotion. It drags you down, but I think in some ways it’s possibly not possible to be quite so perfect in the face of it. Maybe a more realistic one is just to let it run its course on you. Just feel it and let it wash your sins away. Yeah, go through the wringer that you brought on yourself. You know, feel bad and feel crap about yourself and everything, rather than shut it out and be like, “Oh, I’m going to be a good person from now on,” you should just ride it out. Take your medicine, and then at the end of that then, “Right, I’m not going to do that again.” Maybe just welcome it into your life is

actually a more realistic and healthy way to deal with it, rather than just sort of sense, “Oh, it’s coming, I’m going to be a good person,” and run away, perhaps.

A number of responses to shame are interwoven in Liam’s description. He refers to being present with shame, and being willing to suffer as a result of it, rather than escaping from it. Referring to shame brought on oneself as the result of a moral failing, Liam says that feeling the shame and letting it “run its course on you” can enable a person to change as a result of his experience with shame. This illustrates a response to shame that includes acknowledging and grieving a loss of innocence. Liam affords shame the power to “wash sins away.” Shame may then provide the suffering necessary for growth, and the experience necessary for learning. According to Liam’s position, if someone recognises shame as occurring as the result of his own choice and is willing to accept it and learn from it, then shame can empower him to make changes to his future behaviour. This will ultimately improve his behaviour, strengthen his relationships, and develop his character. Liam positions being present with shame as a necessary ingredient for genuine growth as a result of shame. Contrasting this with vowing to “be a good person” as a form of escapism, Liam paints a picture of a person who has endured pain and suffering as a result of shame, been willing to accept this and engage with the struggle, and has emerged from the painful process a genuinely changed, more resilient, and wiser person.

One aspect of being willing to change as the result of shame is being willing to right wrongs. Ultimately, this results in a healthy avoidance of shame, as a result of repair, rather than avoiding, social connections. Sophie introduces this form of positive avoidance and willingness to change when she says:

Like when I spoke to the woman at work, and I’m so horrified how I spoke to her, because it’s just not me, that it makes me take a look at myself and think, “Why the hell did you do that?” and avoid doing it again. And learn from it, you have to learn from it.

Sophie evaluated her own behaviour—a negative way of speaking to a workmate—as being shameful. This led Sophie to question her choice to act in this manner and to make conscious changes to learn from it and avoid making the same mistake in the future.

A final note regarding responding to shame with a willingness to change, concerns empathy. Many participants noted that their experiences with shame made them more empathic toward others who were going through similar experiences. Michelle, when reflecting on the shame of wetting her bed as a child, says,

It does mean I can empathise when I hear of other little people who wet their bed. And they’re like, “Oh, you don’t know what it’s like.” And I’m like, “Yeah I do. Yeah, I really, really do.”

By being present with and recognising her own shame, Michelle is able to genuinely connect with others, offering support to children who may otherwise feel they are suffering alone in their shame. Similarly, Luke offers the insight that having experienced shame himself in the past has caused him to reconsider his responses to others, in order to ensure that they are not harmed by shame. Luke says:

Well, I like to think that I'm a bit wiser in dealing with other people as a result of it. I don't like injustice, whether that's a result of shame experiences... When it comes to people with their peers, if I'm dealing with children or teenagers, I don't like to see them shamed in front of their peers. So, I would say it's made me a little slower to react in situations, to think things through - think of the consequences before dealing with something.

Luke noted earlier in his interview that he feels shame is especially powerful in public situations. Having been affected by the potent influence of public shame, Luke is careful when dealing with vulnerable people to make sure they are supported and respected when correction is necessary. The positive effect of shame in Luke's case, is that it has slowed his reactions and allowed him to carefully consider the effects of his words and actions, rather than reacting naturally, perhaps by avoiding his own shame through blaming others. His willingness to slow down may include a willingness to acknowledge and be present with his own shame, which would likely occur alongside another's shame in a situation where the relational bond has been threatened. This would result in more helpful outcomes for both Luke and the other party.

## 9.8 Shame and Resilience: Practical Implications

We have introduced and discussed a number of responses to shame. In our research, six responses to shame were identified, which were divided into two broad themes. The natural responses to shame are to avoid, escape, or succumb. Participants reported avoiding shame by avoiding any situation that might evoke shame, or escaping from shame through physically running away from shame or through the emotional numbing of substance use. When avoiding or escaping from shame was not possible, the next, natural response to shame was to succumb to shame—most commonly through debilitating anxiety or depression. While natural responses can sometimes be helpful in the short term, they tend to be associated with negative long-term effects.

Participants also described three more difficult, more resilient responses to shame. These were to be vulnerable to shame and willing to take risks; to be present with shame, actively acknowledging its influence; and to be willing to grow and change as a result of struggles with shame. These resilient responses to shame, while described by participants on an individual level, may also be applicable on a wider, community level. As argued by Brown (2006) and Van Vliet (2009), and supported by our own research, acknowledging and naming shame is crucial to shame-resilience. By actively acknowledging shame within our society, we raise awareness of a powerful issue. If we are willing to discuss shame, to be non-shaming and accepting of others who are experiencing struggle, and to challenge and change ways in which we have inadvertently promoted shame, we can encourage shame-resilience on a widespread level.

These findings hold interesting implications for psychological practice. Considering established research on shame and resilience, as well as our own

research findings, it is clear that positive and supportive relationships are important for the development of resilience. The findings suggest that having a safe space to acknowledge shame and vulnerably share one's experiences with shame is beneficial to overcoming shame and building resilience. From the perspective of clinical, psychological practice, this suggests that regardless of the particular modality of therapy, seeking help from a practitioner who is accepting and non-judgemental of the person, as well as their feelings of shame, would be helpful in promoting individual level resilience. For someone who has experienced long-lasting internalised shame, a cognitive-behavioural approach to therapy may be useful in addressing negative core beliefs that have led to enduring and debilitating shame experiences. For someone who has become increasingly isolated as the result of avoiding or escaping from shame, a therapist may need to provide long term stability and support in order for a genuine relationship to build in which the person feels safely able to vulnerably connect. For someone who is not at risk of being overwhelmed by internalised shame, a mindfulness approach may help the person to be present with shame, increasing their awareness of the shame and enabling them to mindfully consider options for change. Bearing in mind the considerable diversity of shame experiences, we should be flexible in our approach to the issue of shame, carefully considering the individual history and context of each person with whom we work.

It is vitally important for practitioners to be able to safely attend to issues of shame in individual therapy. However, as Sedgwick and Frank (1995) point out, relegating shame to the therapy room may actually reinforce the avoidance of talking about shame in other settings. Another important implication of the findings for psychological practice involves the necessity of promoting shame resilience on a more widespread level.

Being willing to be vulnerable and reach out for help is an important individual response to shame, but without people in the community to reach out for help from, this would not be possible. It is important to proactively encourage social support and acceptance of others. For someone who is being marginalised or stigmatised by others, there may be no safe options where he or she can go to receive support. On a community level, we must remain aware of shame and be mindful of its potential power when displayed to others. Thus, being present with shame is not merely an individual response but also a potentially beneficial social value. In our critical reflections of our culture and our society, being aware of shame, naming it, and discussing its influence may go a long way to relieving shame of its negative power. Both on an individual level and a wider, social level, we need to start recognising shame and acknowledging it within our conversations. Reducing its hiddenness may reduce its negative effects. By directing our attention to shame, we will be better equipped to proactively respond to shame.

## References

- Ahmed, E. (2001). *Shame management through reintegration*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Beck, J., McNiff, J., Clapp, J., Olsen, S., Avery, M., & Hagedwood, J. (2011). Exploring negative emotion in women experiencing intimate partner violence: Shame, guilt, and PTSD. *Behaviour Therapy, 42*, 740–750.
- Bonanno, G. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *American Psychologist, 59*, 20–28.
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 87*(1), 43–52. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.3483
- Brown, B. (2010, June). Brené Brown: *The power of vulnerability* [Video file]. Accessed from [http://www.ted.com/talks/Brené\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/Brené_brown_on_vulnerability.html)
- Deonna, J., & Teroni, F. (2008). Shame's guilt disproved. *Critical Quarterly, 50*(4), 65–72.
- Elison, J. (2005). Shame and guilt: A hundred years of apples and oranges. *New Ideas in Psychology, 23*(1), 5–32. doi:10.1016/j.newideapsych.2005.07.001
- Fergus, T., Valentiner, D., McGrath, P., & Jencius, S. (2010). Shame- and guilt-proneness: Relationships with anxiety disorder symptoms in a clinical sample. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 24*(8), 811–815. doi:10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.06.002
- Gilbert, P., McEwan, K., Irons, C., Bhundia, R., Christie, R., Broomhead, C., et al. (2010). Self-harm in a mixed clinical population: The roles of self-criticism, shame, and social rank. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 49*, 563–576.
- Jain, S., Buka, S., Subramanian, S., & Molnar, B. (2012). Protective factors for youth exposed to violence: Role of developmental assets in building emotional resilience. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 10*(1), 107–129. doi:10.1177/1541204011424735
- Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 227–238. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.56.3.227
- Montpetit, M., Bergeman, C., Deboeck, P., Tiberio, S., & Boker, S. (2010). Resilience-as-process: Negative affect, stress, and coupled dynamical systems. *Psychology and Aging, 25*, 631–640.
- Persons, E., Kershaw, T., Sikkema, K., & Hansen, N. (2010). The impact of shame on health-related quality of life among HIV-positive adults with a history of childhood sexual abuse. *AIDS Patient Care and STDs, 24*(9), 571–580. doi:10.1089/apc.2009.0209
- Peters, R. D., Leadbeater, B., & McMahon, R. J. (Eds.). (2005). *Resilience in children families and communities: Linking context to practice and policy*. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Roisman, G. (2005). Conceptual clarifications in the study of resilience. *American Psychologist, 60*, 264–265.
- Scheff, T. J. (2003). Shame in self and society. *Symbolic Interaction, 26*, 239–262.
- Sedgwick, E. K., & Frank, A. (Eds.) (1995). *Shame and its sisters: A Silvan Tomkins reader*. London, England: Duke University Press.
- Sweezy, M. (2011). The teenager's confession: Regulating shame in internal family systems therapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy, 65*, 179–188.
- Unikel, C., Von Holle, A., Bulik, C., & Ocampo, R. (2012). Disordered eating and suicidal intent: The role of thin ideal internalisation, shame and family criticism. *European Eating Disorders Review, 20*(1), 39–48. doi:10.1002/erv.1070
- Vliet, K. (2009). The role of attributions in the process of overcoming shame: A qualitative analysis. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 82*(2), 137–152. doi:10.1348/147608308x389391

# Chapter 10

## From Shame to Guilt: The Remediation of Bullying Across Cultures and the US

Rebecca S. Merkin

**Abstract** When shame becomes guilt, individuals change their focus from blaming others to acknowledging personal responsibility. This piece reports on findings that show how aspects of shame are correlated with bullying behaviors and how reducing those behaviors can be achieved by remediating shame through the promotion of guilt or by using interconnected harmony strategies. Though this study primarily tested US (individualistic) participants, these findings are compared with extant studies carried out in collectivistic cultures because it is important to focus on remediating shame to reduce bullying in multiple contexts. Shame prompts the desire to amend the threatened social self and improve self-esteem. A common maladaptive method of amending the threatened social self and improving self-esteem is bullying, because bullying gives the perpetrator an illusion of power and importance. Addressing and remediating shame could have a positive effect on reducing bullying by establishing an ethical climate within bullying environments that encourages mutual respect, shared responsibility, and social inclusion. Results of this study support the notion that correlates of shame established in previous research on convicts, extends to individuals with a propensity to bully others. Analysis of cross-cultural literature and US findings illuminates how shame leads to a resource-orientation through the desire for harmonious mediation and the acceptance of responsibility through guilt.

### 10.1 From Shame to Guilt: The Remediation of Bullying in the US and Across Cultures

This chapter sets out to extend shame research by identifying the anti-social behaviors enacted by bullies who experience unacknowledged shame (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2004). This chapter accomplishes this by reporting on a recent US

---

R.S. Merkin (✉)  
Baruch College—CUNY, 1 Bernard Baruch Way VC 8-241,  
New York, NY 10010, USA  
e-mail: Rebecca.Merkin@Baruch.Cuny.edu

study which tested the relationships between shame, guilt, and the propensity to bully, as well as reporting on comparable research recently collected in cross-cultural studies. Bullies, like other anti-social personality types, tend to instigate problems in schools and workplaces, often causing the target to respond with negative affect, stress, and aggression (Neuman et al. 2011). Therefore, it is worthwhile to begin identifying the characteristics of those who have a propensity to bully others, in order to better understand the modus operandi of this problematic personality type and to assist individuals in the productive handling of situations where bullying—a persistent harmful type of aggression (Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott 2011)—exists. For example, remediation strategies such as guilt management and harmony enhancement could be planned as resources towards thwarting bullying. As will be discussed, a lack of appropriate guilt contributes to bullying and therefore, enhancing one's ability to feel guilt can perhaps lead to reduced shame and bullying.

Extant research on bullying interactions is primarily focused on bullying targets and what to do about the problem, however, there is very little is known about the perpetrators of bullying (Rayner et al. 2002; Rayner and Keashly 2005; Rivers and Noret 2010; Zapf and Einarsen 2011). Once bullies become part of the fabric of a work place, an intolerably toxic work environment results. It is important to understand more about the perpetrators of bullying in order to inhibit their maladaptive complex anti-social behaviors (Sutton et al. 1999; Vaughn et al. 2010; Vega and Comer 2005).

A study by Sutton et al. (1999) found that bullies may manipulate and organize people in such a manner as to inflict damages on others in subtle and destructive ways, while avoiding detection themselves. As a result of the complexity inherent to the topic at hand, this investigation draws on previous research conducted on anti-social behavior resulting from shame, to try to explain the propensity to bully. Cross-cultural research on shame and bullying will also be reported on as a comparison point for the present US study results.

Previous research shows that there is a connection between unacknowledged shame and anger (Lewis 1971; Scheff and Retzinger 2001). Studies have also found a link between unacknowledged shame and bullying (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2004; Dzurec et al. 2014; Fast 2015). The present chapter expounds on these ideas and sets out to identify personality dispositions likely to be found in bullies, in order to support the fostering of shame remediation as a positive orientation towards bullying remediation. This is because counter intuitively, negative emotions such as guilt are known to facilitate prosocial responses (Bandura 1991; Fisher and Exline 2006) whereas shame-based emotional responses tend to be antisocial (Hall and Fincham 2005; Tangney and Dearing 2002). This occurs for the reason that guilt positions an individual's attention on how a specific action is depraved or immoral (Fisher and Exline 2006; Tangney and Dearing 2002), leading them to focus on their misconduct and be motivated to correct it internally. What's more, by increasing feelings of guilt that would be experienced upon hurting someone, the empathy which could develop, may reduce the likelihood of continued hostile behavior (Stanger et al. 2012). The focus on guilt, therefore, is more likely to



motivate people to work on restoring damaged relationships resulting from transgressions (e.g., Baumeister et al. 1994, 2007; Fisher and Exline 2006; Tangney et al. 2007). Previous literature also indicates that shame leads to negative interpersonal relationships (Tangney and Dearing 2002), one of which is likely to be bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al. 2009). It is, therefore, warranted to examine the effects of shame on bullying behavior more thoroughly in attempts to reform such attempts through fostering guilt, a moral emotion (Malti and Ongley 2014).

The present data has been tested to see whether shame is directly related to bullying, in order to advance the supposition that unacknowledged shame is to blame for this anti-social behavior, as found in previous studies (Tangney and Dearing 2002). For example, two primary characteristics of bullies, namely,

- (a) a lack of empathy (Gini et al. 2011; Jolliffe and Farrington; Warden and MacKinnon 2003) and
- (b) a tendency to deny responsibility for behavior (Menesini et al. 2003; Naimie and Naimie 2009) are both positively related to shame (Fisher and Exline 2006; Proeve and Howells 2002; Tangney 1991).

In other words, this study shows that those who bully have similar personality traits as those who are in a state of shame. The aspect of shame that resembles a lack of empathy, which is the experience of sympathetic emotions (Dovidio et al. 2006), includes the externalization of blame and detachment (Proeve and Howells 2002; Tangney and Dearing 2002). The comparable emotion that corresponds to an acceptance of responsibility—guilt is the undesirable feeling that one has done wrong by one's own standards. There is support for the notion that guilt acts as a catalyst for self-improvement and connection (Schaumberg and Flynn 2012), and is negatively related to shame (Tangney and Dearing 2002).

Given the association between correlates of shame and characteristics of bullying tendencies (i.e., lack of empathy and abdication of responsibility for one's actions), it is supposed that the propensity to bully is also related to correlates of shame. Thus, this study will test the relationship between correlates of shame (i.e., guilt, externalisation of blame, and detachment), and a propensity to bully others, as characterised by a lack of empathy and a lack of taking responsibility for one's behavior.

## 10.2 Bullying, Shame, and Guilt

### 10.2.1 *Bullying*

Individuals with the propensity to bully were often themselves previous targets of shame, by having grown up with domestic violence (Tangney et al. 2007), by having been victims of abuse as a child (Randall 2001), or by having been targets of aggressive behavior (Douglas and Martinko 2001). Shame and other characteristics

associated with aggression are likely to play a part in bullying others (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik et al. 2009). More specifically, studies show that a lack of empathy (Gini et al. 2011; Stanger et al. 2012; Warden and MacKinnon 2003), as indicated by detachment (Gini 2006; Menesini et al. 2003; Stuewig et al. 2010), is associated with aggression. Additionally, a refusal to take responsibility for one's actions, as indicated by externalization of blame (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2004; Gini 2006; Stuewig et al. 2010), has also been shown to be associated with aggression (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2004).

Similar to bullying, perpetrators of derogation who feel shame tend to exacerbate conflict. On the other hand, perpetrators of derogation who feel guilty tend to act prosocially to reconcile their conflicts (Folger and Skarlicki 2005; Menesini and Camodeca 2008). A study of post-traumatic stress and feelings of shame as opposed to guilt showed a connection between stress and feelings of shame leading to more physically and psychologically aggressive behavior than those experiencing stress together with guilt (Schoenleber et al. 2015). In a similar vein, it is likely that bullies who feel shame are also likely to enact anti-social interactions focusing on conflict-exacerbating themes when they reflect. Although there is evidence that shame can also promote prosocial reactions such as an apology or helping (Gausel et al. 2012; Shepherd et al. 2013; Tangney et al. 2014), it is unlikely that bullies are responding in this fashion because they would not be using bullying tactics if they were "helping". Alternatively, it is more likely that bullies experiencing shame are focusing on conflict-exacerbating themes because of their tendency to abrogate responsibility for their actions (Menesini et al. 2003; Naimie and Naimie 2009). Additionally, if confronted by the target and/or the organization over anti-social acts, shamed instigators display defensiveness (Folger and Skarlicki 2005). In short, perpetrators of conflicts such as bullying who feel shame, also tend to use anti-social means to resolve conflicts (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2004).

### ***10.2.2 Shame and Guilt***

It is clear from previous research that although perceptions of shame and guilt are often colloquially referred to interchangeably, there are profound differences in their effects (Tangney et al. 1996, 2005, 2007). Shame is a self-evaluative emotion in which one's total worth as a person is judged while guilt is a condemnation of the person's behavior exclusively (Tangney and Dearing 2002). Consequently, when a person is judged as bad, there is nothing s/he can change to become good but when a behavior is considered bad, one can change the behavior. Accordingly, shame is more serious than guilt in that it results in strong feelings of inadequacy (Donnellan et al. 2005). It is these feelings that are possibly behind the defensive actions of bullies.

In fact, maladaptive (Roos et al. 2014; Tangney et al. 1992; Tangney and Dearing 2002) shame has been shown to be related to unconstructive anger

responses such as direct, indirect, and displaced aggression because it causes people to feel that their self-esteem and pride are gone (Tangney et al. 1992). What's more, shame has been shown to be related to bitterness, hostility, a lack of empathy, and a tendency to blame others for negative events (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2004; Tangney and Dearing 2002) and a decrease in prosocial behavior generally (Roos et al. 2014). An example of this was found by Jakupcak et al. (2005) in their study on men. Their findings showed that in order to mask their shame, men commonly fear expressing vulnerable emotions, which, in turn, leads them to express aggression and hostility instead.

On the other hand, those who experience guilt, also understand that sometimes they may violate their own standards; yet at the same time, know and accept responsibility for the wrong they have done (Malouf et al. 2013; Tangney and Dearing 2002). This is because the acknowledgement of guilt, by definition, requires individuals to take responsibility for their actions (Stuewig et al. 2010). Feeling guilty is positively associated with feeling empathy, which requires others to put themselves in someone else's shoes. As a result, guilt has also been shown to be responsible for prosocial modes of communication (Malouf et al. 2013; Tangney and Dearing 2002). In fact, research shows that although guilt-proneness concurrently predicts more aggressive and less prosocial behavior initially, subsequently it results in an increase in prosocial behavior (Roos et al. 2014). This may be because guilt causes people to accept what they have done wrong. Then, after realizing their behaviour is wrong, they can make amends or correct their future behavior. However, when a person feels shame, the feeling is more global in that the focus is on the person. When people feels that they are bad as a person, there is little room to change or make amends but when a person feels that his or her behaviour has gone astray, they also feel the agency to be able to change.

Similar to those who feel shame, those who engage in bullying interactions feel greater anger in tandem to feeling only a small amount of guilt (Rieffe et al. 2012; Tangney and Dearing 2002). Given past research on the relationship of aggression (similar to bullying), shame, and guilt, one can hypothesize that:

H1: Bullying will be negatively related to guilt.

H2: Bullying will be positively related to shame.

### ***10.2.3 Cross-Cultural Differences in Shame, Guilt, and Bullying***

China is a prototypic example of a collectivistic culture (Hofstede and Hofstede 2001; Jackson and Wang 2013). Eastern Chinese values include communication patterns that are embedded in the historical and religious foundations of Confucianism (Fu et al. 2007).

Confucian cultures conceptualize family as the "great self" (da wo), and the boundaries of the self are flexible enough to include family members and significant

others (Bedford and Hwang 2003). It is this great self that an individual is obligated to protect against any threat from the outside, in contrast to the individualistic concept of self. Chinese identity, like other collectivistic identities, is defined in terms of the system of relationships in which a person is involved (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Triandis et al. 1988). As a result, other personal relations may be treated as part of the self, and an individuals' collectivistic self is confirmed only through interpersonal relationships (Bedford and Hwang 2003; Kwan et al. 1997). Being a member of a group necessitates being held in esteem by that group, which in turn, means that certain demands are made on one, and in exchange, one is entitled to make certain claims on others in the group (Bedford and Hwang 2003). In fact, collectivists have a tacit understanding that throughout people's lifetime group-members are required to continue protecting each other in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede and Hofstede 2001). For example, because of the interconnectedness with their family unit, people from collectivistic Spain (Hofstede and Hofstede 2001) have been shown to get more upset with being shamed in public because it diminishes their family honor in contrasted with the individualistic Dutch, who are more likely to be upset because public shame indicates something is internally wrong personally (Mosquera et al. 2000). These interconnected relational expectations are what confer value on the collectivistic individual, so if the standing as a group member is lost, the person's status is also lost. Thus, collectivistic personal identity is dependent on continued dealings with their group (Bedford and Hwang 2003).

Consistent with the subjective moral prescriptions associated with Chinese culture, people are expected to perform according to the behavioral codes that define their relationships. Suitable behavior, therefore, varies with each circumstance, depending on the different relationships involved. Thus, right and wrong are socially defined. This relational identity also makes it difficult to confer guilt in the objective sense as Westerners conceptualize it (Bedford and Hwang 2003) because the boundaries of a collectivistic person's identity extends beyond the individual to the person's relationships. Given this conceptualization, if one can identify an individual who perpetrated bullying, the responsibility for the behavior encompasses the group as well the consequences. For example, if an employee does something wrong, then that person's boss will be held responsible for not training their employee better. The boss will suffer socially for the employee's misbehavior. Additionally, the collectivistic principle of respecting superiors in a hierarchy results in the relationships among the actors determining what is the most appropriate course of action for a given situation. Similarly, shame in collectivistic Japan involves the fear of bringing denigration on one's family as opposed to the US concept of shame encompassing the images of a belittled self in the face of others (Thonney et al. 2006). Moreover, additional findings show that the more shame-prone Japanese have a greater likelihood to feel anger than the less shame-prone Europeans (Ramírez et al. 2001). Thus, relational identity is essentially connected to the use of shame and situational morality as a form of social

control. It is not similarly compatible with the use of objective morality such as *guilt* (Bedford and Hwang 2003).

Bedford and Hwang (2003) point out that the duty-based morality in Confucian cultures incorporates shame to ensure conformity to the group. In this sense, shame is considered to be a highly valued emotion in Confucian cultures. Moreover, due to the overarching connectedness in Confucian societies, it is expected that the experience of shameful feelings would last for a longer period of time when compared with Westerners (Cardon 2006).

According to Mak et al. (2015), Confucian cultures such as the Chinese, have comparable shame and guilt emotions to Western cultures but experience these emotions as self-evaluation or self-punishment in the event of transgressions in response to face-threats. More specifically, in Confucian cultures shame is caused by disapproval or criticism from others for not meeting society's standards whereas guilt is a response to social-norm violations (guilt).

Thus, guilt is a reaction to violating internalized social norms (Mak et al. 2015). As Bedford (2004) points out, guilt is felt regardless of one's capabilities to fulfill moral obligations, which, given the strong interpersonal bonding in Confucian China, includes duties to one's family (Bedford 2004) and obligations of reciprocity (Yang and Kleinman 2008). When a person fails to fulfill these moral obligations, s/he feels guilty not only for her/his own personal failure but also for the possibility of having damaged her/his family's reputation. Given the close connection between face concern and moral emotions, it is possible that moral emotions act as a mediating mechanism that links face concern with self-stigma. Consequently, experiencing guilt results in an acceptance of responsibility for enacting beneficial behavior.

For example, similar to US findings, in a cross-cultural study between Koreans, Japanese and US Americans, guilt-proneness was associated with a tendency to take responsibility for failures and transgressions (Furukawa et al. 2012). On the other hand, in all three cultures, shame-proneness was positively correlated with aggression-relevant constructs indicating that unacknowledged shame is associated with anger (Tangney et al. 1992). Further research conducted in collectivistic mainland China showed that shame proneness may be a problem for modern-day intimate relationships (Johnson et al. 2015). More specifically, shame proneness was found to be indirectly associated with lower relationship satisfaction for male and female partners and directly associated with more insecure attachment (showing more maladaptive anxiety and avoidance) towards one's intimate partner and less adaptive interactions (e.g., constructive problem solving).

This finding is relevant to bullying because insecure attachment has been shown to be connected to bullying as well (Eliot and Cornell 2009). So that if being prone to shame is related to insecure attachment, this could also indicate a greater likelihood that bullying behavior would be carried out by shame-prone collectivistic cultural members. For example, research has shown that in Japan (a shame-prone culture) employees reported being bullied twice as much as employees of other countries (Giorgi et al. 2013).

To further investigate the role of culture in collectivistic experiences of guilt and shame, in a phenomenological study, Bedford (2004) found that the collectivistic Chinese experience of guilt is similar to that of individualistic Americans, in the sense that guilt is aroused in cases of moral transgression in both cultures. Indeed, Bedford (2004) points out that three types of guilt can be differentiated in the Mandarin language, which do not exist in English. These three different types are the guilt felt in the case of failure to uphold an obligation to another (*nei jiu*), in the case of moral transgression (*zui e gan*), and of the transgression of law (*fan zui gan*). Consequently, Bedford argues that the guilt feeling originating from a failure to fulfill a responsibility to another (*nei jiu*) is different from the Western sense of guilt in the sense that it involves a responsibility towards others. For example, when patients request from a traditional doctor, who does not have the certificate to do surgery, to perform a medical operation, the doctor feels *nei jiu* guilt, because he is incapable of doing this (Bedford 2004). One can conclude from this evidence that collectivistic guilt is present but has a more group-oriented character in keeping with their more interconnected group-oriented identity. Findings have also shown a high-level of group-oriented guilt in collectivistic South Korea, indicating that collectivism interacts with the notion of guilt (Furukawa et al. 2012).

Accordingly, the more the self is defined in terms of a group, the more likely that group referencing and shame in the context of the group will be a strong influence on the self-concept.

Interconnectedness makes shame a powerful socializing force because as Retzinger (1991) suggests, when the self becomes alienated from significant others, shame acts as a thermometer. Yet, when shame is unacknowledged it becomes exceptionally difficult to monitor the self in relation to others and often leads to dysfunctional behavior such as intense conflict. Culture tends to determine the extent to which individuals need togetherness as opposed to separateness. Thus, those from Japanese culture lean more towards engulfment while US Americans lean towards isolation (Retzinger 1991).

According to Lebra (2010), shame and guilt are both anchored in the individual's self, but also reflect concern with others. Lebra explains that both shame and guilt are important moral sanctions for collectivistic Japanese, but guilt has a relative priority over shame possibly because its ultimate moral value is associated with self-denial, a Confucian ideal. Shame, involves an egocentric concern for self-image. The egocentricity entailed in shame arouses a degree of ambivalence in Japanese to admit feeling shame; whereas guilt admission involves no such ambivalence. Moreover, egocentric reasoning has been shown to be associated with bullying as well (Menesini and Camodeca 2008). Guilt, on the other hand, is anchored more firmly than shame in the Japanese moral system, therefore, in Japan, shame is often translated into guilt terms (Lebra 2010). This notion is consistent with US notions of shame and guilt in that shame often goes unacknowledged and is enacted dysfunctionally—possibly through bullying—while guilt is less ambiguous hence requires more clear action.

### **10.3 Empathy, Detachment, Externalization of Blame, and Bullying**

In the previous section, it was illustrated that given the similarities between those who experience unacknowledged shame and those who bully, it is likely that bullies are likely to be in a state of unacknowledged shame. Expanding upon this line of reasoning, other relationships between shame and bullying will be explored. In particular, the relationship of shame to empathy, detachment, and externalization of blame will be examined to see if they are related to bullying as well, to show the even greater similarity between the experience of shame and bullying, indicating that bullies are also experiencing shame.

#### ***10.3.1 Empathy/Detachment and Bullying***

Below the relationship will be explored between shame, bullying and detachment. Shame-proneness is responsible for negative communication because findings consistently show that shame is positively correlated with anger arousal, suspiciousness, resentment, irritability, a tendency to blame others for negative events, and indirect expressions of hostility (Tangney et al. 1992). In fact, evidence indicates that bullies also use indirect aggression while justifying their behavior through externalizing blame, and justifying their behavior to themselves as acceptable (Marini et al. 2006; Zapf et al. 2011). Findings also indicate that bullies often use indirect tactics partly because they tend to be more disposed to Machiavellianism, and narcissism (Baughman et al. 2012) which have been shown to be related to empathy deficits (Jonason and Kroll 2015).

In contrast, the prosocial psychological trait of empathy was shown to decrease the likelihood that a person would engage in bullying and vice versa (Ayala et al. 2014). This may be because studies generally indicate that prosocial behavior is related to empathy (Telle and Pfister 2012). While shame has been shown to be related to anti-social behavior, the proneness to “shame-free” guilt, was shown to be inversely related to externalization of blame and some indices of anger, hostility, and resentment (Tangney et al. 1992). Thus, shame appears to relate to anti-social and possibly bullying behavior, while guilt is more likely to be related to engagement, empathy, and prosocial behavior.

In fact, there is a relationship between moral disengagement and aggressive behavior, which is mediated by reduced feelings of guilt (Bandura et al. 1996). Findings further indicate that while guilt is related to empathy, shame is related to a lack of empathy (Tangney and Dearing 2002). A person’s level of empathy determines whether or not he or she chooses to enact prosocial or anti-social communication (Sakurai et al. 2011; Sze et al. 2011). For example, findings show that people who are most empathic exhibit more helping behaviors (Pavey et al. 2012) and use more prosocial communication than those who are least empathic



(Sakurai et al. 2011). What's more, people who lack empathic responsiveness toward others have been consistently identified as more likely to engage in aggressive behavior and in some cases, violent crime (Day et al. 2012; Stanger et al. 2012). Furthermore, a lack of affective empathy has been shown to lead to more frequent, as opposed to occasional, bullying of others (Jolliffe and Farrington 2006). Similarly, research shows that bullies possess moral disengagement mechanisms (Gini 2006) and low levels of empathic responsiveness (Gini et al. 2011). Consequently, Randall (1997) asserts that bullies, in general, fail to understand the feelings of others. Moreover, because bullies lack empathic skills (Shaw 2012), their aggressive behavior recurs due to their detachment (unconcern) towards their victim. In support of this claim, findings have suggested that if a target displays pain, this only strengthens the bullies' behavior even more (Davis 1994). Given studies with adolescent bullying as indicated above, the following hypothesis is posed:

H3: Bullying will be positively related to detachment.

### ***10.3.2 Cross-Cultural Differences in Empathy/Detachment and Bullying***

For the most part, cross-cultural research across the three cities in Europe (in Italy and Spain) has shown that bullies, as compared to victims and outsiders, demonstrate higher levels of disengagement emotions and motives and exhibit egocentric reasoning (Menesini et al. 2003). This finding was corroborated in Japan, a society where detachment is promoted (Giorgi et al. 2013) and in Sweden where bullying is more rampant among "morally disengaged" students (Thornberg 2010). Findings also showed that in southern Italy, where bullying and violence are more widespread and supported by societal beliefs (evidenced by crime statistics indicating higher percentages of violent offences and organized crime), participants use more justifications and have higher levels of disengagement than in Spain. Recorded justifications revealed that bullies have a profile of egocentric reasoning that is particularly evident when they justify attribution of disengagement to self in the role of the bully. These findings support the notion that bullying is accompanied by moral disengagement, a correlate of shame. Additionally, cultural-specific environments appear to augment moral disengagement reactions to bullying.

In contrast to disengagement, empathy is important because its consequences are compassionate behavior towards others, moral agency, and ethical behavior (Harris 2007). On the one hand, there is evidence that indicates that collectivism (Asian) is correlated with empathy (Heinke and Louis 2009). For example, a study of servant leadership showed that dimensions of empathy and humility were more strongly endorsed in Asian cultures than European cultures (Mittal and Dorfman 2012). On the other hand, a study comparing Thai (collectivistic) and American



(individualistic) counsellor trainees found that American trainees showed greater empathy than Thai trainees (Kaelber and Schwartz 2014). Perhaps this can be explained by definitional differences in the literature. For instance, Realo and Luik (2002) found that collectivism was correlated positively with dispositional intellectual empathy and empathic emotion and that individualism predicted intellectual empathy. However, Duan et al. (2008) advance this argument further by demonstrating that empathic dispositions are more consistent with collectivistic values than with individualistic values. They posit that collectivistic values orient individuals towards empathizing with others both intellectually and emotionally by focusing the individual on the needs and interests of others, which is an integral and essential part of any empathy process. On the other hand, individualism, which focuses on the self or ego, competes with the individual's readiness for empathy by orienting his/her attention away from what others may feel or think. However, future studies are needed to test this notion. In short, extant literature on empathy as reported on above, is still evolving. Cross-cultural findings, as indicated do appear to lie in the same direction as US studies indicating that shame is likely to be correlated with bullying, an example of a hostile action, which would likely be positively correlated with feelings of detachment.

### ***10.3.3 Externalization of Blame and Bullying***

Scheff and Retzinger (2001) point out that shame and alienation are aspects of the same reality in that shame is the emotional aspect of relational alienation. For example, when a person feels shame, s/he disengages with others. This disengagement leads to alienation. Given that a connection to others is the normal state of affairs, those who are not connected to others when communicating, as in the case of lacking empathy, are practicing dysfunctional communication. Other dysfunctional anti-social characteristics associated with shame in addition to detachment include blaming others and denying responsibility for one's actions (Scheff and Retzinger 2001), that is externalization of blame (Tangney 1991).

The externalization of blame involves attributing the cause of one's own anti-social communication to external sources or to another person (Tangney and Dearing 2002). Tangney et al. (1992), reported a consistently positive relationship between proneness to shame and a tendency to externalize blame. In other words, those who feel shame tend to not take responsibility for their behavior and tend to blame others for their negative actions. Although the externalization of blame may act to improve the pain of shame temporarily, it can either lead to subsequent withdrawal from the blamed person or to an escalation of an antagonistic, humiliated rage (Lewis 1971; Scheff 1987) because having to acknowledge or take responsibility for an action that causes shame is humiliating.

In the case of bullying interactions, the bully's attribution of blame is often made to the target of bullying and is enacted via scapegoating the target (Jackson et al. 2009; Rothschild et al. 2012). In fact, a study of school children indicated that bullies are more likely to blame their victims than are children assuming other roles (Hara 2002). Further research demonstrates that there is a positive connection between shame-proneness, anger, hostility, and externalization of blame (Bennett et al. 2005; Hoglund and Nicholas 1995; Tangney et al. 1992, 1996). Given evidence from previous research with children and the relationships indicated by previous research, it is likely that adult bullying is related to the externalization of blame. Thus,

H4: Bullying will be positively related to the externalization of blame.

### ***10.3.4 Cross-Cultural Differences in Externalization of Blame and Bullying***

Cross-cultural evidence suggests that shame is associated with externalizing consequences to a lesser extent than among individualistic American samples than to collectivistic Asian samples (Sheikh 2014). Actually, Retzinger (1991) explains that when one is in an unacknowledged state of shame, it is almost impossible to take personal and social responsibility. A seeming example of this is how children in Sweden (an individualistic culture) who were desensitized to bullying believed it was a normal consequence of various victim behaviors (Thornberg 2010). When participating in bullying, the Swedish children involved transferred the responsibility and blamed others due to the psychological distance they created between themselves and their victims (Thornberg 2007). Research carried out with collectivistic Japanese children also supported the idea that bullies feel justified in their actions because they do not take responsibility for the damage they are inflicting on their victims by engaging in "denial of victims" and "denial of injury" (Hara 2002). Results of Hara's (2002) study suggest that justification for bullying in Japan may be related to the importance placed on group goals, signifying that the abuse is considered to be for the greater good and therefore acceptable and even right.

While shame-proneness positively predicted externalization of blame among Japanese children, it did not predict anger-proneness as in the case of American children who also showed anger-proneness (Tangney et al. 1992). This may be due to their collectivistic values of harmony that cause them to feel an interconnectedness to their group which expressing anger could potentially thwart. In fact, Sheikh (2014) points out that collectivistic Japanese children show a greater sense of responsibility for their behavior than individualists, as demonstrated by their being more prone to experience shame and guilt and less likely to externalize blame overall. Failure to meet the expectations of significant others not only reflects unfitting social abilities, eliciting behavior-specific feelings of guilt, but is also

considered to be disrespectful to the Japanese moral identity, producing more persistent feelings of shame about one's sense of self (and deficiencies of social skills). This is the way in which shame and guilt act as internalized sanctions against communally and ethically inappropriate conduct, inspiring individuals to act consistently within their cultural value system, so as to avoid intense shame or guilt (Kitayama et al. 1997).

In a cross-cultural comparison among Japanese, Korean, and American children (Furukawa et al. 2012), shame-proneness was positively correlated with aggression-relevant constructs in all cultures. On the other hand, guilt-proneness was associated with a tendency to take responsibility for failures and transgressions. In contrast, Bear et al. (2009) found that shame predicted aggression among the American children, as reported by classroom teachers, but not among the Japanese or the Korean children. Finally, a study comparing Japanese with Turkish adults responding to shame found that the collectivistic Japanese, who were more attuned to relationships maintenance and face responded with shame without anger, while the collectivistic Turkish respondents, who were more attuned to honor—regardless of relationship concerns—experienced shame and anger implying that honor needs, which are more externally focused, mediates the relationship between shame and anger.

The three studies cited above which investigated the relationship between shame and externalizing consequences across “non-Western” cultures found less anger and aggression as a function of shame. It is possible that results reflect the positive connotations of shame prevalent in collectivist cultures as well as the negative connotations of anger as destructive to interpersonal relationships—and although individualistic cultures also sometimes hold anger in a negative light, they do so to a much lesser extent than those from collectivistic cultures (Sheikh 2014). Thus, the finding of less anger may be due to shame's positive role in social harmony and anger's potential to disrupt harmony and damage interpersonal relationships (Sheikh 2014). Thus, the interdependent Japanese are explicitly educated to manage their negative emotions (e.g., frustration or anger) in order to maintain group harmony (Giorgi et al. 2013).

It appears that bullying tends to be positively related to the externalization of blame in most cultures despite some dissent. Overall, the findings linking shame to expressing consequences such as anger and violence have been found primarily in individualistic cultures (e.g., North America), whereas those linking shame to restorative consequences have been found primarily in collectivist cultures (Sheikh 2014). However, research suggests that shame is related to withdrawal propensities across nations. Although the current state of the literature has limitations that preclude definitive conclusions about the relationship between culture and shame's consequences, there is some support for a resource orientation where shame acts to restore interpersonal relationships through a focus on interdependent harmony in repairing the harm one has caused. This focus became apparent when studies conducted with collectivistic cultures presented results indicating that anger is unacceptable to those from interdependent cultures because of their focus on

harmony. The method and results testing the US sample reported on in this chapter follow.

## 10.4 Method

### 10.4.1 Participants

A sample of 193 employed adults filled out questionnaires through Amazon's Mechanical Turk service which generates samples comparable to mainstream academic methodologies (Buhrmester et al. 2011). Participants included 74 males and 118 females who were aged 18–66 ( $M = 28$ ;  $SD = 9.3$ ).

### 10.4.2 Instrumentation

Bullying was measured by providing a scenario prodding respondents to act as if they were bullying someone. Specifically, respondents were asked,

Has there ever been someone who just bothered you in your life? Keeping this person in mind, please answer to what extent you have engaged in the following behaviors at work towards this person (if appropriate to the example).

Then, the revised Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ; Einarsen and Raknes 1997; Einarsen et al. 2009), the most widely used scale to identify victims of bullying, was presented as the response items ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ). Respondents employed a 10-point response scale to NAQ questionnaire items (Never = 1; Always = 10). Given that there is no widely used measure to assess bullies, using the NAQ questions as response items enabled the inclusion of the entire universe of possible bullying attempts in a propensity to bully measure. In particular, this study operationalized those with a propensity to employ bullying, to score high on carrying out bullying behaviors already identified in previous research.

Since there is little agreement on how to measure characteristics of bullies, following the suggestion that multiple approaches offer a useful way for researchers to assess bullying in organizations (Cowie et al. 2002), a control measure was also used to correlate with the NAQ results. In particular, to assure that the scenario chosen had effectively measured bullies, not victims, an additional question was added: "Have you ever been harassed in the past six months?"

Shame, Guilt, Detachment, and Externalization of Blame were measured using the TOSCA-3 (Tangney and Dearing 2002), a self-report measure that consists of a series of 11 negative and five positive scenarios, with each of the effects assessed by four or five responses. Each item of the TOSCA-3 was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not likely, 5 = very likely). The alpha reliability for shame was 0.79, guilt was 0.82, detachment was 0.69; and externalization of blame was 0.80. The respondents

were first presented with an inventory scenario, for example, “You break something at work and then hide it.” Followed by a. You would think, “This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or get someone else to do it.”; b. You would think about quitting; c. You would think, “A lot of things aren’t made very well these days”; d. You would think, “It was only an accident”. Each item measured shame, guilt, detachment, or externalization of blame.

### 10.4.3 Results

Results of this study indicated that using the provided scenario together with the NAQ captured the construct of perpetrating bullying because the NAQ was significantly negatively related to the control question about being a target of bullying ( $r(134) = -0.30; p = 0.05$ ). In addition, correlations for H1–H4 were significantly correlated as hypothesized. Bullying was negatively related to guilt ( $r(191) = -0.20, p < 0.006$ ); positively related to shame ( $r(191) = 0.39, p < 0.01$ ); positively related to detachment ( $r(191) = 0.31, p < 0.0001$ ); and positively related to externalization of blame ( $r(191) = 0.61, p < 0.0001$ ). See Table 10.1 for correlations between bullying and the personality variables of shame, guilt, detachment, and externalization of blame.

### 10.4.4 Discussion

Research stresses the need for greater understanding of workplace bullying, a problem that impacts approximately half of employed adults and has devastating results on employee well-being and organizational productivity (Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy 2012). This study took a closer look at the correlates of shame and initially tested them on those with a propensity to bully to preliminarily see if bullies are likely to also be in a state of unacknowledged shame. Then as in the case of shame, proposed remediation attempts to move those with a bullying personality type from feelings of shame to guilt.

**Table 10.1** Correlations between bullying and personality variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Shame	1				
2. Detached	0.37**	1			
3. Guilt	0.13	0.14	1		
4. Blame	0.54	0.58**	-0.13	1	
5. Bullying	0.39**	0.30****	-0.20**	0.61****	1

\* $P < 0.05$ ; \*\* $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\* $P < 0.000$

Past research on bullying has mainly focused primarily on the damage done to victims as well as on solutions designed to prevent bullying, without much discussion on the perpetrators' characteristics (Zapf and Einarsen 2011) or the specific personality types of those with a propensity to bully others (Rayner et al. 2002; Rayner and Keashly 2005). Filling this gap of knowledge, as results supporting H1 show, those who are prone to enact bullying are also likely to have experienced shame themselves. What is more, as support for H2 indicates, bullies also do not tend to experience guilt, which means that they are unlikely to feel responsible for their behavior (Stuewig et al. 2010). Concomitant with their state of shame, bullies also tend to be deficient in the ability to feel empathy, as demonstrated by support for H3, which states that bullying is positively related to detachment. After all, bullies might think that if they were unfairly shamed, why should other people enjoy the benefit of the doubt that Concomitant with their state of shame, bullies also tend to be deficient in the ability to feel empathy, as support for H3, that bullying is positively related to detachment demonstrates. After all, bullies might think that if they were unfairly shamed, why should other people enjoy the benefit of the doubt that empathy might provide? Besides not feeling responsibility for their behavior, as support for H4 shows, bullying is also positively related to the externalization of blame—meaning that they find outside empathy might provide? Besides not feeling responsibility for their behavior, as support for H4 shows, bullying is also positively related to the externalization of blame—indicating that bullies find outside antagonists to blame for their failures instead of taking personal responsibility for their actions. These results apply to individualistic cultures, such as the US, where the self of each person is separate from society or the family group. On the other hand, people from collectivistic cultures tend to have more interdependent selves, where the self is viewed as inter-reliant with the surrounding context, and individual experiences are manifestations of group experiences (Marcus and Kitayama 1991, Kitayama et al. 1997). The bullying profile portrayed by this study's results highlight the downside of shame which has been characterized as a strong negative feeling in both American and Japanese cultures (Szyner et al. 2012). The changes that result from feelings of shame have been proven to be both maladaptive and anti-social, explaining its positive relationship to bullying. Guilt has also been shown to motivate change, albeit with constructive results. More specifically, guilt has been proven to be negatively related to bullying and positively correlated to self-work. It is therefore sensible to conclude that replacing shame with guilt, an emotion leading to acceptance of responsibility, can result in heightened prosocial behaviors. This is corroborated by previous research showing that those who experience shame experience more maladjustment (Tangney et al. 1991), personal distress, and impaired interpersonal relationships in contrast to those who experience guilt (Leith and Baumeister 1998).

On the one hand, the results tested here apply to individualistic cultures such as the US where the self-identity of each person is separate from society or the family group. On the other hand, people from collectivistic cultures tend to have more interdependent selves where the self is viewed as inter-reliant within the surrounding context, and it is the group that is focal point in individual experiences

(Marcus and Kitayama 1991, 1997). Given these two diverging perspectives, the way people of different cultures experience and react to shame is inevitably different.

Retzinger (1991) points out that shame, a breakdown of the social bond which regulates conformity in a society (Scheff 1995), can be used to stigmatize or integrate depending on the culture. More specifically, Braithwaite (1998) showed how shame can effect stigmatization or integration in her study with Japanese white-collar criminals who were rehabilitated using shame to integrate (Retzinger 1991). However, this process is culture-specific, yielding successful results when combined with the collectivistic Japanese need for interconnectedness (Marcus and Kitayama 1991; Riemer et al. 2014). Other studies indicated that interconnectedness was responsible for Japanese employees feeling that justice was achieved only when they saw conflicts were resolved in a group-oriented manner, relatively independent of personal interests (Ohbuchi et al. 2001). Finally, interconnectedness can act as a catalyst for restorative consequences primarily in collectivist cultures (Sheikh 2014); even though robust evidence suggests that shame is related to withdrawal propensities across nations.

Although the current state of the literature has limitations that preclude definitive conclusions about the relationship between culture and shame's consequences, there is some support for a resource orientation where shame acts to restore interpersonal relationships through a focus on interdependent harmony in repairing the harm one has caused as in the case of bullying, for example. This focus became apparent when studies conducted with collectivistic cultures, indicated that anger is unacceptable to those from interdependent cultures because of the value they place on group harmony.

### ***10.4.5 Implications and Future Research***

The results of this study move bullying research forward by emphasizing that shame is likely to play a central role in the behavior enacted by bullies. The findings of this study concur with research showing that guilt improves relationship outcomes and perspective taking (Leith and Baumeister 1998). This is partly because feeling guilt by definition is a result of the perpetrator accepting responsibility for his or her behavior and realizing that bullying is wrong (Stuewig et al. 2010). If leaders who have a higher status than those with a propensity to bully are able to require them to accept responsibility for their behavior, then the acceptance of guilt could lead to greater perspective-taking followed by improved relationship outcomes (Leith and Baumeister 1998).

To practically address this concept, those with the ability to approach bullying perpetrators, such as a superior in the organizational hierarchy or a parent, may take action by insisting that the perpetrator focus on rectifying the wrongdoings by discovering the cause of the maladaptive behavior and accepting responsibility for past actions. In addition, it is essential that authorities insist on perpetrators

committing to right actions as a new way of functioning while concurrently taking serious measures to correct past wrongdoings. In the US and likely similar individualistic cultures, inspiring guilt appears to be a strategic asset for those with authority over bullying perpetrators. In collectivistic cultures such as Japan, research indicates that those who have the authority to manage bullying perpetrators should test out identity management strategies focusing on methods of harmoniously interconnecting with group norms to improve bullying situations.

It is also necessary for employers to address the shame that is at the heart of the toxicity emanating from bullies by directing the offenders to those in a position to help them, such as a therapist. Indeed, findings indicate that resolving shame issues are pivotal in therapeutic relationships because the healing of shame is often the key to transformational change (Lee and Wheeler 1996). Therefore, if those in positions of authority maintain that perpetrators of bullying must carry out remedial actions as described above, it could be possible to address the issue of bullying more constructively.

One of most fundamental skills in human social behavior is the ability to experience empathy for the difficulties experienced by our fellow human beings (Rameson et al. 2012). In contrast to those who feel guilt and the resulting emotion of empathy (Ghorbani et al. 2014), those with a propensity to bully others tend to feel detachment and to externalize blame. Thus, those with a propensity to bully others tend to have little interest in taking responsibility for their actions, as is evidenced by the low guilt content found in bullies. What's more, those with a propensity to bully are detached from the consequences of their actions (the pain they are causing others), which enables them to continue the process by blaming their victims. These findings were apparent in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Jackson et al. 2009; Rothschild et al. 2012; Thornberg 2007). Blaming and belittling is most likely to be addressed successfully by strong managers who, without the disruption of social bonds, can insist that the bullies acknowledge their feelings of shame and take responsibility for their behavior instead of displacing shame by blaming others (or use shame to propel harmony for those from cultures so inclined). Future research is necessary to test different managerial tactics to see what approaches are most successful in effecting a change in bullying behaviour.

In addition to taking responsibility for one's actions, researchers indicate that the reparation of harm begins with the development of the emotion of guilt and the de-escalation of the emotion of shame (Herbst 2005; Jackson et al. 2009; Tangney et al. 1992; Weizmann-Henelius et al. 2002). Future research is needed to see whether it is possible to develop emotions of guilt in offenders, so that they may become more empathetic, more likely to accept responsibility for their organizational and social offenses, and less likely to blame their victims (Herbst 2005; Jackson et al. 2009, 2011; Stuewig et al. 2010; Tangney et al. 1992; Weizmann-Henelius et al. 2002). One study showed that marked desistance from school bullying was possible when identified bullies went through a process of shame acknowledgment that led to less shame displacement such as blaming the victim (Ahmed and Braithwaite 2012). Therefore, future research is needed to test different methods of working through and acknowledging of shame, especially



geared towards bullying perpetrators in the workplace—to see if this course of action provides a possible alternative in managing adult workplace bullying interactions. In addition to targeted observations of perpetrators dealing with shame, future research employing different methodologies testing the same propositions set forth in this study would add further support for the conclusions found here.

### **10.4.6 Limitations**

The use of quantitative questionnaires allows researchers to test reliability and validity empirically, but does not allow for follow-up questions to probe deeper into the thoughts of bullying perpetrators. What's more, it is not possible, using a rating-scale approach, to identify directly, who actual bullying perpetrators are. Even if such individuals were identified, it is unlikely that known groups of bullies would agree to be measured as such. Therefore, the indirect measurement method conducted for this study acts as an experimental beginning to be followed up with more direct methodology in the future. For example, future research using qualitative interviews could be used to delve deeper into the psyche of consenting bullying perpetrators. If possible, observations could be carried out to see if bullies behave in coordination with the findings in this study in a naturalistic setting. Finally, if known perpetrators could be identified (perhaps by human resources departments) interviews could be employed to replicate and follow up on the findings of this study in conjunction with managerial demands.

Another limitation of this study was the use of a self-report instrument. Self-report measures in some cases could be problematic. Cook and Campbell (1979) have pointed out that sometimes subjects either report what they believe the researcher expects to see, or report what reflects well on their own abilities or knowledge. Another concern about self-reports is whether subjects are able to accurately recall their past behaviors. Cognitive psychologists have also warned that the human memory is imperfect (Schacter 1999). Thus, respondents may not remember the details of what they are asked to report on.

On the other hand, a series of construct validity studies show that global self-reports have validity (e.g., Lucas et al. 1996; Sandvik et al. 1993). It is also possible to replicate and extend the findings of this study with multiple methodologies to further validate the results.

## **10.5 Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, this chapter proposes the notion that bullies have a shamed past and, therefore, respond similarly to how the literature says those who have unacknowledged shame behave—in an anti-social manner—with a lack of empathy and a refusal to accept responsibility for their actions. However, if

members of individualistic cultures focus on guilt and its corresponding acceptance of responsibility and if members of collectivistic cultures focus on promoting interdependent harmonious interactions, this positive orientation would help foster constructive steps in remediating the issues of shame leading to bullying behaviors. In turn, the results of this study highlight how shame and shame correlates could be the central trigger for bullying interactions and could also be the lynchpin in treating the problem.

## References

- Ahmed, E., & Braithwaite, V. (2004). "What, me ashamed?" Shame management and school bullying. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 41(3), 269–294. doi:10.1177/0022427804266547
- Ahmed, E., & Braithwaite, V. (2012). Learning to manage shame in school bullying: Lessons for restorative justice interventions. *Critical Criminology*, 20(1), 79–97. doi:10.1007/s10612-011-9151-y
- Ayala, A. G., Muñoz, A. R., López, Y. M., Antino, M., & Ayllón, E. (2014). The role of psychological detachment and empathy in the relationship between target and perpetrator in workplace bullying situations/El papel del distanciamiento psicológico y la empatía en la relación entre víctima y agresor en situaciones de acoso en el trabajo. *Revista de Psicología Social*, 29(2), 213–234.
- Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Handbook of moral behavior and development: Theory, research, and applications* (pp. 71–129). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Mechanism of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 364–374.
- Baughman, H. M., Dearing, S., Giammarco, E., & Vernon, P. A. (2012). Relationships between bullying behaviours and the Dark Triad: A study with adults. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(5), 571–575.
- Baumeister, R. F., Stillwell, A. M., & Heatherton, T. F. (1994). Guilt: An interpersonal approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 243–267.
- Baumeister, R. F., Vohs, K. D., DeWall, C. N., & Zhang, L. (2007). How emotion shapes behavior: Feedback, anticipation, and reflection, rather than direct causation. In *Personality and social, and reintegration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bear, G., Uribe-Zarain, X., Manning, M., & Shiomi, K. (2009). Shame, guilt, blaming, and anger: Differences between children in Japan and the US. *Motivation & Emotion*, 33(3), 229. doi:10.1007/s11031-009-9130-8
- Bedford, O., & Hwang, K. (2003). Guilt and shame in Chinese culture: A cross-cultural framework from the perspective of morality and identity. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 33(2), 127–143.
- Bedford, O. A. (2004). The individual experience of guilt and shame in Chinese culture. *Culture & Psychology*, 10(1), 29–52.
- Bennett, D. S., Sullivan, M. W., & Lewis, M. (2005). Young children's adjustment as a function of maltreatment, shame, and anger. *Child Maltreatment*, 10(4), 311–323. doi:10.1177/1077559505278619
- Braithwaite, J. (1998). Institutionalizing Distrust, Enculturating Trust. In E. Braithwaite, & M. Levi (Eds.), *Trust and Democratic Governance*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

- Buhrmester, M., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S. D. (2011). Amazon's mechanical turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality, data? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(1), 3–5. doi:[10.1177/1745691610393980](https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610393980)
- Cardon, P. W. (2006). Reacting to face loss in Chinese business culture: An interview report. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 4, 439–443.
- Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and analysis issues*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Cowie, H., Naylor, P., Rivers, I., Smith, P. K., & Pereira, B. (2002). Measuring workplace bullying. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 7(1), 33–51. doi:[10.1016/S1359-1789\(00\)00034-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1359-1789(00)00034-3)
- Davis, M. H. (1994). *Empathy, a social psychological approach*. USA: William. C. Brown Communications Inc.
- Day, A., Mohr, P., Howells, K., Gerace, A., & Lim, L. (2012). The role of empathy in anger arousal in violent offenders and university students. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 56(4), 599–613. doi:[10.1177/0306624X11431061](https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X11431061)
- Donnellan, M., Trzesniewski, K. H., Robins, R. W., Moffitt, T. E., & Caspi, A. (2005). Low self-esteem is related to aggression, antisocial behavior, and delinquency. *Psychological Science*, 16(4), 328–335. doi:[10.1111/j.0956-7976.2005.01535.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0956-7976.2005.01535.x)
- Douglas, S. C., & Martinko, M. J. (2001). Exploring the role of individual differences in the prediction of workplace aggression. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(4), 547–559. doi:[10.1037//0021-9010.86.4.547](https://doi.org/10.1037//0021-9010.86.4.547)
- Dovidio, J. F., Piliavin, J. A., Schroeder, D. A., & Penner, L. A. (2006). *The social psychology of prosocial behavior*. New Jersey, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Duan, C., Wei, M., & Wang, L. (2008). The role of individualism-collectivism in empathy: An exploratory study. *Asian Journal of Counselling*, 15(1), 57–81.
- Dzurec, L. C., Kennison, M., & Albatineh, R. (2014). Unacknowledged threats proffered “in a manner of speaking”: Recognizing workplace bullying as shaming. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 46(4), 281–291.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., & Notelaers, G. (2009). Measuring exposure to bullying and harassment at work: Validity, factor structure and psychometric properties of the negative acts questionnaire-revised. *Work & Stress*, 23(1), 24–44. doi:[10.1080/02678370902815673](https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370902815673)
- Einarsen, S., & Raknes, B. (1997). Harassment in the workplace and the victimization of men. *Violence and Victims*, 12, 247–263.
- Eliot, M., & Cornell, D. G. (2009). Bullying in middle school as a function of insecure attachment and aggressive attitudes. *School Psychology International*, 30(2), 201–214.
- Fast, J. (2015). *Beyond bullying: Breaking the cycle of shame, bullying, and violence*. Oxford University Press.
- Fisher, M. L., & Exline, J. (2006). Self-forgiveness versus excusing: The roles of remorse, effort, and acceptance of responsibility. *Self and Identity*, 5(2), 127–146. doi:[10.1080/15298860600586123](https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860600586123)
- Folger, R., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2005). Beyond counterproductive work behavior: Moral emotions and deontic retaliation versus reconciliation. In S. Fox & P. E. Spector (Eds.), *counterproductive work behavior* (pp. 83–106). Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association.
- Fu, G., Xu, F., Cameron, C. A., Heyman, G., & Lee, K. (2007). Cross-cultural differences in children's choices, categorizations and evaluations of truths and lies. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, 278–293.
- Furukawa, E., Tangney, J., & Higashibara, F. (2012). Cross-cultural continuities and discontinuities in shame, guilt, and pride: A study of children residing in Japan, Korea and the USA. *Self and Identity*, 11(1), 90–113. doi:[10.1080/15298868.2010.512748](https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2010.512748)
- Gausel, N., Leach, C. W., Vignoles, V. L., & Brown, R. (2012). Defend or repair? Explaining responses to in-group moral failure by disentangling feelings of shame, inferiority and rejection. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102, 941–960.
- Ghorbani, N., Watson, P. J., Lotfi, S., & Chen, Z. (2014). Moral affects, empathy, and integrative self-knowledge in Iran. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 34(1), 39–56.

- Gini, G. (2006). Social cognition and moral cognition in bullying: What's wrong? *Aggressive Behavior*, 32(6), 528–539. doi:[10.1002/ab.20153](https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20153)
- Gini, G., Pozzoli, T., & Hauser, M. (2011). Bullies have enhanced moral competence to judge relative to victims, but lack moral compassion. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 50(5), 603–608. doi:[10.1016/j.paid.2010.12.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.12.002)
- Giorgi, G., Ando, M., Arenas, A., Shoss, M. K., & Leon-Perez, J. M. (2013). Exploring personal and organizational determinants of workplace bullying and its prevalence in a Japanese sample. *Psychology of Violence*, 3(2), 185.
- Hall, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (2005). Self-forgiveness: The stepchild of forgiveness research. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24, 621–637.
- Hara, H. H. (2002). Justifications for bullying among Japanese schoolchildren. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 5(3), 197–204. doi:[10.1111/1467-839X.00104](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-839X.00104)
- Harris, J. (2007). The evolutionary neurobiology, emergence and facilitation of empathy. In T. Farrow & P. Woodruff (Eds.), *Empathy in mental illness* (pp. 168–186). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Heinke, M. S., & Louis, W. R. (2009). Cultural background and individualistic-collectivistic values in relation to similarity, perspective taking, and empathy. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 39(11), 2570–2590. doi:[10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00538.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00538.x)
- Herbst, D. P. (2005). Four steps to emotional healing: Helping juveniles reflect on their lives and criminal offenses. *Corrections Today*, 67, 22–25.
- Hofstede, G. H., & Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Hoglund, C., & Nicholas, K. (1995). Shame, guilt, and anger in college students exposed to abusive family environments. *Journal of Family Violence*, 10, 141–157. doi:[10.1007/BF02110597](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02110597)
- Jackson, A., Lucas, S., & Blackburn, A. (2009). Externalization and victim-blaming among a sample of incarcerated females. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 48, 228–248. doi:[10.1080/10509670902766612](https://doi.org/10.1080/10509670902766612)
- Jackson, A. L., Blackburn, A. G., Tobolowsky, P., & Baer, D. (2011). Guilt, shame, empathy and blaming. *The Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice*, 8, 4–29.
- Jackson, L. A., & Wang, J. L. (2013). Cultural differences in social networking site use: A comparative study of China and the United States. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 910–921.
- Jakupcak, M., Tull, M. T., & Roemer, L. (2005). Masculinity, shame, and fear of emotions as predictors of men's expressions of anger and hostility. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 6(4), 275–284. doi:[10.1037/1524-9220.6.4.275](https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.6.4.275)
- Johnson, M. D., Nguyen, L., Anderson, J. R., Liu, W., & Vennum, A. (2015). Shame proneness and intimate relations in Mainland China. *Personal Relationships*, 22, 335–347. doi:[10.1111/pere.12083](https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12083)
- Jolliffe, D., & Farrington, D. P. (2006). Examining the relationship between low empathy and bullying. *Aggressive Behavior*, 32(6), 540–550. doi:[10.1002/ab.20154](https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20154)
- Jonason, P. K., & Kroll, C. H. (2015). A multidimensional view of the relationship between empathy and the dark triad. *Journal of Individual Differences*, 36(3), 150–156. doi:[10.1027/1614-0001/a000166](https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001/a000166)
- Kaelber, K. Y., & Schwartz, R. C. (2014). Empathy and emotional intelligence among Eastern and Western counsellor trainees: A preliminary study. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 36(3), 274–286. doi:[10.1007/s10447-013-9206-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-013-9206-8)
- Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., Matsumoto, H., & Norasakkunkit, V. (1997). Individual and collective processes in the construction of the self: Self-enhancement in the United States and self-criticism in Japan. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(6), 1245.
- Kwan, V. S., Bond, M. H., & Singelis, T. M. (1997). Pancultural explanations for life satisfaction: Adding relationship harmony to self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(5), 1038.

- Lebra, T. (2010). Shame and guilt in Japan. In R. A. LeVine & R. A. LeVine (Eds.), *Psychological anthropology: A reader on self in culture* (pp. 102–111). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lee, R. G., & Wheeler, G. (1996). *The voice of shame: Silence and connection in psychotherapy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Leith, K. P., & Baumeister, R. F. (1998). Empathy, shame, guilt, and narratives of interpersonal conflicts: Guilt-prone people are better at perspective taking. *Journal of Personality*, 66(1), 1–37. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.00001
- Lewis, H. B. (1971). *Shame and guilt in neurosis*. New York: International University Press.
- Lucas, R. E., Diener, E., & Suh, E. (1996). Discriminant validity of well-being measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(3), 616–628. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.71.3.616
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & McDermott, V. (2011). Making sense of supervisory bullying: Perceived powerlessness, empowered possibilities. *Southern Communication Journal*, 76(4), 342–368. doi:10.1080/10417941003725307
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P., Naimie, G., & Naimie, R. (2009). Workplace bullying: Causes, consequences, and corrections. In P. Lutgen-Sandvik & B. D. Sypher (Eds.), *Destructive organizational communication* (pp. 27–52). New York: Routledge.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Tracy, S. J. (2012). Answering five key questions about workplace bullying: How communication scholarship provides thought leadership for transforming abuse at work. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 26(1), 3–47. doi:10.1177/0893318911414400
- Mak, W. W., Ho, C. Y., Wong, V. U., Law, R. W., & Chan, R. C. (2015). Cultural model of self-stigma among chinese with substance use problems. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 155, 83–89. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2015.08.011
- Malouf, E., Youman, K., Harty, L., Schaefer, K., & Tangney, J. P. (2013). Accepting guilt and abandoning shame: A positive approach to addressing moral emotions among high-risk, multineed individuals. In *Mindfulness, acceptance, and positive psychology: The seven foundations of well-being* (pp. 215–239).
- Malti, T., & Ongley, S. F. (2014). The development of moral emotions and moral reasoning. In M. Killen & J. G. Smetana (Eds.), *Handbook of moral development* (pp. 163–183). New York: Psychology Press.
- Marini, Z. A., Dane, A. V., & Bosacki, S. L. (2006). Direct and indirect bully-victims: Differential psychosocial risk factors associated with adolescents involved in bullying and victimization. *Aggressive Behavior*, 32(6), 551–569. doi:10.1002/ab.20155
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224.
- Menesini, E., & Camodeca, M. (2008). Shame and guilt as behaviour regulators: Relationships with bullying, victimization and prosocial behaviour. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 26(2), 183–196. doi:10.1348/026151007X205281
- Menesini, E., Sanchez, V., Fonzi, A., Ortega, R., Costabile, A., & Lo Feudo, G. (2003). Moral emotions and bullying: A cross-national comparison of differences between bullies, victims and outsiders. *Aggressive Behavior*, 29, 515–530. doi:10.1002/ab.10060
- Mittal, R., & Dorfman, P. W. (2012). Servant leadership across cultures. *Journal of World Business*, 47(4), 555–570. doi:10.1016/j.jwb.2012.01.009
- Mosquera, P. M. R., Manstead, A. S., & Fischer, A. H. (2000). The role of honor-related values in the elicitation, experience, and communication of pride, shame, and anger: Spain and the Netherlands compared. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(7), 833–844.
- Naimie, G., & Naimie, R. (2009). *The bully at work*. Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks Incorporated.
- Neuman, J. H., Baron, R. A., Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. (2011). Social antecedents of bullying: A social interactionist perspective. In *Bullying and harassment in the workplace: Developments in theory, research, and practice* (pp. 201–225).
- Ohbuchi, K., Suzuki, M., & Hayashi, Y. (2001). Conflict management and organizational attitudes among Japanese: Individual and group goals and justice. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 4(2), 93–101. doi:10.1111/j.1467-839x.2001.00078.x

- Pavey, L., Greitemeyer, T., & Sparks, P. (2012). "I help because I want to, not because you tell me to": Empathy increases autonomously motivated helping. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(5), 681–689. doi:10.1177/0146167211435940
- Proeve, M., & Howells, K. (2002). Shame and guilt in child sexual offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 46(6), 657–667. doi:10.1177/0306624X02238160
- Rameson, L. T., Morelli, S. A., & Lieberman, M. D. (2012). The neural correlates of empathy: Experience, automaticity, and prosocial behavior. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 24(1), 235–245. doi:10.1162/jocn\_a\_00130
- Ramírez, J. M., Fujihara, T., & Van Goozen, S. (2001). Cultural and gender differences in anger and aggression: A comparison between Japanese, Dutch, and Spanish students. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 141(1), 119–121.
- Randall, P. (1997). *Adult bullying: Perpetrators and victims*. London: Routledge.
- Randall, P. (2001). *Bullying in adulthood: Assessing the bullies and their victims*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Rayner, C., Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2002). *Workplace bullying: What we know, who is to blame, and what we can do*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Rayner, C., & Keashly, L. (2005). Bullying at work: A perspective from Britain and North America. In S. Fox & P. E. Spector (Eds.), *Counterproductive work behavior* (pp. 271–296). Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association.
- Realo, A., & Luik, M. (2002). On the relationship between collectivism and empathy in the context of personality traits. *Trames*, 6(3), 218–233.
- Retzinger, S. (1991). *Violent emotions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rieffe, C., Camodeca, M., Pouw, L. C., Lange, A. C., & Stockmann, L. (2012). Don't anger me! Bullying, victimization, and emotion dysregulation in young adolescents with ASD. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(3), 351–370. doi:10.1080/17405629.2012.680302
- Riemer, H., Shavitt, S., Koo, M., & Markus, H. R. (2014). Preferences don't have to be personal: Expanding attitude theorizing with a cross-cultural perspective. *Psychological Review*, 121(4), 619.
- Rivers, I., & Noret, N. (2010). Participant roles in bullying behavior and their association with thoughts of ending one's life. *Crisis*, 31, 143–148.
- Roos, S., Hodges, E. V., & Salmivalli, C. (2014). Do guilt-and shame-proneness differentially predict prosocial, aggressive, and withdrawn behaviors during early adolescence? *Developmental Psychology*, 50(3), 941.
- Rothschild, Z. K., Landau, M. J., Sullivan, D., & Keefer, L. A. (2012). A dual-motive model of scapegoating: Displacing blame to reduce guilt or increase control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(6), 1148–1163. doi:10.1037/a0027413
- Sakurai, S., Hayama, D., Suzuki, T., Kurazumi, T., Hagiwara, T., Suzuki, M., & ... Oikawa, C. (2011). The relationship of empathic-affective responses toward others' positive affect with prosocial behaviors and aggressive behaviors (English). *Japanese Journal of Psychology*, 82(2), 123–131. doi:10.4992/jjpsy.82.123
- Sandvik, E., Diener, E., & Seidlitz, L. (1993). Subjective well-being: The convergence and stability of self-report and non-self-report measures. *Journal of Personality*, 61(3), 317–342. doi:10.1111/1467-6494.ep9402021310
- Schacter, D. L. (1999). The seven sins of memory: Insights from psychology and cognitive neuroscience. *American Psychology*, 54, 182–203. doi:10.1023/A:1021375526129
- Schauberg, R. L., & Flynn, F. J. (2012). Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown: The link between guilt proneness and leadership. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103(2), 327.
- Scheff, T. J. (1987). The shame-rage spiral: A case study of an interminable quarrel. In H. B. Lewis (Ed.), *The role of shame in symptom formation* (pp. 109–149). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Scheff, T. J. (1995). Self-defense against verbal assault: Shame, anger, and the social bond. *Family Process*, 34(3), 271–286.



- Scheff, T. J., & Retzinger, S. M. (2001). *Emotions and violence: Shame and rage in destructive conflicts*. Lexington, MA, USA: Lexington Books/D. C. Heath and Company.
- Schoenleber, M., Sippel, L. M., Jakupcak, M., & Tull, M. T. (2015). Role of trait shame in the association between posttraumatic stress and aggression among men with a history of interpersonal trauma. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 7(1), 43–49. doi:10.1037/a0037434
- Shaw, V. (2012). Bullying tactics. *Coaching at Work*, 7(1), 42–44.
- Sheikh, S. (2014). Cultural variations in shame's responses: A dynamic perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 18(4), 387–403. doi:10.1177/1088868314540810
- Shepherd, L., Spears, R., & Manstead, A. S. (2013). 'This will bring shame on our nation': The role of anticipated group-based emotions on collective action. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49, 42–57. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2012.07.011
- Stanger, N., Kavussanu, M., & Ring, C. (2012). Put yourself in their boots: Effects of empathy on emotion and aggression. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 34(2), 208–222.
- Stuewig, J., Tangney, J. P., Heigel, C., Harty, L., & McCloskey, L. (2010). Shaming, blaming, and maiming: Functional links among the moral emotions, externalization of blame, and aggression. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(1), 91–102. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2009.12.005
- Sutton, J., Smith, P. K., & Swettenham, J. (1999). Bullying and 'theory of mind': A critique of the 'social skills deficit' view of anti-social behaviour. *Social Development*, 8(1), 117–127. doi:10.1111/1467-9507.00083
- Sze, J. A., Gyurak, A., Goodkind, M. S., & Levenson, R. W. (2011). Greater emotional empathy and prosocial behavior in late life. *Emotion*, Aug 22, 2011, No Pagination. doi:10.1037/a0025011
- Szyner, D., Takemura, K., Delton, A. W., Sato, K., Robertson, T., Cosmides, L., et al. (2012). Cross-cultural differences and similarities in proneness to shame: An adaptationist and ecological approach. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 10(2), 352.
- Tangney, J. P. (1991). Moral affect: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 598–607.
- Tangney, J., Mashek, D., & Stuewig, J. (2005). Shame, guilt, and embarrassment: Will the real emotion please stand up? *Psychological Inquiry*, 16(1), 44–48.
- Tangney, J., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. (2007). Moral emotions and moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58(1), 345–372. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070145
- Tangney, J., Wagner, P. E., Hill-Barlow, D., Marschall, D. E., & Gramzow, R. (1996). Relation of shame and guilt to constructive versus destructive responses to anger across the lifespan. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(4), 797–809. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.70.4.797
- Tangney, J. P. (1991). Moral affect: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(4), 598–607. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.61.4.598
- Tangney, J. P., & Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and guilt*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Martinez, A. G. (2014). Two faces of shame the roles of shame and guilt in predicting recidivism. *Psychological Science*, 25(3), 799–805.
- Tangney, J. P., Wagner, P., Fletcher, C., & Gramzow, R. (1992). Shamed into anger? The relation of shame and guilt to anger and self-reported aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62(4), 669–675. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.62.4.669
- Telle, N., & Pfister, H. (2012). Not only the miserable receive help: Empathy promotes prosocial behaviour toward the happy. *Current Psychology*, 31(4), 393–413. doi:10.1007/s12144-012-9157-y
- Thoney, J., Kanachi, M., Sasaki, H., & Hatayama, T. (2006). Guilt and shame in Japan: Data provided by the thematic apperception test in experimental settings. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 8(1), 85–98.
- Thornberg, R. (2007). A classmate in distress: Schoolchildren as bystanders and their reasons for how they act. *Social Psychology of Education*, 10(1), 5–28.

- Thornberg, R. (2010). Schoolchildren's social representations on bullying causes. *Psychology in the Schools, 47*(4), 311–327.
- Triandis, H. C., Bontempo, R., Villareal, M. J., Asai, M., & Lucca, N. (1988). Individualism and collectivism: Cross-cultural perspectives on self-ingroup relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*(2), 323.
- Vaughn, M. G., Fu, Q., Bender, K., DeLisi, M., Beaver, K. M., Perron, B. E., et al. (2010). Psychiatric correlates of bullying in the United States: Findings from a national sample. *Psychiatric Quarterly, 81*(3), 183–195.
- Vega, G., & Comer, D. R. (2005). Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words can break your spirit: Bullying in the workplace. *Journal of Business Ethics, 58*(1–3), 101–109. doi:[10.1007/s10551-005-1422-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-005-1422-7)
- Warden, D., & MacKinnon, S. (2003). Prosocial children, bullies and victims: An investigation of their sociometric status, empathy and social problem-solving strategies. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 21*, 367–385. doi:[10.1348/026151003322277757](https://doi.org/10.1348/026151003322277757)
- Weizmann-Henelius, G., Sailas, E., Viemero, V., & Eronen, M. (2002). Violent women, blame attribution, crime and personality. *Psychopathology, 35*, 355–361. doi:[10.1159/000068590](https://doi.org/10.1159/000068590)
- Yang, L. H., & Kleinman, A. (2008). “Face” and the embodiment of stigma in China: The cases of schizophrenia and AIDS. *Social Science and Medicine, 67*(3), 398–408.
- Zapf, D., & Einarsen, S. (2011). Individual antecedents of bullying: Victims and perpetrators. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and harassment in the workplace. Developments in theory, research, and practice* (pp. 177–200). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Zapf, D., Escartín, J., Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., & Vartia, M. (2011). Empirical findings on prevalence and risk groups of bullying in the workplace. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and harassment in the workplace. Developments in theory, research and practice* (pp. 75–105).



**Part III**  
**The Application of Shame and Culture  
in Therapeutic and Counseling Practices**

# Chapter 11

## Shame and Psychotherapy: Theory, Method and Practice

Mrigaya Sinha

**Abstract** Shame along with guilt and embarrassment, belongs to a family of emotions that have been called the self-conscious emotions. These emotions are known to make us inward focused, however, shame almost always occurs in the presence of the other or imagined other making us relationally focused. When appropriately experienced, shame can be a modulator of interpersonal relatedness, however, if it is denied in oneself or not accessed meaningfully, it can lead to disconnect in the emotional and relational realm. In psychotherapeutic literature, there has been a surge in clinical interest in shame and many of the problems of anxiety have now been reconceptualized as problems of shame. It has been found correlated with a host of psychiatric disorders like depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety, eating disorders, PTSD, and substance abuse. An appreciation of manifestations of shame in psychotherapy may greatly deepen our ability to connect with and understand our patients' experience. This chapter will discuss the relevance of shame in therapeutic practice, the importance of assessing shame, identification of verbal and non-verbal markers of shame, role of shame in therapeutic alliance, and some principles a therapist should follow when treating shame.

### 11.1 Introduction on Shame: Construct and Relevance to Psychotherapy

Shame is one of the more complex self-conscious emotions which has recently achieved a point of great significance within the domains of psychopathology and psychotherapy (Gilbert and Miles 2000; Lester 1998; Quigley and Tedeschi 1996; Tangney et al. 1992). Psychotherapy practitioners and researchers now agree that an appreciation of manifestations of shame in psychotherapeutic practices is imperative to correct understanding and management of many psychological disorders. The recent emergence of shame in formulations of pathology has generated new

---

M. Sinha (✉)  
Staunton Clinic, Pittsburgh, PA, USA  
e-mail: mrigayasinha@gmail.com

possibilities for interventions in disorders which up to now were viewed as difficult to treat (MacBeth and Gumley 2012; Orsillo 2005).

This chapter will provide a glimpse of different dimensions of shame-proneness, its relevance in some common psychological disorders and the new-wave therapies which have found significance in treating problematic shame. While the most emergent theoretical models of shame are from Western psychology, it is recognized that this may not be the only model nor the only mode of intervention with shame. The last section in the chapter will briefly speak about the implications alternate ways of approaching shame and its relevance to psychotherapy.

## 11.2 Dimensions of Shame

Shame and guilt were used almost synonymously till their cognitive, affective and motivational dimensions were teased apart (Lewis 1971; Tangney et al. 1996). Lewis (1971) whose work was pivotal in distinguishing guilt and shame posited that guilt occurs when a person attributes a negative outcome to a specific behavior or transgression whereas shame occurs when the negative outcomes are attributed to the entire self. If the voice of guilt uttered, “I did wrong”, the voice of shame shouted, “I am wrong”. The cognitive-attribution model considers shame to be a consequence of global, stable and internal attribution to negative events (Abramson et al. 1978). In other words those experiencing shame make more internal, global and stable attributions to negative situations and this attributional conceptualization of shame is the predominant view held in clinical research and practice of psychology (Lewis 1971; Tangney and Dearing 2002).

Shame is a normal social emotion occurring in the interpersonal matrix and it directly affects how one connects with the outside world. The developmental and evolutionary perspective of shame views it as a marker of one’s social desirability and an alarm to possible loss of social attractiveness (Gilbert et al. 1994). The perceived loss of social status generates responses like submissiveness in order to appease the other or induces withdrawal and hiding in an attempt to avoid scrutiny from others. Therefore, the self can be a reference point both from the inside and outside while undergoing shame. This assessment of oneself from inside and outside has led to the distinction between internal and external shame (Gilbert et al. 1994). In external shame there is anxiety about one’s likability and acceptability resulting in heightened preoccupation with evaluation from others. The experience of criticism and rejection from others in external shame has shown significant correlation with depression and anxiety (Gilbert 2000; Kim et al. 2011). The Other as Shamer Scale (OAS) is a measure of external shame assessing different aspects of what people are actually concerned with in being judged (Goss et al. 1994). The OAS has shown significantly high correlations with depression and other mental disorders. In internal shame the struggle is about living up to one’s own ideals and experiencing a sense of dejection at having failed to do so (Gilbert et al. 1994; Gilbert 2000). As it is apparent, both, internal and external shame, are not completely separate entities

with one affecting the valence of the other, however, they can provide two separate points for assessment and intervention (Gilbert 2000).

Another approach to the study of shame is from the perspective of state and trait. De Hooge et al. (2010) uses the term “acute shame” to describe state shame which is a discrete and circumscribed emotional state. Similar to guilt, it is more focused on behavior and promotes approach tendencies. In contrast, chronic shame or shame proneness is akin to a trait where the experience of shame is frequent and painful and motivates self-protection through hiding and withdrawal. The chronic or trait approach to shame has led to terms like shame proneness, characterological or dispositional shame. Kaufman (1989) developed the idea of internalized shame which described a “shame-bound” personality or “shame-based identity”. Unlike its healthy form, internalized shame is a developmental deficit where repeated experiences of shaming in childhood leads to a generalized sense of being unworthy and inferior. These childhood experiences of shaming are believed to induce fears of evaluation, extreme shyness and lack of trust and hostility in relationships which then persist into adulthood (Gilbert and Miles 2000). Much of the research literature on shame and psychopathology takes a trait or deficit approach to shame. There is research evidence from undergraduate samples and clinical population to suggest that the self-denigration and withdrawal of shame-proneness is associated with interpersonal consequences like fear of intimacy and poorer quality of interpersonal relationship (Black et al. 2013; Lutwak and Ferrari 1997). The Test of Self Conscious Affect (TOSCA) measures chronic shame (Tangney and Dearing 2002) by presenting a range of scenarios and asking respondents to rate their anticipated distress in these situations. Cook’s (1988) Internalized Shame Scale (ISS), additionally helps to rate the frequency with which particular thoughts or feelings of shame are experienced. Both these measures of trait shame or shame-proneness give crucial clinical information about shame and possible points of intervention.

Nathanson (1992) speaks about the “compass of shame”, which outlines the specific ways in which people deal with shameful experiences. There are four basic modes which branch into different behaviors and generate various forms of psychopathology. These are withdrawal, isolation, attack on others and attack on self. Engaging in addictions can be a manifestation of withdrawal from the pain of shame as is narcissistic pathology with its excessive avoidance of truth about oneself. Attack on others out of shame can explain rage reactions which is an attempt to balance power in a relationship. Attack on self due to shame can manifest in eating disorders where food becomes a way of punishing oneself and in worst case scenario it may result in suicide (Baumeister 1990).

### 11.3 Shame and Psychological Disorders

With increased clarity on different dimensions of shame-proneness and the development of rating scales for its measure, a significant number of studies have emerged correlating shame with different psychological disorders. In many ways,

from being an invisible emotion, shame-proneness has emerged as the single, most important explanation for multiple psychopathology. The negative, global and stable attribution of shame makes it a key self-conscious emotion in disorders like depression (Gilbert 2000; Gotlib 1984), social anxiety (Lutwak and Ferrari 1997; Li et al. 2005; Gilbert 2000), post-traumatic stress disorder (Sippel and Marshall 2011; Twohig 2008), addictions (Treeby and Bruno 2012; Wiechelt 2007) and eating disorders (Frank 1991; Gee and Troop 2003). This section will review some of the psychological disorders in which shame-proneness has shown significant correlation with origin and maintenance of psychopathology. It is not a comprehensive review but a summation of significant findings from the perspective of psychotherapy.

### ***11.3.1 Anxiety Disorders***

There are several overlapping features between shame and social anxiety. The fear of social evaluation and avoidance of social situations which is a hallmark of social anxiety is also the core experience in shame-proneness. External shame which is an aspect of shame related to concerns about other's evaluation of oneself is found to resonate closely with social anxiety (Gilbert and Miles 2000). When individuals with social anxiety and extreme shyness have been compared with non-anxious adults, they have shown significantly higher scores on shame measures (Gilbert 2000). In a study examining shame and guilt in anxiety disorders in a clinical population, symptoms of both social anxiety disorder (SAD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) shared significant relations with shame-proneness after controlling for other types of anxiety disorder symptoms, depression symptoms, and guilt-proneness (Fergus et al. 2010). The relationship of shame-proneness with GAD implies a larger link between shame and worry which is the fundamental problem in anxiety. In another study, when different aspects of shame like cognitive, bodily and existential shame were examined in various psychiatric disorders, it was those with SAD who reported significantly higher levels of both cognitive and bodily shame (Scheel et al. 2014). The heightened bodily shame was a finding of significance as self-conscious focus on physical appearance can be as consequential in SAD as the cognitive aspects of shame. In an unpublished doctoral study, Sinha and Raguram (2011) found self-identified shy young adults to have a significant and high correlation with shame which was thought to increase their vulnerability to social anxiety disorder. The indiscriminate use of shaming, comparison and criticality within the family predisposes individuals to chronic shyness, SAD and avoidant personality (Erwin et al. 2003; Bruch and Heimberg 1994). These parenting styles might socialize individuals to unhealthy shame and predispose them to worries about social evaluation.

### ***11.3.2 Anger***

The pathway from shame to anger is more complex and less intuitive than its relationship with anxiety or depression. Multiple research evidence suggests that while on one side shame generates an appeasement and withdrawal response, irrational rage and hostility are the occupants of the other side of shame (Harper and Arias 2004; Nathanson 1992). Some authors have gone as far as to suggest that all acts of violence have some form of unattended shame at its core and Lewis (1971) termed shame induced anger as “humiliated fury” (Scheff 2012; Tangney et al. 1992). The shame-anger theory propounds that criticism from others and the resulting sense of rejection is experienced as painfully shameful, especially for those with early experience of repeated shaming. The experience of shaming develops an internal model of self as inferior and inadequate and a belief that they exist negatively in the minds of others. These early experiences also increase the propensity to self blame and general psychopathology (Gilbert and Miles 2000). Moreover, the experience of constant shaming results in the internalization of parent’s blaming behavior (Bruch and Heimberg 1994). When facing rejection and shame, the mind instantly seeks whom to blame to overcome the pain of rejection. There is research evidence to suggest that it is the provocation experienced in response to felt criticism which results in the anger and not the presence of an angry temperament (Hejdenberg and Andrews 2011). In a couple of longitudinal studies, shame proneness was found a risk factor for later deviant behavior (Stuewig et al. 2014) and higher rates of recidivism in contrast to feelings of guilt (Hosser et al. 2007). Scheff (2012) described the phenomenon of the recursive “feeling trap” which helps to explain the cycles of emotions with relation to anger. He proposed that emotions can multiply and gather force over time; one can become ashamed because one is ashamed, or angry because one is ashamed, then ashamed because one is angry, and so on, gathering increasing force with time, till it results in anger, depression or self harm.

### ***11.3.3 Depression***

The conceptualization of shame has many parallels with the attributional theory of depression. It is proposed that depressed individuals become shame prone due to their tendency to make internal, global and stable attributions to negative events (Abramson et al. 1978). Shame has been found in severe depression through several other pathways like “moving away” and withdrawal which decreases reinforcing environmental contingencies, poor social support and self focused ruminations (Cheung et al. 2004). Depression can also result from the shame experienced with the perceived discrepancy between the idea and the real self. In a meta-analysis examining the different facets of shame, external shame was associated with depressive symptoms and had larger effect sizes when compared to internal shame (Kim et al. 2011). External shame which relates to preoccupation with the

evaluation of a critical other may be specially active in depression and mark a break in social bonds. The Other as Shamer Scale (Goss et al. 1994) which is considered a good measure of external shame has been found strongly associated with different measures of depression (Allan and Gilbert 1997; Cheung et al. 2004; Cook 1988). The emptiness factor has predicted depression most robustly out of the other factors highlighting the sense of isolation while experiencing external shame. In worse cases, external shame increases the vulnerability to suicidal thoughts and ideations through its concerns with public condemnation and ridicule.

### ***11.3.4 Alcohol Dependence***

Shame contributes to both the origin and maintenance of alcohol dependence (Dearing et al. 2005; Meehan et al. 1996; O'Connor et al. 1994). Shame has shown significant correlations with various aspects and stages of alcohol dependence like continued use, propensity to relapse, stigma related to help seeking and adherence to treatment. There is a high positive correlation between shame and alcohol use and dependence in varied populations like students, jail inmates and those seeking de-addiction treatment (Dearing et al. 2005; Meehan et al. 1996; O'Connor et al. 1994). Shame-proneness can increase alcohol use through its avoidance of painful emotions (Treeby and Bruno 2012) and self devaluation resulting in self destructive behavior. In a study with 281 university students, Treeby and Bruno (2012) found that alcohol was primarily being used to cope with underlying feelings of anxiety and depression. The stress coping hypothesis has propounded the notion that drinking is one of the maladaptive ways of coping with stress (Cooper et al. 1995; Holahan et al. 2001). It is highly likely that those who are shame prone and who have low self-esteem, anxiety and depression chose to use alcohol to treat these. For example, a person who feels ashamed because of inadequate sexual functioning might resort to drinking to cope with his/her feelings of inadequacy. Shame-prone people have also been associated with a tendency to drink for mood enhancement (Treeby and Bruno 2012). Those who rely on drinking to enhance mood are probably poor at mood regulating strategies and more susceptible to getting dependent on alcohol. The Treeby and Bruno (2012) study also found that shame-prone people might be drinking for reasons of conformity to avoid peer-based rejection. Drinking then becomes a way of meeting approval and acceptance and creating a sense of belonging in those who feel that they are otherwise not likeable or acceptable.

### ***11.3.5 Trauma***

Shame has been linked with early trauma and adult psychopathology in a range of disorders, from bodily shame, eating disorder to post traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) and borderline personality disorder (BPD) (Andrews 1995; Robinaugh and McNally 2010). The DSM-V has included emotional states of anger, horror, guilt and shame along with fear in the repertoire of negative emotions which are predominantly aversive emotion of PTSD. Within PTSD sample, when those with higher levels of shame have been compared to the low shame group, those with higher shame exhibited a proneness to engage in self-critical thinking and a lesser tendency to engage in self reassuring thinking (Olatunji et al. 2009; Resick and Schnicke 1992; Robinaugh and McNally 2010; Shin et al. 1999; Sippel and Marshall 2011).

Shame may be a primary emotion which is experienced at the time of abuse and can also be the ongoing emotion as a result of the reliving and assessment of the trauma incident. The feelings of powerlessness and humiliation experienced during the trauma and the feelings of helplessness created by the inability to take action to defend oneself lay down the grounds for shame-proneness (Andrews et al. 2000). The interpretations of the traumatic event and the experience of negative affect like shame during the trauma has been described as the critical link between the experience of a potentially traumatic event and the development and maintenance of PTSD (Ehlers and Clark 2000; Andrews and Hunter 1997). The occurrence of a highly traumatic event in the presence of an intense emotion like shame makes trauma memory more accessible and vivid (Berntsen and Rubin 2002). Researchers have found that the more central a traumatic event is to one's life, the more one suffers from symptoms of PTSD and depression (Berntsen and Rubin 2002). Early trauma experiences like abuse create problems of attachment and emotional dysregulation especially as they become a part of one's identity (Pulakos 1996).

### ***11.3.6 Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and Suicide***

BPD is one of the more difficult disorders to treat with the high rates of abuse, anger, aggression and self-harm. There are many indications that an inability to cope with the emotions of shame is closely related to the origin and maintenance of symptoms of BPD (Rizvi and Linehan 2005; Schoenleber and Berenbaum 2012). BPD patients score higher on shame as compared to control groups and even other clinical groups on both explicit and implicit shame measures. Arousal of shame in laboratory conditions has revealed a specific pattern when shame is aroused. Once aroused it takes longer for the shame to dissipate and the experience of shame is particularly aversive to the individual. This phenomenon has been labeled as "shame aversion" and it appears that those with BPD are particularly intolerant to the experience of shame. Due to shame aversion, anger becomes one of the maladaptive strategies to deflect from the pains of shame (Gratz et al. 2010; Nathanson 1992; Schoenleber and Berenbaum 2012).

Over the years, a clear relationship has emerged between shame-proneness, suicide attempts, and self-injurious behavior in adult BPD patients (Brodsky et al. 2006; Brown et al. 2009; Rizvi and Linehan 2005; Schoenleber and Berenbaum



2012; Shearer et al. 1988). Research on motivations for non-suicidal self-injury indicates that the majority of individuals who self-harm do so as a means of emotion regulation and for borderline clients shame is a hard to cope with emotion (Klonsky 2007). The second most commonly endorsed motivation is self-punishment (Klonsky 2007). It has been suggested that individuals with BPD have learned that they deserve punishment and thus seek to express anger toward themselves by self-harming (Gratz and Tull 2011; Welch and Linehan 2002).

In a study investigating the factors in a drug overdose, results indicated that the majority of overdoses occurred in the presence of shame related thoughts and emotions. The predominant feeling while the overdose occurred was loneliness and a sense of shame and failure (Bancroft et al. 1976). Baumeister (1990) suggested that suicide may be a way to escape from harsh realities about oneself, a feeling that they have certain qualities which they cannot change (Rizvi and Linehan 2005). Tangney and Dearing's (2002), longitudinal study on shame in American children in the 5th standard predicted suicide attempts as late as in young adulthood. Thus, unresolved shame can be a significant predictor for later suicide attempts.

### ***11.3.7 Eating Disorders (ED)***

In Eating Disorders (ED) both shame and guilt are intertwined with different aspects of the disorder and as well as one's identity (Frank 1991; Masheb et al. 1999). State and trait shame is considered high in women who have a history of ED or who currently have symptoms even after controlling for symptoms of depression (Gee and Troop 2003; Troop et al. 2008). There have been some findings common across different diagnoses of eating disorders. They experience high levels of self-directed hostility, significantly lower levels of self-compassion and self-criticism is a strong predictor of eating disorder symptoms (Andrews 1995; Cooper et al. 1998; Doran and Lewis 2012). These women may also strive for a higher level of perfectionism and in some way restricting food becomes a way of striving for a better self. A general sense of worthlessness and inferiority and fear of being abandoned is a common emotion expressed by women with ED (Murray and Waller 2002; Cooper et al. 1998). When different aspects of shame and eating disorder were studied, there emerged a clear association between external shame and anorexia nervosa and internal shame was predictive of bulimia nervosa (Troop et al. 2008). The specific associations may become significant from the therapeutic perspective, providing different ways of intervening with this population.

Shame in ED has been studied especially for bodily shame as compared to general shame. In a retrospective interview study, bodily shame mediated the link between childhood abuse and adult bulimia (Andrews 1995). Both in clinical and non-clinical samples, bodily shame appears to be a stronger predictor of ED than general shame (Burney and Irwin 2000; Doran and Lewis 2012) even though aspects of shame including bodily characteristics, non-physical characteristics,

general behavior and behavior around eating are all significantly correlated with shame. Women with an eating disorder are reported to hide their bodies in various ways, even in the most intimate relationships. Shame generates a fear of creating disgust in others and in ED higher levels of shame have also shown an association with lack of disclosure in therapy (Swan and Andrews 2003).

In all the disorders mentioned above, it is apparent that shame causes a break in the social matrix and results in disconnection, both within one's own self and in relationships. Shame can hide behind different pathological presentations like alcohol abuse, eating disorder or depression. The quality of the early rearing environment and abuse significantly affects how shame gets represented internally as well as whether one learns to cope with shame adaptively. When emotions of shame are met with criticality and rejection, it becomes a toxic part of one's emotional life.

## **11.4 Shame in Therapeutic Practice**

### ***11.4.1 Starting Points in Shame Work***

It would be difficult to imagine any client narrative where shame and the pains of shame experience were not being expressed. Empirical evidence from various disorders highlights that shame-proneness increases vulnerability to psychological disorders and makes existing ones more difficult to treat (Parker and Thomas 2009; Wiechelt 2007). Targeting shame directly is believed to increase effectiveness of therapy and improve well-being, however, the literature on treatment of shame is presently evolving and the detection of shame is itself considered challenging. It would not be wrong to say that shame works in mysterious ways, as it is the natural tendency of shame to not express itself by its true name. In societies where the value of shame experience is not explicitly recognized it emerges largely in the context of depression, addiction or other psychological disorders for which the client seeks help. The narcissistic grandiose defense against shame is a classic example of how deeply entrenched shame can become. Recounting stories of shame makes people re-experience the unpleasantness and pain associated with it and threaten to overwhelm them (Scheff 2012). Discussing shame is further taken to imply having done something shameful or committing a moral faux pas and this creates a fear of being judged and inviting further rejection. Therefore, clients may constantly anticipate emergence of shame sensitive topics and side step them to avoid pain and rejection. Parker and Thomas (2009) list a series of helpful differences between shame and guilt that counselors and therapists need to be cognizant of when evaluating or treating patients in view of self-conscious emotions. If the presentation of a problem is focused on a global sense of one's badness rather than feeling bad about a specific action, then shame is likely to be the central emotion. They postulate that this distinction is important diagnostically because a client who makes a global, shame based judgment of self is developmentally at a different place as compared to feelings of guilt. Parker and Thomas (2009) also state that the

hyperfocus on one's own self creates a cognitive and emotional rigidity which lowers ability to empathize and detracts from problem solving. It creates a short sightedness towards the possibilities of multiple causalities for a negative outcome. In contrast, a guilt dominated person will describe the negative event as a matter of bad choice and stay focused on the behavior attempting to change those actions and choices.

### ***11.4.2 Withdrawal and Concealment***

Withdrawal is a natural response to shame and which can alert a therapist to it's presence. Therapy relies heavily on emotional expression and disclosure and assumes them as necessary for therapeutic success. The therapy process requires a person in need to bare their deepest secrets to a stranger and clients may struggle to understand what can be revealed and what will bring forth more shame. A client may keep an unwanted pregnancy and an abortion hidden from both her partner and therapist to avoid shame, only to feel worse for not being an honest person. Another client who begins to experience sleep disturbances and strange dreams following the loss of a friend may be unwilling to talk about the death as it brings up shame for having romantic feelings towards a best friend. Clients with eating issues may hide their difficult relationship with food as it brings up shame associated with their body image. An insistence from the therapist to delve into it could generate resistance, withdrawal and anger and potentially more shame. In a study directly exploring shame proneness and it's relation to disclosure in therapy, college students in the United States thought of a shameful secret of theirs and rated the degree of shame they felt about the secret, their willingness to disclose the secret to a potential counselor, and their expected support from a potential counselor. Participants who experienced shame regarding their secrets predicted lower anticipated support from the counselor which predicted lower willingness to disclose the secret (Dorahy et al. 2015). These findings indicate that a crucial aspect of concealment lies in the anticipated risk of disclosure, and that shame was aroused even in disclosing symptoms of a disorder which is perceived as stigmatizing. Since therapists are a part of the culture which shapes reactions to certain issues like sexuality, trauma, abuse and addictions, clients may have assumptions about therapist response to disclosure. It would then be beneficial to discuss what the client perceives as the cost of revelation and how to create an environment of safety and support in which disclosure can occur.

### ***11.4.3 To Be Direct or Not***

While it has been suggested that shame be directly addressed there is some evidence that a direct attack on shame may unintentionally generate automatic withdrawal

both from the therapist and the difficult emotions (Dorahy et al. 2015). When participants in a study were assessed on how they would like therapists to respond if their client disclosed a shame-inducing incident, interesting insights were received (Dorahy et al. 2015). Participants overall, and those with high shame proneness, did not feel withdrawal was helpful nor did they believe that staying focused on the shame feeling was particularly helpful when it was disclosed in therapy. It was an intermediate approach which was deemed most effective. An approach which allowed clients some contact with shame affect when disclosing and also providing skills in managing these emotions is deemed most helpful. It was also clear that the habitual withdrawal response in everyday interaction was not seen as beneficial while doing therapeutic work. This was interpreted as a sign of hope in clients that shame could be overcome and that the support received in therapy may provide necessary courage to face the threat from shame activation. Thus, it is prudent that probing is used sparingly at the initial phase and focus should be maintained on creating a safe environment for emotional expression. The overzealous attempts to enter into the client's world and set it right may fracture the tenuous relationship which can instead be strengthened over time with creating a safe and nurturing therapeutic environment.

#### ***11.4.4 Therapeutic Alliance***

Both implicit and explicit aspects of shame make therapeutic alliance a difficult process. Therapeutic alliance has been a long established predictor of successful therapeutic work. Therapeutic alliance has three important elements which are imperative to therapy effectiveness; agreement on goals, agreement on therapy tasks and development of an affective bond (Bordin 1979). It is believed that the two components of tasks and goals of the alliance can only develop if there is a personal relationship of confidence and regard. Like all relationships that aim to heal, faith and trust become a necessary component before goals can be achieved and healing can occur. Engaging in behaviors aimed to circumvent potentially shameful interactions with others presents significant problems with therapeutic alliance. Those with high external shame are more watchful for other's reactions and sensitive to being judged. They might conceal undesirable information and reveal only what is considered acceptable. Interpersonal avoidance can present in many ways, from avoiding eye contact to omitting significant clinical material. Client's may completely avoid a question or skip certain chapters of their lives. They may laugh nervously, or clear their throat while talking of something shameful as if the words were stuck in their throat. The therapist may note an unexplainable forgetfulness or difficulty in doing emotion focused work. The client may even lash out at the therapist for asking certain questions. The presentations of shame are as varied as the representations of psychopathology itself and when shame moments occur in therapy they may be totally unanticipated. The labelling of these presentations as resistance can create blocks in developing a free flowing interaction. It may

generate feelings of frustrations and inadequacy in the therapist as well as further jeopardizing therapeutic alliance. Nathanson's (1992) models of shame talks of typical shame avoidance strategies including preemptive avoidance of and escape from perceived shame triggers. There may be an attempt to completely circumvent situations that could potentially elicit shame or focus energy on disengaging from situations where shame has already been elicited. The use of attack and aggression are probably attempts to cope with shame that has been already aroused. Some clients may report a sudden flight into health.

Shame experiences have very often taught clients that safety lies in disconnection and withdrawal. In the initial stages of forming an alliance, acknowledging and respecting the role that withdrawal has played in maintaining the integrity of self is more imperative than challenging and pointing out its maladaptive nature. In some ways the work is akin to motivational enhancement for a person dependent on a substance. It might require the therapist to align with the client's worldview and roll with the resistance. Attempting to develop a genuine understanding of what role withdrawal played in the person's life improves motivation to discuss its pros and cons and eventually work at overcoming it. Therapists are advised to remain open to their own experiences of shame and withdrawal which can stop them from being fully present and engaged in the therapy session.

## **11.5 Some Goals in Shame Work**

The process of working with shame begins with acknowledging it, facilitating its expression, understanding the various internal and external factors in its existence, making connections and finally learning to separate the self from it.

### ***11.5.1 Facilitating Expression of Shame***

For those who have never verbalized their shame experience to another for fear of being judged, expression and verbalization of it in front of an audience is a big starting point. Encouraging expression of emotions which have been held secretly can provide a sense validation to parts of oneself which were considered too "bad" to be unmasked. Therapists need to facilitate this expression by attending closely to both the verbal and non-verbal signs of shame coping styles like avoidance or attack. The therapist would be wise to listen carefully for issues that might court shame and ask questions around their presentations. A simple inquiry like, "you looked down for a moment there, could you share what was going through your mind?", can be made. This can allow for more conscious processing of emotions rather than denying them. For a subset of clients, identifying and labeling the emotion of shame can give them valuable insights into their usual attributional styles. If the client experiences and expresses distress in discussing the shame

experience, more direct statement like “sometimes we feel angry or ashamed if we are asked about certain topics and we wish to avoid them”, can allow the client to express their distress. These moments of shame can also be noted and revisited at a later juncture when the client is more distanced from the emotion and in a better state to discuss it. Topics related to body image, sexuality, abuse, suicide attempts and even symptoms of mental health may all elicit different levels of difficulty depending on the person’s background and experience.

Initial discussions are mostly overwhelming and draining for the client and withdrawal is an immediate respite they may seek. The therapist has to acknowledge and even allow for some withdrawal but eventually drawing the client back into the discussion is imperative to create movement in therapy. It is essential to provide the holding environment in which client can talk about their deepest fears without feeling like they will be overwhelmed. Giving voice to one’s experience of abuse, deprivation, humiliation in the presence of an unconditional other can be of no small significance. It can create a cognitive and emotional shift and a sense of freedom from letting go of what was so tightly held to one’s core.

### ***11.5.2 Making Connections***

Clients in therapy understand that the way to defeat withdrawal and isolation lies in making better connection with their support systems (Vliet 2008) and efforts towards this end cannot be initiated too early in therapy. In some ways making connections require becoming more deeply connected with one’s own values and desires for one’s life. Clients may recognize that withdrawing because of shame takes them farther away from their goal of establishing genuine and compassionate relationships. Therapeutic alliance serves an invaluable function enhancing the individual’s sense of being a worthwhile and worthy person. Knowing that there is one person who provides unconditional regard leads to a sense of being valued and needed which can counteract a negative self-image. The person’s growing confidence in social context should be encouraged and reinforced and an attempt can be made to reconnect with various social networks. Overcoming interpersonal distance would also mean examining a person’s role in disconnected relationships, and taking real responsibility for repairing the damages in the relationship. Often clients are required to work with forgiveness, overcoming anger and making peace with extremely conflicted aspects of themselves. This is hard, honest work, which needs the therapist’s encouragement all the way. The therapist may engage the client in rehearsals and role plays for maximizing opportunities for successful interactions. The person may also be encouraged to talk about their shame with empathic others, even join groups or religious communes where these stories can be shared. Letting go of the secrecy of shame can forge new and meaningful connections for many of the disfranchised clients.

### ***11.5.3 Understanding Shame***

Understanding one's shame process requires assessing multiple aspects of life. This process is incomplete without visiting early family relationships and attachments. The first experience of shame probably occurs in interactions with one's early attachment figures as a part of early socialization. Some parents block the natural function of shame by using love withdrawal as a kind of punishment and get in power struggles with the child. Other parents are prone to anger and these styles probably result in a need to safeguard the self from shame and avoid further hurt. Exploring and identifying how these interactions affected early attachment and later interpersonal interactions is beneficial towards the goal of understanding shame. Clients may also develop an understanding of how their shame and particular shame coping style evolved. For example, a person who was shamed by parents for failures may resort to procrastination and avoidance of responsibility to fight the shame of failure. This person may underperform at work, avoid taking risks and fear intimacy. Shame driven perfectionism is not an uncommon finding within therapy clients. Those who constantly seek accolades and recognition may understand their deep sense of shame related to failure. Narcissistic rage and contempt is one the extreme ways of coping with internal shame. The only way to feel acceptable from the inside becomes a constant need for external accolade. Over a period of time, the client can develop awareness of when the particular shame coping strategy kicks in and it can be helpful to frame effective strategies to deal with the shame. The aim is to help the client take value driven decisions for life rather than be a hostage to their own emotions.

### ***11.5.4 Enhancing Emotional Coping***

Emotional regulation is never far in the work with shame. Substance abuse, eating disorders, and self-harm represent multiple ways in which individuals try to evade the internal unpleasant reactions to shame (Frank 1991; Treeby and Bruno 2012). For many people shame attacks at the core of the self and activates the primitive flight or fight response. Signs of weakness, lack of knowledge or control can all generate shame and therefore be covered or controlled with behaviors made to appease or attract or attack. Shame proneness has also been related to engaging in excessive wishful thinking about possessing desirable qualities as a way of regulating negative emotions. All of these create a diversion from concern about one's self-image. Becoming more tuned to one's internal self-talk is invaluable to understanding why one feels the way they do. Negative self-labels and calling oneself a bad person for negative events generates painful emotions which can accumulate over a period of time and result in harmful emotional spillovers. The use of empty chair to elicit and address the self-critical voices which have become internalized as one's identity has been particularly useful to accessing and

addressing emotions of shame. Asking the person to step out of their shoes and imagine how they would help a friend or child respond in similar situations generates helpful voices which can then counter the critical self-talk. The work with emotional regulation also lies in helping the person take real stock of one strengths and weaknesses without falling into habitual shame reactions and avoidance. The client can recognize the very high moral standards they hold for themselves both personally and interpersonally. Anger in circumstances where personal standards are not met can be examined from perspectives of self discrepancy where less than an idealized self is not valued. Specific strategies like anger management and assertiveness techniques become helpful skills in more effective management of negative emotions. Many a times leaving behind negative influences and making a new start is seen as a good way of emotional regulation and it doesn't allow shame to fester and grow. Focusing on positive activities and actions which generate positive emotions greatly benefit emotional coping and well being. Taking up new skills and activities to buildup one's strengths reinforces the positive aspects of oneself instead of staying focused on deficits.

### ***11.5.5 Externalization and Acceptance of Shame***

A big part of externalizing shame is to learn to accept situations and one's own feelings in a realistic manner. Clients may blame themselves for abuse or trauma and see it as a result of their own unlikeability. Shame, which resulted from early abuse or traumatic upbringing, requires reaching an understanding that most of the contributors to abuse had nothing to do with the individual himself/herself. The development of this understanding helps to put the blame where it belongs. Writing letters to the hurtful party and expressing how the abuse shattered and took control of their lives validates the experience and simultaneously externalizes the experience. The client might also be encouraged to write a letter expressing compassion and support to an imaginary person who experienced similar trauma. Creating emotional distance facilitates the flow of compassion and actually helps the client to experience this more easily than if he/she was focused on her/his own self.

Accepting different aspects of oneself, both the desirable and the undesirable, is a big learning step towards making shame adaptive. An inability to express genuine feelings of hurt or anger keeps the shame as an internal experience to be repeatedly churned and experienced. It is also as important to learn to reject what is another person's projection of shame. The focus on one's own strengths, divorcing from labels or limitations caused by others, experience pride in overcoming adversaries and celebrating achievements go a long way in developing positive coping with shame.



## 11.6 Specific Therapies that Target Shame

There are certain approaches which broadly target the goals mentioned in working with the shame prone person. These have mostly grown out of the mindfulness and acceptance based approaches. Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT) with its underpinnings in mindfulness found early success in the treatment of shame in BPD patients. A treatment derived from DBT called “opposite actions” has been particularly applied to treating shame in BPD (Rizvi and Linehan 2005). This strategy requires identification of the current unwanted emotion, then identifying what are the usual urges and actions generated by these emotions and then finally determine and engage in actions which are completely opposite to the usual actions (Rizvi and Linehan 2005). For example, if the action tendency is to shrink and hide, the client will be encouraged to approach and hold oneself high. The client is oriented to the rationale of treatment and the nature of shame as psychoeducation is found helpful to client co-operation with the technique. Results with opposite action in one study have given promise and hope that it can be used as a standalone treatment specifically for shame (Rizvi and Linehan 2005).

Acceptance and Commitment based therapies (ACTs) and Compassion focused therapy (CFT) have shown favorable outcomes in targeting lack of compassion and self-criticality, the chief deficits in shame proneness. Cognitive behavioral interventions have been the mainstay of treatment for negative beliefs about self. However, more recently mindfulness and acceptance based approaches have been tested in groups of clients with PTSD, ED and substance abuse who were resistant to traditional CBT and found to be effective (Gilbert and Procter 2006; Hernandez and Mendoza 2011; Luoma et al. 2012; Orsillo 2005; Weichelt 2007).

### 11.6.1 *Compassion Focused Therapy*

Gale et al. (2014) designed a study to investigate the effect of CFT on shame, self-criticism and self compassion in a program where psychoeducational components, CBT and CFT were added sequentially. This stepwise intervention revealed that both shame and self-criticism increased following psychoeducational and the CBT component probably because of the increased focus on negative cognitions and exercises to challenge them. It was only when the CFT component was introduced that levels of self-compassion increased and levels of self-criticism and shame significantly reduced.

Self-compassion is described as the ability to view one’s failures and moments of imperfections with kindness rather than being harshly self critical and unforgiving (Gilbert 2014). For those who are shame-prone, self compassion is an area of deficit and a difficult goal to achieve. CFT directly focuses on increasing

self-compassion, tolerance and warmth instead of challenging negative thoughts. The premise of CFT is that developing a universal sense of compassion enhances mental health and alleviates distress pan disorders. As a technique, CFT integrates multiple influences from different disciplines although it works with three main principles revolving around compassion; cultivating openness to the helpfulness and compassion from others, being helpful and compassionate towards others, and developing an encouraging, supportive, and compassionate approach to oneself (Gilbert 2014). Another strong working point of CFT is its direct work with affect regulation (Gilbert and Procter 2006). At the heart of CFT lies the value of human connections and CFT tries to generate caring relationships as a part of developing affect regulation (Macbeth and Gumley 2012). A compassionate therapeutic relationship is inherently essential to CFT and the attributes of compassion like warmth, empathy, non judgement, sensitivity, and distress tolerance have to first be modeled by the therapist through compassionate engagement (Gilbert and Procter 2006). The compassion and kindness experienced from the therapist offers a corrective emotional experience and fosters the experience of healthy attachment. Jazaieri et al. (2013) were able to demonstrate that compassion was a teachable quality in a program called compassion cultivation training (CCT). Participants in this program demonstrated enhanced compassion following training even in the background of a deficit in early development.

Over the years since CFT was developed, treatment programs have been developed and applied in treating shame based experiences in SAD, eating disorders, substance abuse and PTSD (Gilbert and Procter 2006; Leaviss and Uttley 2015; Twohig 2008). Clients who adhered to a more frequent regimen of mindfulness practice made more improvement and this indicates that treatment dose is important to the effectiveness of CFT (Boersma et al. 2014). Self criticality is especially resistant as a lifetime of self-criticality is hard to change. Practicing compassion based exercises like compassionate letter writing to oneself and compassion meditation have been associated with immediate effects like an increase in positive affect and a decrease in negative affect (Leaviss and Uttley 2015). They have also been associated with more long term changes at the brain level and development of empathy in relationships. Other studies have shown significant reductions in anxiety and depression scores, shame, self-hatred, social comparison, inferiority and submissive behavior across a range of disorders. A concomitant increase in self-compassion, self-reassurance, self-safeness, relational warmth and closeness were also achieved through CFT (Leaviss and Uttley 2015). CFT has been specifically modified for treating self criticality in eating disorders and has been attempted in the group and the individual format and significant improvements are seen across the entire range of symptoms (Goss and Allen 2009). Among the different kinds of eating disorder symptomatology, bulimia nervosa has shown the maximum improvement with CFT and even though anorexia did not show similar increment, development of self compassion was.

### ***11.6.2 Acceptance and Commitment Therapies***

Similar to CFT, Acceptance and Commitment Therapies (ACT) with its focus on experiential avoidance and cognitive fusion, seems particularly suited for treatment of shame (Hayes 2004). ACT conceptualizes clients struggling with shame firstly as being fused with denigrating thoughts about themselves while simultaneously attempting to avoid coming in contact with the thoughts, feelings, and memories associated with the shame. Experiential avoidance is a pathological emotional regulation strategy which requires spending enormous amount of time and energy trying to avoid, control and suppress internal experiences. Suppression of negative emotions and cognitions is known to be counter-effective as they result in rebounding of the same cognitions that are being avoided. The aim of ACT is to help clients develop awareness of their thoughts and feelings without giving into their habitual avoidance tendencies or trying to change them, therefore moving towards a better acceptance of self (Hayes 2004). ACT suggests six processes or skill sets to promote psychological flexibility in clients: (a) acceptance; (b) cognitive defusion; (c) contact with the present moment; (d) self as context; (e) values; and (f) committed action (Hayes 2004).

ACT uses a mindfulness-based approach to dealing with shame memories and experiences. Mindfulness approaches are used to enhance awareness of the “here and now”, reduce a judgmental attitude towards oneself and disengage from unhelpful thoughts. Basic grounding techniques, noticing things in the environment, centering on the breath and other simple ways of becoming mindful are taught. ACT views substance abuse as a kind of experiential avoidance of shame and it has found success in reduction of shame in substance abuse population through its promotion of self acceptance (Hayes 2004). Treatment of substance abuse through ACT has shown slow and steady improvement over a period of time with higher outpatient treatment attendance during follow up (Luoma et al. 2012). ACT has been found particularly helpful in disorders of shame, guilt like PTSD and BPD (Gratz and Gunderson 2006; Lang and Sharma-Patel 2011; Luoma et al. 2012; Gratz and Tull 2011). Twohig (2008) reported ACT’s successful treatment of a woman with history of abuse and post-traumatic symptoms who had not been responsive to CBT based interventions. The client used acceptance and mindfulness processes to stop herself from unnecessary attempts at controlling her experiences and make value based choices for her life.

### ***11.6.3 Comprehensive Distancing***

Comprehensive Distancing (CD) is one aspect of mindfulness-based therapies which has been tried as a treatment for shame especially in PTSD. CD is a facet of ACT in which one attempts to tolerate negative thoughts, emotions, memories by “distancing” one- self from them (Zettle 2005). The goal of CD is primarily emotional

regulation by using the stance of a distanced observer. By achieving the goal, one becomes a neutral observer to negative mental events and therefore, negative events lose their emotional valence (Orsillo 2005; Zettle 2005). There is evidence to show that writing about a traumatic event from an observer perspective is far better than writing about it as if it was being experienced. A person who repeats the experiences from one's own perspective probably strengthens the association with the memory and it gets more tightly integrated within oneself. Getting a distance to one's thoughts and emotions encourages the view that "we are not our thoughts" and we are something larger. Considering thoughts as "just thoughts" and not the truth decreases associated emotional distress with them (Orsillo 2005).

The field of shame-focused therapies is narrow. The acceptance and mindfulness based approaches provide a flexible approach to treatment of shame as they borrow from humanistic, cognitive and emotion focused schools even as they primarily remain mindfulness based in their practice. The premise of treatment lies with the broad idea that the suppression and non-acceptance of shame results in an unhealthy denial of emotions. The above mentioned techniques aim to develop healthy acceptance towards shame so that a person can develop resiliency towards shame memories and experiences. These approaches need wider use and application with different disorders and a clearer understanding of the aspects of treatment that contribute to reduction of shame-proneness.

#### ***11.6.4 Shame Therapy: Implications for Non-western Cultures***

Shame does exist in every culture. However, it can have different conceptualization and linguistic representations across cultures. A therapist needs to be aware of these contextual differences as the idea of elimination of shame may be more beneficial to certain cultures as compared to others. The internal, global, stable conceptualization of shame is primarily a Western model of shame which gives it an inherent, pathological quality (Kitayama et al. 1995). Unlike the Western culture, shame is a key emotion in Eastern cultures. It is routinely experienced in different kinds of relationships and even deliberately used as a disciplining strategy. The focus on the opinion of others and the fear of shame sensitizes individuals to promote socially responsible behavior within them. This self improvement focus of shame might be the factor which results in Asians trying harder when shamed in comparison to Caucasians who tend to disengage or give up when experiencing shame (Bagozzi et al. 2003). Therefore, the dominant, Western model of shame which theorizes that shame is a passive emotion and does not generate reparative behaviors may not be generalizable. This also implies that in collectivist cultures, shame and guilt are not demarcated sharply like in American and many of the attributes of guilt may apply to shame. Collective societies also rely less on legal structures and more on social structures to identify and modify problematic behavior. The idea of losing face or

family honor and the shame of disconnection can act as a deterrent to problematic behaviors like substance abuse or unfaithfulness and promote pro-social behavior. Many cultures in the collectivistic world believe that an act of shame does not dishonor only the living guardians but also the souls of ancestors. Overall, shame may not be as catastrophic to self or relationship as viewed by North American culture. The removal of all shame in psychotherapy may not be a desired goal for someone from a collectivist culture as shame is the necessary compass that guides behavior and maintains relationships.

On the other hand, this positive conceptualization does not imply that shame is not a problem in collectivistic culture. A collectivistic culture may promote shame excessively as a way of binding individuals to social structures and this would limit and restrict the individual from recognizing their potential. A person in an interdependent culture may be more prone to shame when there is public ridicule and not as much about internal characteristics. Shame may be more devastating in the context of having disappointed a significant other rather than failed achievements. In these contexts, individuals have to work on separating their own needs and desires from what is expected of them and negotiate the fear of shame that comes with doing so.

Overall, it appears that there is a need to move away from a unilateral view of shame as pathological. Shame can be well regulated and adaptive and shying away from discourse of shame pushes all shame under the realm of maladaptiveness. Divorcing shame from its contextual aspects and focusing on shame-proneness, which is by definition a pathological disposition, categorizes all maladaptive self-evaluation as shame. This doctrine, which is the prevalent model of shame in American culture asserts that shame is a negative feeling and the clinical objective is to help patients recognize it and then get rid of it. Shame is forever within us and between us. It would be hard to imagine a society with “no shame”. Therefore, creating societies of shame phobics does not serve the function that it was meant to serve. Shame does not necessarily take away from one’s strengths and abilities but it can help to develop a more cooperative and thoughtful approach to interpersonal interactions. It is the guide which points us to who or what got hurt and what needs to be made right. It is the warning bell which if heard can stop us from committing many a faux pas. When we learn to successfully negotiate with our shame, which is what is being attempted in the mindfulness based approaches, we will have nothing to hide and achieve better mental health.

**Acknowledgements** This work was encouraged by Dr. Dharma Bhawuk, Professor, University of Hawaii. I thank him for his guidance.

## References

- Abramson, L., Seligman, M., & Teasdale, J. (1978). Learned helplessness in humans: Critique and reformulation. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 87*(1), 49–74. doi:[10.1037/0021-843x.87.1.49](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843x.87.1.49)
- Allan, S., & Gilbert, P. (1997). Submissive behaviour and psychopathology. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 36*(4), 467–488. doi:[10.1111/j.2044-8260.1997.tb01255.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8260.1997.tb01255.x)

- Andrews, B., Brewin, C., Rose, S., & Kirk, M. (2000). Predicting PTSD symptoms in victims of violent crime: The role of shame, anger, and childhood abuse. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 109*(1), 69–73. doi:10.1037/0021-843x.109.1.69
- Andrews, B., & Hunter, E. (1997). Shame, Early abuse, and course of depression in a clinical sample: A preliminary study. *Cognition and Emotion, 11*(4), 373–381. doi:10.1080/026999397379845
- Andrews, B. (1995). Bodily shame as a mediator between abusive experiences and depression. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 104*(2), 277–285. doi:10.1037/0021-843x.104.2.277
- Bagozzi, R., Verbeke, W., & Gavino, J. (2003). Culture moderates the self-regulation of shame and its effects on performance: The case of salespersons in the Netherlands and the Philippines. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(2), 219–233. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.219
- Bancroft, J., Skrimshire, A., & Simkin, S. (1976). The reasons people give for taking overdoses. *The British Journal Of Psychiatry, 128*(6), 538–548. doi:10.1192/bjp.128.6.538
- Baumeister, R. (1990). Suicide as escape from self. *Psychological Review, 97*(1), 90–113. doi:10.1037//0033-295x.97.1.90
- Berntsen, D., & Rubin, D. (2002). Emotionally charged autobiographical memories across the life span: The recall of happy, sad, traumatic and involuntary memories. *Psychology and Aging, 17*(4), 636–652. doi:10.1037/0882-7974.17.4.636
- Black, R., Curran, D., & Dyer, K. (2013). The impact of shame on the therapeutic alliance and intimate relationships. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 69*(6), 646–654. doi:10.1002/jclp.21959
- Boersma, K., Håkanson, A., Salomonsson, E., & Johansson, I. (2014). Compassion focused therapy to counteract shame, self-criticism and isolation. A replicated single case experimental study for individuals with social anxiety. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 45*(2), 89–98. doi:10.1007/s10879-014-9286-8
- Bordin, E. (1979). The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the working alliance. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 16*(3), 252–260. doi:10.1037/h0085885
- Brodsky, B. S., Groves, S. A., Oquendo, M. A., Mann, J. J., & Stanley, B. (2006). Interpersonal precipitants and suicide attempts in borderline personality disorder. *Suicide Life Threatening Behaviour, 36*(3), 313–322.
- Brown, M., Linehan, M., Comtois, K., Murray, A., & Chapman, A. (2009). Shame as a prospective predictor of self-inflicted injury in borderline personality disorder: A multi-modal analysis. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 47*(10), 815–822. doi:10.1016/j.brat.2009.06.008
- Bruch, M., & Heimberg, R. (1994). Differences in perceptions of parental and personal characteristics between generalized and nongeneralized social phobics. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 8*(2), 155–168. doi:10.1016/0887-6185(94)90013-2
- Burney, J., & Irwin, H. (2000). Shame and guilt in women with eating-disorder symptomatology. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 56*(1), 51–61. doi:10.1002/(sici)1097-4679(200001)56:1<51:aid-jclp5>3.0.co;2-w
- Cheung, M., Gilbert, P., & Irons, C. (2004). An exploration of shame, social rank and rumination in relation to depression. *Personality and Individual Differences, 36*(5), 1143–1153. doi:10.1016/s0191-8869(03)00206-x
- Cook, D. (1988). *Measuring shame: Alcoholism treatment quarterly, 4*(2), 197–215. doi:10.1300/j020v04n02\_12
- Cooper, J. M., Todd, G., & Wells, A. (1998). Content, origins, and consequences of dysfunctional beliefs in anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 12*, 213–230.
- Cooper, M., Frone, M., Russell, M., & Mudar, P. (1995). Drinking to regulate positive and negative emotions: A motivational model of alcohol use. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(5), 990–1005. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.69.5.990
- de Hooge, I., Zeelenberg, M., & Breugelmans, S. (2010). Restore and protect motivations following shame. *Cognition and Emotion, 24*(1), 111–127. doi:10.1080/02699930802584466
- Dearing, R., Stuewig, J., & Tangney, J. (2005). On the importance of distinguishing shame from guilt: Relations to problematic alcohol and drug use. *Addictive Behaviors, 30*(7), 1392–1404. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2005.02.002

- Dorahy, M. J., Gorgas, J., Hanna, D., & Wiingard, S. U. (2015). Perceptions of therapist responses to shame disclosures by clients: A quasi-experimental investigation with non-clinical participants. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 15, 58–66. doi:[10.1002/capr.12004](https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12004)
- Doran, J., & Lewis, C. (2012). Components of shame and eating disturbance among clinical and non-clinical populations. *European Eating Disorders Review*, 20(4), 265–270. doi:[10.1002/erv.1142](https://doi.org/10.1002/erv.1142)
- Ehlers, A., & Clark, D. (2000). A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 38(4), 319–345. doi:[10.1016/s0005-7967\(99\)00123-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7967(99)00123-0)
- Erwin, B., Heimberg, R., Schneier, F., & Liebowitz, M. (2003). Anger experience and expression in social anxiety disorder: Pretreatment profile and predictors of attrition and response to cognitive-behavioral treatment. *Behavior Therapy*, 34(3), 331–350. doi:[10.1016/s0005-7894\(03\)80004-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7894(03)80004-7)
- Frank, E. (1991). Shame and guilt in eating disorders. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 61(2), 303–306. doi:[10.1037/h0079241](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0079241)
- Fergus, T., Valentiner, D., McGrath, P., & Jencius, S. (2010). Shame- and guilt-proneness: Relationships with anxiety disorder symptoms in a clinical sample. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 24(8), 811–815. doi:[10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.06.002)
- Gale, C., Gilbert, P., Read, N., & Goss, K. (2014). An evaluation of the impact of introducing compassion focused therapy to a standard treatment programme for people with eating disorders. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 21(1), 1–12.
- Gee, A., & Troop, N. (2003). Shame, depressive symptoms and eating, weight and shape concerns in a non-clinical sample. *Eat Weight Disord*, 8(1), 72–75. doi:[10.1007/bf03324992](https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03324992)
- Gilbert, P. (2000). The relationship of shame, social anxiety and depression: The role of the evaluation of social rank. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 7(3), 174–189. doi:[10.1002/1099-0879\(200007\)7:3<174::aid-cpp236>3.0.co;2-u](https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0879(200007)7:3<174::aid-cpp236>3.0.co;2-u)
- Gilbert, P. (2014). Compassion-focused therapy: Preface and introduction for special section. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 53(1), 1–5. doi:[10.1111/bjc.12045](https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12045)
- Gilbert, P., & Miles, J. (2000). Sensitivity to social put-down: It's relationship to perceptions of social rank, shame, social anxiety, depression, anger and self-other blame. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29(4), 757–774. doi:[10.1016/s0191-8869\(99\)00230-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-8869(99)00230-5)
- Gilbert, P., Pehl, J., & Allan, S. (1994). The phenomenology of shame and guilt: An empirical investigation. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 67(1), 23–36. doi:[10.1111/j.2044-8341.1994.tb01768.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8341.1994.tb01768.x)
- Gilbert, P., & Procter, S. (2006). Compassionate mind training for people with high shame and self-criticism: Overview and pilot study of a group therapy approach. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 13(6), 353–379. doi:[10.1002/cpp.507](https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.507)
- Goss, K., & Allan, S. (2009). Shame, pride and eating disorders. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 16(4), 303–316. doi:[10.1002/cpp.627](https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.627)
- Goss, K., Gilbert, P., & Allan, S. (1994). An exploration of shame measures—I: The other as Shamer scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 17(5), 713–717. doi:[10.1016/0191-8869\(94\)90149-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(94)90149-x)
- Gotlib, I. (1984). Depression and general psychopathology in university students. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 93(1), 19–30. doi:[10.1037//0021-843x.93.1.19](https://doi.org/10.1037//0021-843x.93.1.19)
- Gratz, K., & Gunderson, J. (2006). Preliminary data on an acceptance-based emotion regulation group intervention for deliberate self-harm among women with borderline personality disorder. *Behavior Therapy*, 37(1), 25–35. doi:[10.1016/j.beth.2005.03.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2005.03.002)
- Gratz, K., Rosenthal, M., Tull, M., Lejuez, C., & Gunderson, J. (2010). An experimental investigation of emotional reactivity and delayed emotional recovery in borderline personality disorder: The role of shame. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 51(3), 275–285. doi:[10.1016/j.comppsy.2009.08.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2009.08.005)
- Gratz, K., & Tull, M. (2011). Extending research on the utility of an adjunctive emotion regulation group therapy for deliberate self-harm among women with borderline personality pathology. *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 2(4), 316–326. doi:[10.1037/a0022144](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022144)



- Harper, F., & Arias, I. (2004). The role of shame in predicting adult anger and depressive symptoms among victims of child psychological maltreatment. *Journal of Family Violence, 19*(6), 359–367. doi:[10.1007/s10896-004-0681-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-004-0681-x)
- Hayes, S. (2004). Acceptance and commitment therapy, relational frame theory, and the third wave of behavioral and cognitive therapies. *Behavior Therapy, 35*(4), 639–665. doi:[10.1016/s0005-7894\(04\)80013-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7894(04)80013-3)
- Hejdenberg, J., & Andrews, B. (2011). The relationship between shame and different types of anger: A theory-based investigation. *Personality and Individual Differences, 50*(8), 1278–1282. doi:[10.1016/j.paid.2011.02.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.02.024)
- Hernandez, V., & Mendoza, C. (2011). Shame resilience: A strategy for empowering women in treatment for substance abuse. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 11*(4), 375–393. doi:[10.1080/1533256x.2011.622193](https://doi.org/10.1080/1533256x.2011.622193)
- Holahan, C., Moos, R., Holahan, C., Cronkite, R., & Randall, P. (2001). Drinking to cope, emotional distress and alcohol use and abuse: A ten-year model. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 62*(2), 190–198. doi:[10.15288/jsa.2001.62.190](https://doi.org/10.15288/jsa.2001.62.190)
- Hosser, D., Windzio, M., & Greve, W. (2007). Guilt and shame as predictors of recidivism: A longitudinal study with young prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 35*(1), 138–152. doi:[10.1177/0093854807309224](https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854807309224)
- Jazaieri, H., Jinpa, G. T., McGonigal, K., Rosenberg, E. L., Finkelstein, J., Simon-Thomas, E., et al. (2013). Enhancing compassion: A randomized controlled trial of a compassion cultivation training program. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 14*, 1113–1126.
- Kaufman, G. (1989). *The psychology of shame*. New York: Springer.
- Kim, S., Thibodeau, R., & Jorgensen, R. (2011). Shame, guilt, and depressive symptoms: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin, 137*(1), 68–96. doi:[10.1037/a0021466](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021466)
- Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., & Matsumoto, H. (1995). A cultural perspective on self-conscious emotions. In J. P. Tangney & K. W. Fisher (Eds.), *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride* (pp. 439–464). New York: Guilford Press.
- Klonsky, E. (2007). Non-suicidal self-injury: An introduction. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 63*(11), 1039–1043. doi:[10.1002/jclp.20411](https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20411)
- Lang, C., & Sharma-Patel, K. (2011). The relation between childhood maltreatment and self-injury: A review of the literature on conceptualization and intervention. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 12*(1), 23–37. doi:[10.1177/1524838010386975](https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838010386975)
- Leaviss, J., & Uttley, L. (2015). Psychotherapeutic benefits of compassion-focused therapy: An early systematic review. *Psychological Medicine, 45*(05), 927–945. doi:[10.1017/s0033291714002141](https://doi.org/10.1017/s0033291714002141)
- Lester, D. (1998). The association of shame and guilt with suicidality. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 138*(4), 535–536. doi:[10.1080/00224549809600407](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224549809600407)
- Lewis, H. B. (1971). Shame and guilt in neurosis. *Psychoanalytic Review, 58*(3), 419–438.
- Li, B., Qian, M.-Y., & Zhong, J. (2005). Undergraduates' social anxiety: A shame proneness model. *Chinese Mental Health Journal, 19*, 304–306.
- Luoma, J., Kohlenberg, B., Hayes, S., & Fletcher, L. (2012). Slow and steady wins the race: A randomized clinical trial of acceptance and commitment therapy targeting shame in substance use disorders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 80*(1), 43–53. doi:[10.1037/a0026070](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026070)
- Lutwak, N., & Ferrari, J. (1997). Shame-related social anxiety: Replicating a link with various social interaction measures. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping, 10*(4), 335–340. doi:[10.1080/10615809708249307](https://doi.org/10.1080/10615809708249307)
- MacBeth, A., & Gumley, A. (2012). Exploring compassion: A meta-analysis of the association between self-compassion and psychopathology. *Clinical Psychology Review, 32*(6), 545–552. doi:[10.1016/j.cpr.2012.06.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2012.06.003)
- Masheb, R., Grilo, C., & Brondolo, E. (1999). Shame and its psychopathologic correlates in two women's health problems: Binge eating disorder and vulvodynia. *Eating and Weight Disorders, 4*(4), 187–193. doi:[10.1007/bf03339735](https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03339735)



- Meehan, W., O'Connor, L. E., Berry, J. W., Weiss, J., Morrison, A., & Acampora, A. (1996). Guilt, shame, and depression in clients in recovery from addiction. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, *28*, 125–134.
- Murray, C., & Waller, G. (2002). Reported sexual abuse and bulimic psychopathology among nonclinical women: The mediating role of shame. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *32*(2), 186–191. doi:[10.1002/eat.10062](https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.10062)
- Nathanson, D. L. (1992). *Shame and pride*. New York, NY: Norton.
- O'Connor, L. E., Berry, J. W., Inaba, D., Weiss, J., & Morrison, A. (1994). Shame, guilt, and depression in men and women in recovery from addiction. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, *11*, 503–510.
- Olatunji, B., Babson, K., Smith, R., Feldner, M., & Connolly, K. (2009). Gender as a moderator of the relation between PTSD and disgust: A laboratory test employing individualized script-driven imagery. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, *23*(8), 1091–1097. doi:[10.1016/j.janxdis.2009.07.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2009.07.012)
- Orsillo, S. (2005). Acceptance and commitment therapy in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Behavior Modification*, *29*(1), 95–129. doi:[10.1177/0145445504270876](https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445504270876)
- Parker, S., & Thomas, R. (2009). Psychological differences in shame vs. guilt: Implications for mental health counselors. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, *31*, 213–224.
- Pulakos, J. (1996). Family environment and shame: Is there a relationship? *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *52*, 617–623. doi:[10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-4679\(199611\)52:6<617](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-4679(199611)52:6<617)
- Quigley, B., & Tedeschi, J. (1996). Mediating effects of blame attributions on feelings of anger. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *22*(12), 1280–1288. doi:[10.1177/01461672962212008](https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672962212008)
- Resick, P., & Schnicke, M. (1992). Cognitive processing therapy for sexual assault victims. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *60*(5), 748–756. doi:[10.1037/0022-006x.60.5.748](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006x.60.5.748)
- Rizvi, S., & Linehan, M. (2005). The treatment of maladaptive shame in borderline personality disorder: A pilot study of “opposite action”. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, *12*(4), 437–447. doi:[10.1016/s1077-7229\(05\)80071-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1077-7229(05)80071-9)
- Robinaugh, D., & McNally, R. (2010). Autobiographical memory for shame or guilt provoking events: Association with psychological symptoms. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *48*(7), 646–652. doi:[10.1016/j.brat.2010.03.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2010.03.017)
- Scheel, C., Bender, C., Tuschen-Caffier, B., Brodführer, A., Matthies, S., Hermann, C., et al. (2014). Do patients with different mental disorders show specific aspects of shame? *Psychiatry Research*, *220*(1–2), 490–495. doi:[10.1016/j.psychres.2014.07.062](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2014.07.062)
- Scheff, T. (2012). A social/emotional theory of ‘mental illness’. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, *59*(1), 87–92. doi:[10.1177/0020764012445004](https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764012445004)
- Schoenleber, M., & Berenbaum, H. (2012). Shame regulation in personality pathology. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *121*(2), 433–446. doi:[10.1037/a0025281](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025281)
- Shearer, S. L., Peters, C. P., Quaytman, M. S., & Wadman, B. E. (1988). Intent and lethality of suicide attempts among female borderline inpatients. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *145*, 1424–1427.
- Shin, L. M., McNally, R. J., Kosslyn, S. M., Thompson, W. L., Rauch, S. L., Alpert, N. M., et al. (1999). Regional cerebral blood flow during script-driven imagery in childhood sexual abuse-related PTSD: A PET investigation. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *156*, 575–584.
- Sinha, M., & Raguram, A. (2011). *Shyness in Indian Context: An Exploratory Study*. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Clinical Psychology, National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences, Karnataka, India.
- Sippel, L., & Marshall, A. (2011). Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, intimate partner violence perpetration, and the mediating role of shame processing bias. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, *25*(7), 903–910. doi:[10.1016/j.janxdis.2011.05.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2011.05.002)
- Stuewig, J., Tangney, J., Kendall, S., Folk, J., Meyer, C., & Dearing, R. (2014). Children’s proneness to shame and guilt predict risky and illegal behaviors in young adulthood. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, *46*(2), 217–227. doi:[10.1007/s10578-014-0467-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-014-0467-1)

- Swan, S., & Andrews, B. (2003). The relationship between shame, eating disorders and disclosure in treatment. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 42*(4), 367–378. doi:[10.1348/014466503322528919](https://doi.org/10.1348/014466503322528919)
- Tangney, J., Wagner, P., Fletcher, C., & Gramzow, R. (1992). Shamed into anger? The relation of shame and guilt to anger and self-reported aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*(4), 669–675. doi:[10.1037/0022-3514.62.4.669](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.62.4.669)
- Tangney, J. P., & Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and guilt*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Tangney, J. P., Miller, S. R., Flicker, L., & Barlow, D. H. (1996). Are shame, guilt, and embarrassment distinct emotions? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*, 1256–1269. doi:[10.1037/0022-3514.70.6.1256](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.6.1256)
- Treeby, M., & Bruno, R. (2012). Shame and guilt-proneness: Divergent implications for problematic alcohol use and drinking to cope with anxiety and depression symptomatology. *Personality and Individual Differences, 53*(5), 613–617. doi:[10.1016/j.paid.2012.05.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.05.011)
- Troop, N. A., Allan, S., Serpell, L., & Treasure, J. L. (2008). Shame in women with a history of eating disorders. *European Eating Disorders Review, 16*, 480–488.
- Twohig, M. P. (2008). Acceptance and commitment therapy for treatment-resistant posttraumatic stress disorder: A case study. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 16*, 243–252. doi:[10.1016/j.cbpra](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra)
- Van Vliet, K. (2008). Shame and resilience in adulthood: A grounded theory study. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 55*(2), 233–245. doi:[10.1037/0022-0167.55.2.233](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.55.2.233)
- Welch, S., & Linehan, M. (2002). High-risk situations associated with parasuicide and drug use in borderline personality disorder. *Journal of Personality Disorders, 16*(6), 561–569. doi:[10.1521/pedi.16.6.561.22141](https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.16.6.561.22141)
- Wiechelt, S. (2007). The specter of shame in substance misuse. *Substance Use and Misuse, 42*(2–3), 399–409. doi:[10.1080/10826080601142196](https://doi.org/10.1080/10826080601142196)
- Zettle, R. (2005). The evolution of a contextual approach to therapy: From comprehensive distancing to ACT. *International Journal of Behavioral Consultation and Therapy, 1*(2), 77–89. doi:[10.1037/h0100736](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0100736)

## Chapter 12

# Shame—“A Soul Feeding Emotion”: Archetypal Work and the Transformation of the Shadow of Shame in a Group Development Process

Claude-Hélène Mayer

*Open your heart and listen  
to what your dreams tell you.  
Follow those dreams,  
because only a person  
who is not ashamed  
can manifest the glory of God.*

(Coelho 1992, 138)

*Shame is a soul eating emotion.  
Shame is one of the scars of trauma,  
but shame shrinks as healing grows.*

C.G. Jung

**Abstract** Carl Gustav Jung changed the way of thinking about the person, the conscious and the unconscious. According to Jung, every person carries a shadow and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the denser it is. Shame is viewed as an intense, “soul eating” emotion which can impact negatively on the individual. Caroline Myss has developed a therapeutical concept to work with Jung’s archetypes in individual therapy from a positive psychology perspective. The question addressed in this chapter is how shame can be transformed from shadow into light, from the unconscious into consciousness. The aim of this chapter is to present a selected single case study on a therapeutical process working with shame, shadow and archetypal psychology in an individual and group process. Findings show that shame can be transformed through therapeutical work from a “soul eating” into a “soul feeding” emotion.

---

C.-H. Mayer (✉)

Institut für therapeutische Kommunikation und Sprachgebrauch,  
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt, Germany  
e-mail: claudemayer@gmx.net

C.-H. Mayer

Department of Management, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

## 12.1 Introduction

During his life, Jung changed the way of thinking about the person, the conscious and the unconscious. This transformation of his idea of the collective unconscious is based on his personal extended visionary experiences, which he called his “confrontation with the unconscious” (Jung 2009, xi). Jung’s self-exploration and self-experiment between the years 1913 and 1930 led to the development of his method of “active imagination” (Jung 2009, xi) and the idea that the inner world of a person is “truly infinite, in no way poorer than the outer one”. According to Jung (2009, 264), “man lives in two worlds”: the conscious and the unconscious.

Based on Jung’s visions as recounted in *The Red Book* (Jung 2009), he developed his theory on the ego, the persona, the self, the shadow, the anima and the animus, the complexes, the personal and the collective unconscious, the archetypes, the psychological types and the process of individuation (Stein 2003). Several of these concepts are important when focusing on shame as a universal emotion and to provide shame with a voice in therapeutic contexts (Lee and Wheeler 2013).

In his major works, Jung (2009) refers to the concept of shame in different ways, which will be explored in this chapter. At the same time, he focuses on transforming psychotherapy from a pathological practice into a practice of treatment concerned with the recovery of the meaning in life and reconnection with the soul. Jung, therefore, can be seen as a pioneer in positive psychological frameworks. His approaches to defining the personality and identifying the symbols and influences used by human beings at individual and collective levels, are frequently used by therapists and counsellors around the world.

## 12.2 Aim and Purpose of this Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on a process of psychological development of a single individual in the format of a single case study. During the therapeutical process—which is based on Jungian theory and the practical therapeutical application based on Caroline Myss—the topic of shame was uncovered as an important underlying issue of self-development in the context of archetypal analysis and development and other selected therapeutical interventions. The transformation of shame from a “soul eating” to a “soul feeding” emotion is presented in the description and analysis of this longitudinal single case study.

## 12.3 Jung’s Foundational Concepts: Personality, Archetypes and the Shadow

Jungian psychology, as referred to in the introduction, had a major influence on therapeutical work around the world, particularly with regard to the redefinition of certain concepts, such as the personality, archetypes, and the collective unconscious and the shadow (Stein 2003).

For Jung, the personality consists of several subsystems which are integrated, holistically interconnected and dynamic. The personality is constructed of the ego, the conscious upper part of the personality, consisting of thoughts, feelings, sensations, evaluations, perceptions and active memories (Jung 1971a). It is the seat of the conscious and rests upon the conscious and unconscious contents. The persona covers the ego and is the public image of the individual, whilst the self is based in the middle of the personality and is called the personal unconscious. The self mediates between the conscious, the unconscious and the collective unconscious.

According to Jung (1971b), archetypes are culturally and generationally transmitted and inherited personality building blocks of the unconscious. Hall (1989) emphasises that archetypes are seen as universal patterns or motifs, and are the basic content of religions, mythologies, legends and fairy tales. Jung (1971a) identifies three main archetypes based around the self: the shadow, the anima/animus and the supporting complexes.

Jung (1917, 103) defines the shadow as

the negative side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the contents of the personal unconscious.

Every person carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the denser it is. He differentiates between an individual and an archetypal shadow.

Along with our individual personal unconscious, which is unique to each of us, Jung (1968, 43) asserts that

there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature that is identical in all individuals.

This collective unconscious, he believes, is inherited rather than developed, and is composed mainly of archetypes.

## 12.4 The Concept of Shame in the Work of Jung

Jung (1989, 965) refers to the concept and influence of shame, and to shame as "a soul eating emotion". Jacoby (2002) describes, from a Jungian perspective, that shame manifests in various ways, such as inferiority, shyness, embarrassment or humiliation. He indicates that a lack of self-esteem can be the root cause of susceptibility to shame and is usually rooted in childhood experiences.

Shame is viewed as an archetypal phenomenon (Jacoby 2002), and can be seen in biblical narratives, as well as in the Jungian interpretation of the persona, the so-called soul mask. Jung maintains that the persona—which is viewed as the part of the person that is displayed openly and that carries the reputation of a person and the social image—is highly vulnerable (Gamber 2014, 248). How the persona is

defined, how it is presented and how vulnerable it is depends on the culture in which a person is raised (Gamber 2014, 248).

Gamber (2014, 248) states that feelings of shame can lead to feelings of disempowerment, and ultimately to a state of feeling victimised. However, through positive thoughts, attitudes, actions and a focus on strength and newly and positively defined actions, individuals can create health and well-being, particularly with regard to the concept of shame. Mindfulness and reflective attitudes support a culture of empowerment (Mayer and Viviers 2014a, b). However, empowerment also needs to be based on the remembrance of success stories of the individual and the experience of self-efficacy. To overcome and minimise feelings of shame, resources need to be activated to contribute to the empowerment of the individual. Gamber (2014, 249) provides examples which can support an individual to activate his/her resources, namely leisure time activities, successful projects, musical activities, meditation, a walk, visiting friends, visiting museums or theatres and listening to one's inner self. One other important step to minimise feelings of shame is self-reconciliation in order to overcome self-criticism and shame.

In his Red Book, Jung (2009) refers to the concept of shame in the context of the gospel of the Egyptians, pointing out the challenges of crushing the covering of shame and becoming one with others. Jung (2009, 2) also refers to shame in the context of God:

But I'm ashamed of my God. I don't want to be divine but reasonable. The divine appears to me as irrational craziness. I hate it as an absurd disturbance of my meaningful human activity. It seems an unbecoming sickness which has stolen into the regular course of my life. Yes, I even find the divine superfluous.

With this claim, Jung emphasises that he is ashamed of his own beliefs, irrational thoughts and constructions of the divine. He therefore implies that he is ashamed of himself in the context of spirituality and religious beliefs and thoughts.

Related to selected concepts of Jung's psychology, such as the archetypes, the shadow and the persona, Myss (2002) has developed her concepts of energy and therapeutical work.

## **12.5 Archetypes and Sacred Contracts in the Work of Caroline Myss**

Myss developed the field of energy anatomy, which works on a practical basis with emotions, psychological, physical and spiritual stress patterns (Myss and Shealy 1993). Myss (2002) asserts that each individual has lessons to learn in a lifetime. These lessons are connected to twelve primary archetypes (which are chosen by an individual from a list of about fifty), which every person inherits. Of these twelve archetypes, every person uses four so-called universal archetypes of survival, namely the Child, the Victim, the Prostitute and the Saboteur. Myss (2002) stresses that the twelve chosen archetypes are vital for an individual's growth and

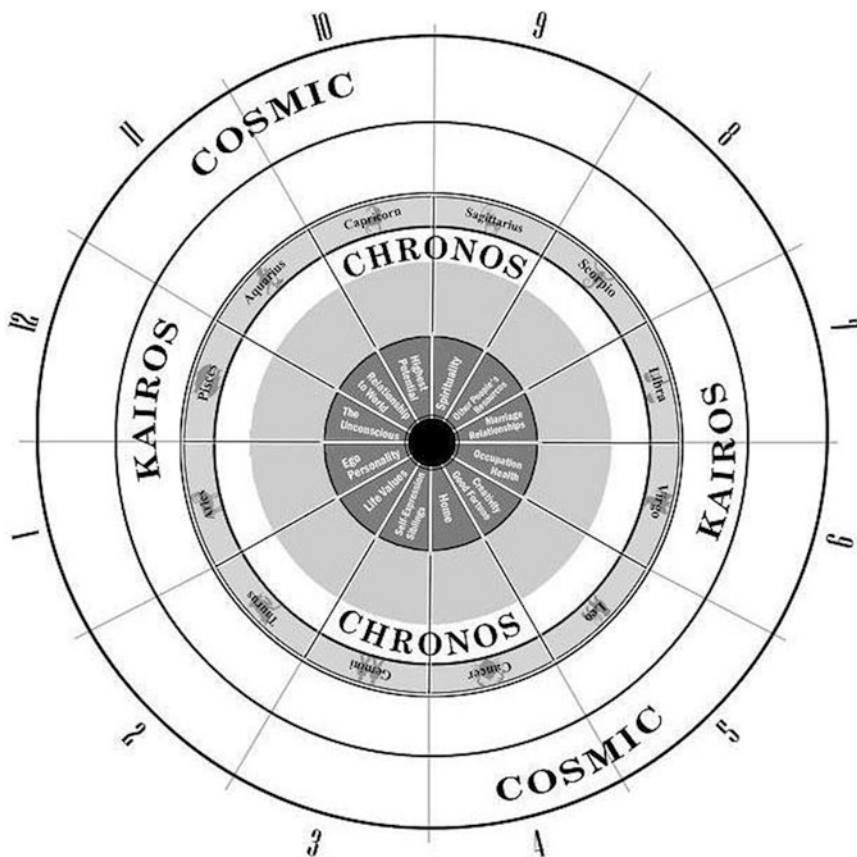


Fig. 12.1 Astrological chart houses (Myss 2015)

functioning as an adult. She claims that archetypes are impersonal patterns that become personalised when they form part of the individual psyche. Archetypes both guide the individual through his/her life and alert the individual when he/she falls into destructive behaviour which is shadow-related.

Myss (2015) applies archetypes in her psychological practice as follows: firstly, a person needs to pay attention to his/her archetypes and choose twelve archetypes which are relevant to him/her. These twelve selected archetypes are written on twelve slips of paper. Through an intuitive process, combined with meditation practices, the archetypes are combined with the astrological chart houses, as presented in Fig. 12.1. The question the individual asks himself/herself is: “In which houses do these archetypes best serve me?” (Myss 2015). Then, the specific archetype is inserted into the numbered astrological house on the wheel (as explained in Fig. 12.2, Sect. 12.8.2.3). After the archetypes have been allocated to the different houses, a unique energy field has been generated which Myss (2015)

describes as a “symbolic hologram of the unconscious”. Next, the archetype-to-house partnerships are explored by asking questions, such as “What events or personal characteristics led me to choose this archetype?”, “Which role has this archetype played in my life?”, “Which myths, fairy tales, or spiritual stories that have a special meaning for me do I associate with this archetype?”, or “What impact did this archetype have on my spirituality?” and “What have I learned about my own shadow aspect through this archetype?”

In the therapeutical process described in the single case study below, this process as described by Myss (2015) was followed.

## 12.6 The Concept of Shame in Psychotherapy

Whilst working with archetypes, shame is often an underlying issue which is, at the same time, usually connected to the shadow a person has to deal with.<sup>1</sup> However, dealing with the shadow requires courage and trust in therapeutical processes. In the therapeutical setting, the relationship and trust between the client and the therapist is deepened and more trust is created when shadow aspects are accepted and acknowledged empathically (Perry, 2015). A certain approach in therapy is used in the work with the shadow and therefore with shame, as Jung (1976, 223) maintains:

It is usual for psychotherapy...to begin by eliciting from the patient a more or less voluntary confession of things he dislikes, is ashamed of, or fears. This is like the much older confessional in the Church, which in many ways anticipated modern psychotherapeutical techniques.

Dislikes, shame and fear are usually important aspects of therapeutical work. These aspects are not necessarily experienced as negative. Research highlights the positive role shame can play in resolving conflicts and crisis situations (Behrendt and Ben-Ari 2012). Harper and Hoopes (1990) found that shame in therapy can not only be treated with regard to the individual, but must be explored from a systemic family perspective. They are of the opinion that the impact of the family on shame experiences and proneness should be considered. However, not only clients need to focus on their shame, but therapists must also be clear about their own blind spots and healing of shameful experiences. Therapists and counsellors need to recognise their own shadows, and confront and incorporate them to be able to work with the shadow aspects of their clients (Page 1999). This might not always be a simple task since a person might be ashamed about his/her own behaviour and this shame might interfere with recognition of the personal shadow.

In therapy, though, shadows can be incorporated and used for further self-development by exploring the positive aspects of the experiences, values and thoughts classified as “shadow” by the client or his/her socio-cultural environment (Page 1999).

---

<sup>1</sup>See the Chap. 11 of Mrigaya Sinha in this book.



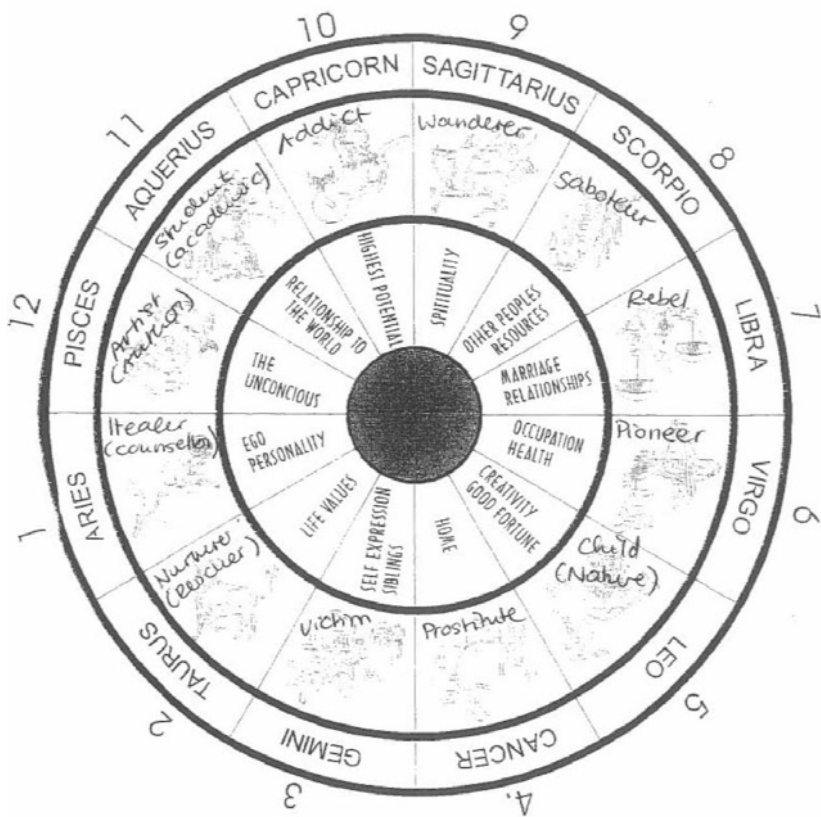


Fig. 12.2 Toni’s chart at the beginning of the therapeutic process (researcher’s source from group development process)

### 12.7 Research Methodology

This research study was founded in a single case study research design, within the interpretative paradigm. The interpretative paradigm centres on how human beings make sense of their subjective reality and the meaning attached to it (Flick 2009). The research focused on the development and change of a single individual (O’Reilly 2012) over a longitudinal time frame of twelve months. This type of research approach requires an in-depth understanding of the actors, the context, as well as the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of the actors (Bryman et al. 1996) and aims at understanding the individual, his/her subjective experiences (ontology), as well as the experiences by interacting with this individual and listening to him/her (epistemology) (Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

### ***12.7.1 Research Method Approach***

In this study, a mixed method research approach was implemented, including various research methods with regard to the analysis of a therapeutical process of a selected individual.

### ***12.7.2 Introduction to the Research Field***

The researcher works as a family therapist, a counsellor and a constellation work facilitator. She is interested in various methods used in psycho-therapeutical work as well as in Jungian psychology. Based on this interest, the researcher attended a course on Jungian archetypal psychology and its practical application in psycho-therapeutical group sessions and individual therapies. At one of these training courses, the researcher met a woman who was working on her self-actualisation and individual development. The researcher, who is interested in the development of individuals based on certain psycho-therapeutical methods, approached the woman and invited her to become part of a developmental single case study process. The woman, who is called Toni,<sup>2</sup> agreed to be part of this single case study research.

### ***12.7.3 Data Collection, Research Methods and Sampling***

Data was collected over a period of twelve months through in-depth face-to-face interviews and colloquial talks on Skype or by telephone with the researched participant, observation by the researcher in a group development process in which the individual participated, field notes taken during participant observations and a researcher's diary, written with regard to the group development process. The group processes took place irregularly, according to the timetables of the participants, varying from twice a month to every six weeks. As is customary in interpretative research, the researcher became part of the context in which the phenomenon was being studied by becoming part of the research setting in an open, empathetic and engaging way (Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

---

<sup>2</sup>The name has been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

### ***12.7.4 Data Analysis***

Data was analysed through the five-step process of content analysis of Terre Blanche et al. (2006, 322–326), namely familiarisation and immersion, inducing themes, coding, elaboration, and interpretation and checking to ensure data quality. During this process, codes were constructed for the content and the emerging themes and sub-themes (Patton 2002), whilst data was reduced through the construction of these themes and patterns (Maxwell 2012). At the same time, the data underwent intra-individual and inter-individual validation processes between the researcher and the researched (Yin 2008, 45).

### ***12.7.5 Quality Criteria and Ethical Considerations of Research***

In this study, qualitative quality criteria, such as conformability, credibility, transferability and dependability (Mayer 2011), were applied. Ethical considerations included anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, right of the participant to withdraw from the study at any point in time, as well as the building of a cooperative and favourable relationship between the researcher and the researched (Wang 2012).

### ***12.7.6 Limitations of Research***

This study was limited to the analysis and interpretation of the therapeutical process of a single individual over a defined period. As a qualitative study, the study is potentially limited by the researcher's bias, perceptual misrepresentation and the impossibility of generalising the findings in quantitative perspectives. Furthermore, the study is limited to the primary and secondary source analyses, theoretical perspectives and methodological applications used in this research study.

## **12.8 The Case Study**

Biographical background information about the individual on whom the study was based is provided below. Following this description, an account is given of the development process and the transformation of shame as a life topic of Toni, throughout the group development process.

### ***12.8.1 Biographical Background Information***

The subject of research was a woman called Toni. During the time of the psycho-therapeutical development process, Toni turned 39 years old. She was highly educated, worked as a consultant on a freelance basis and lectured part time at different universities. She was married and had three children.

During her life, Toni had undergone several psycho-therapeutical therapies to develop herself and to resolve problems she had encountered during her personal development. She aimed at being self-conscious, self-aware and mindful. Her priorities were her family, as well as her professional career.

When the researcher met Toni in the course on Jungian archetypal psychology, Toni was discontent with her life. She felt that she needed to make career decisions and was uncertain as to where she should take her professional career. She also desired to develop spiritually and to integrate spiritual development into her life. At the same time, she felt unhappy in her marriage and was searching for visions and solutions to her family life challenges.

### ***12.8.2 The Developmental Process***

Toni's development process included several steps which will subsequently be explained.

#### **12.8.2.1 Step One: The Realisation of the Need to Develop**

Soon after her 38th birthday, Toni realised that she wanted to change her professional career as well as her family life, as she was discontent with both. As a consultant she was aware of coaching interventions and psycho-therapeutical work, but she had not dealt with Jungian therapeutical concepts and archetypal work before. Through a friend she became aware of and signed up for the group training session in archetypal work. The training session included work with archetypes based on theories of C.G. Jung and Caroline Myss. Inspired by these group training sessions, which consisted of about ten sessions over a period of five months, Toni decided to sign up for a long-term archetypal group development process in order to develop her awareness of the ways in which archetypes were actively impacting on her life and her decisions.

#### **12.8.2.2 Step Two: Preparing for and Attending the Archetypal Group Development Process**

Before the archetypal group development process started, the participants received basic written information from the facilitator about Jung's archetypal work

on family dynamics and the morphogenic field, astrological charts, archetypal work in psychoanalytical practice and interpreting Myss's astrological charts about creativity and creative expression, as well as the four agreements of Ruiz (2011). During the group sessions the information provided by the facilitator was mainly based on Jung's definition of the archetypes, his shadow work and teachings, as well as on Myss's explanations of the archetypes and the astrological charts used during the process.<sup>3</sup>

Later, the participants received a list of the four principal (survival) energy companions (archetypes), namely the Child, the Victim, the Prostitute and the Saboteur. These archetypes are defined as the basic archetypes of survival (Myss 2002, 138). The Addict is in some cases regarded as a fifth survival archetype. In the course attended, these five survival archetypes were considered as vivid and pre-selected as highly important in every human being.

The participants were given the task to read Myss's explanation on the archetypes and to work through a list of selected archetypes published by Myss (2002, 431 p). They had to select twelve of the presented archetypes which were the most important and active in their own life.

In this pre-stage of the group development process, Toni chose—besides the five survival archetypes—the following archetypes as being the most important and active in her life:

- The Artist/Author
- The Healer/Counsellor
- The Nurturer/Rescuer
- The Pioneer
- The Rebel
- The Wanderer
- The Student/Academic.

### 12.8.2.3 Group Development Process Session 1: Ego and Personality

The first group development process took 4 h in which the participants introduced themselves to one another, shared the challenges in their life and their ideas to change and transform. They also presented their chosen archetypes to the group and explained why they had chosen certain archetypes.

Subsequently, the Template for the Twelve Houses of the Archetypal Wheel (Myss 2002, 523) was introduced by the facilitator. Each participant wrote down the twelve archetypes, each one on a different card, and shuffled the cards without

---

<sup>3</sup>This relates to all the information provided during the group sessions with regard to archetypes, shadow work and astrology. The information referring to these aspects in the findings is all based on the participant observation and field notes from the group process as well as on information taken from collateral talks and interviews. Therefore, it might not be objectively correct when compared with the original sources provided above.

looking at them. Then, each participant randomly drew one archetype card to be placed in each house. In the end, each of the twelve houses was linked to one archetype.

The Healer (counsellor) in the first house (Aries)—Ego and personality, Chakra 1 and Chakra 3

For Toni, the Healer (Counsellor) appeared in the first house of the wheel. The first house is related to Aries, to the ego and the personality aspects of a person. It deals with the ability to stand alone, and is related to new beginnings, the question of how to conduct oneself with others, how to initiate, how to belong and how to deal with the self, the group mind and the family.

During her individual reflection on the Healer and Counsellor in the first house, Toni recognised herself as a very strong, individualised person, working as a successful counsellor at work and within her family. She felt very connected to her children, but abandoned by her husband. She realised that her focus was strongly on her children and their development and that she tried to heal and counsel them and herself on a permanent basis. She connected to the idea that she was aware of a strong “healing energy” within herself and highlighted the fact that she had always been drawn into the healing field, into therapeutic work. She had had many years of training in counselling, therapeutic practices and hypnotherapy, and had applied a great deal of her knowledge to herself and her personal self-healing processes.

At the end of each session, each participant drew a card containing symbolic images and a word. Toni drew the card “control” and felt that she often wanted to control too much with regard to herself and her immediate environment. She felt restricted by her perfectionism and the speed with which she moved. As a person with a Healer archetype in the first house, she felt that she needed to control situations and people. One major issue was for her to “let go of control” and to “go with the flow”. In the interview after the session she explained that she felt ashamed about wanting to control her environment and that she aimed at trusting more in her children instead of controlling them.

At the end of the session, Toni chose a mantra for the Healer in the first house: “I am strong.”

#### **12.8.2.4 Group Development Process Session 2: Earth and Life Values**

Each group development process took 3–4 h and started with the sharing of experiences, feelings and ideas. In this session, the second house was the centre of discussion. Toni explained that she was motivated to work and develop herself.

The Nurturer (rescuer) in the second house (Taurus)—Earth and life values, Chakra 2

The second house is linked to Taurus and the question of what individuals hold most dear and what they claim as their own in terms of possessions. Furthermore, the second house deals with achieving balance, being aware of the physical and being mindful about choices and their consequences.

For Toni, the Nurturer (Rescuer) appeared in the second house of the wheel. She felt she nurtured many individuals through her counselling work, as well as in her family. Sometimes she found that she nurtured others so much that she forgot about her own feelings and needs. Her personal values were related to freedom and spirituality found it very difficult to be grounded in physical energy. She enjoyed the energy of thinking and nurtured others with her thoughts, her ideas and her love. However, she did not enjoy physical objects, such as furniture, a television set or any other physical possessions. She made it clear that she did not nurture her children's desire for more material objects and that she sometimes felt guilty about not succumbing to their wishes. Toni explained that, through her focus on anti-materialism, she aimed at becoming more spiritual and less materialistic.

At the end of the session, Toni drew a card with an orange on it. She said that she connected the orange with nature, spirituality and the opposite of materialism. She felt she would like to enjoy the fruits of life fully. The orange indicated the importance of nature, the earth, spirituality and fruitfulness in her life.

### **12.8.2.5 Group Development Process Session 3: Self-expression and Siblings**

The third group development process focused on the third house. For Toni, the following constellation was the focus:

The Victim in the third house (Gemini)—Self-expression and siblings, Chakra 3 and Chakra 5

The third house deals with the topics of communication, self-expression, the relationship to siblings, self-worth, loyalty and secrets. It is also about taking action, being aware of motivations and intentions of hurting, blaming or shaming someone.

With regard to the Victim in the third house, questions of how to bring the individual's power into the world and how individuals voice their thoughts and feelings are addressed. Toni associated the idea and feeling of "not being seen" with the Victim archetype. With regard to her family of origin, she felt like a victim. She felt that she was not recognised as the person she was and experienced feelings of disempowered. Connecting these feelings to her family of origin caused Toni to feel restricted in bringing her power into the world. She realised that she still adhered to the restrictedness and victimhood she felt within her family of origin. She did not regard herself as having a voice in her family of origin and experienced the same feelings within her present family. She felt restricted in her self-expression within her family and only felt free to express herself when her husband was not around. She related these feelings to her childhood in the group-sharing session: as a child, Toni found it hard to express herself in front of her sister or her parents, because she was afraid that they might think that she was being disloyal. When she reflected on her feelings, it became evident that she did not feel part of her family of origin because she had differences in opinion, thoughts and career with her sister and her parents. Although Toni felt that she had made her way up into a professional career and that she had successfully managed to build a family, she experienced a low

sense of self-worth, which she related to her parents' inability to accept her as she was. When Toni recognised that she had feelings of low self-worth, she felt ashamed about them. This feeling of shame was related to her belief that counsellors should only counsel others if they themselves have developed so much personally that they do not suffer from feelings of low self-worth or other complexes.

At the end of the session Toni drew the card "intimacy". She explained that she did not experience any kind of intimacy with her husband, that she felt separated from her inner self and restricted in her self-expression when he was around. She related this back to her childhood years when she did not feel any intimacy towards her parents and she considered the possibility that she needed to think about issues of intimacy with regard to her present situation with her parents and her husband.

#### 12.8.2.6 Group Development Process Session 4: Home

The fourth house in astrology stands for the home. It is usually loaded with emotional impact and is linked with the concept of betrayal. It represents the family and the ancestral line and is referred to as the house in which individuals carry unfinished challenges. Since this house is connected to home, it is interlinked with childhood experiences, parenting and being parented. The challenge in this house is to cope with loyalty issues and the question of the price that individuals pay with regard to unconscious loyalty. Questions that relate to this house are, for example: "What are the wounds that I carry?", "Where is the true residence of passion in life?", "How do the family roots influence an individual?", and finally: "What does the emotional life of an individual look like?"

In Toni's fourth house was the Prostitute.

The Prostitute in the fourth house (Cancer)—Home, Chakra 1 and Chakra 4

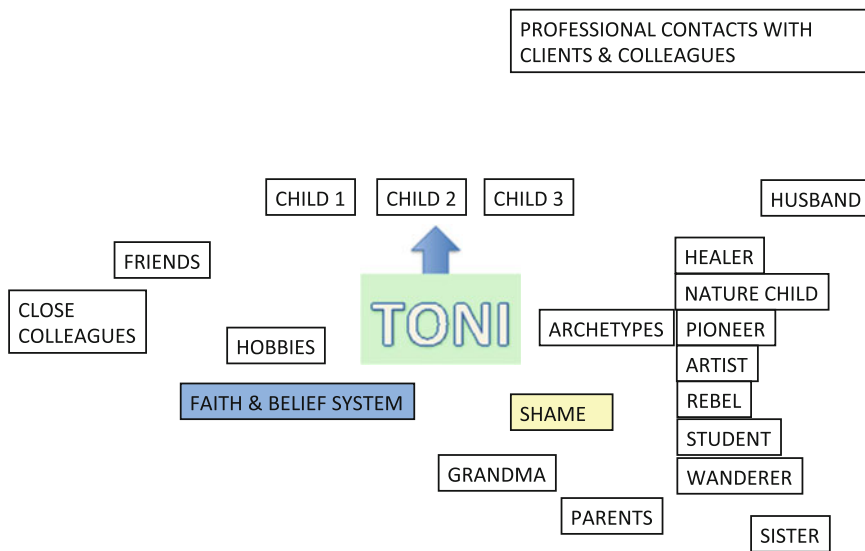
The Prostitute archetype is interlinked with the fear of survival and the most painful relationships a person has experienced within his/her life.

Toni explained that she always felt that she needed to be loyal to her parents, but she did not feel a strong bond with her parents and her sister. She felt embarrassed that she had never stood up in front of her family to express herself. She recognised a lack of trust towards her parents and her sister and she was aware that this had been a family pattern for several generations. She regretted the fact that she stayed loyal to this pattern and regarded it as a weakness. Finally, Toni emphasised that her faith and trust needed to be re-established and that she aimed at working on her faith in herself and her present family, particularly her children.

Toni presented her family in terms of a constellation as follows (Fig. 12.3).

Interestingly, Toni always referred to her parents as one concept, not to two individual persons, such as mother and father. When drawing the constellation picture, Toni realised that she often felt ashamed of both of her parents in public and that she used to exclude her parents from her own life and certain events, because she felt ashamed to introduce them to, for example, her friends, her





**Fig. 12.3** Toni’s family (research’s source from group development process)

teachers or the sport groups in which she was active. However, she could not understand where the shame came from.

At the end of the session, the facilitator provided some healing advice for the participants and referred to the resources they could activate to deal with their wounds, their family, the challenges and burdens of their past. Some of these included practising certain rituals in which the individuals start seeing and later accepting their family of origin.

Toni drew the card “fear” and said that she feared realising that she was not as much part of the family as she would like to be. The session ended for Toni very emotionally and she highlighted that she needed time to deal with the issue of inclusion and exclusion in her family and the topic of shame.

### 12.8.2.7 Group Development Process Session 5: Sexuality and Passion

Toni started the session with feedback to the group. She had worked on recognising the source of her shame towards her parents and felt that this shame was part of the family system. It felt to her like an intergenerational shame that had been passed on to her from previous generations. However, she had not worked out for herself how to deal with this intergenerational family shame which she experienced as a collective family shame and not as an individual shame separating herself and her parents. She emphasised that she felt much freer to deal with her parents since she had made this discovery. She had also thought about inviting her parents to spend time with them.

The fifth house, Leo, is related to the topics of sexuality and passion. It is about “entering the desert” to create mental energy, intuition and creativity. In this house, the activity to make things happen, to love and to act, as well as spontaneity and opportunity are integrated. Intelligence and imagination are also based in this house. The challenges connected to this house are spiritual crises, the potential misuse of sexual power, the use of creativity for selfish manipulation and things that are out of control. At the same time, Leo stands for fame, connection and fun in life and for children. Experiences which fall under this house are intense and relate to the question of what an individual loved and did with passion whilst growing up.

The Child (Nature Child) in the fifth house (Leo)—Creativity and good fortune, Chakra 6

For Toni, the Child archetype was placed in the fifth house. She specified that her Child archetype was the Nature Child. During the session she highlighted that as a child she had enjoyed gardening, animals, sports and playing in natural environments. She had spent many hours gardening in her grandmother’s garden and walking through the forests by herself. At the same time, she realised with sadness that the Nature Child within herself was not currently activated and present. She reflected on how she could integrate it more in her life and developed the idea to build a treehouse with her children and plant flowers on her balcony.

She drew the card “love” and reflected upon the fact that, for her, nature was interlinked with love and that she loved her children most in her life. Her passion and creativity were stimulated by nature and she developed the idea to reconnect with her Nature Child, which she could recognise in her own children at that time. She planned to spend more time in nature with her children.

### **12.8.2.8 Group Development Process Session 6: Occupation and Health**

The sixth house reflects the topics of occupation and health and is interlinked with Virgo. This house refers to planning, control and perfection and is a survival-oriented house. The challenge in this house is to find a balance in work and life, negotiating morals and ethics for the sake of financial security whilst establishing self-worth. Questions that might need to be addressed in this house are, for example, “How much time do individuals invest in life, work and family?” and “Who is telling the truth?”.

The Pioneer in the sixth house (Virgo)—Occupation and health

The archetype that resides in this house influences an individual in the way he/she seeks the path of security. In Toni’s house the Pioneer archetype resided here. She enjoyed her work and she loved to do pioneering work in her life. She was not afraid of financial (in-)security. She described herself as a perfectionist in her work and suffered when she realised that she was not the “perfect mother” she wanted to be for her children. She felt guilty, because she had focused a great deal on her self-development within her profession during the past years and felt that she should have focused even more on her children. She stated that she would like to

develop further in terms of her occupation, but she did not yet know in which direction she would like to do so.

She drew the card "solitude" and said that she knew that she needed solitude to find out where her personal path would take her during the next few years.

### **12.8.2.9 Group Development Process Session 7: Marriage and Relationships**

The seventh house relates to the sign of Libra. The associated topics connected are marriage and relationships in terms of friendships, as well as business relationships. This house relates to two other houses to form a cross: these are house 4 and house 10. The seventh house might therefore lead to the second encounter with betrayal which an individual might already have experienced in the fourth house, the home. If the challenging issues of the fourth house are not resolved, the individual might live through them repeatedly.

The Rebel in the seventh house (Libra)—Marriage and relationships, Chakra 2 and Chakra 4

The Rebel was the archetype in Toni's seventh house. This archetype is usually a moving, energetic and happy archetype that does not conform to the norms of society and cultural expectations regarding marriage and relationships. Toni explained that she was unhappy in her marriage and that she had always been a rebel in terms of societal norms. She had had several affairs during her marriage and enjoyed being with friends. When thinking about her childhood, she explained that she knew that her mother had also had several affairs during her marriage to Toni's father. She reflected that she experienced her mother's affairs as betrayal, because her mother had not been open about them. For many years, her mother had told her children that their father was suffering from the delusional idea that she was engaged in extramarital affairs. Toni realised that she felt betrayed by her mother, not because of her affairs, but because she had discredited Toni's father. She realised in this session that she felt ashamed that she had trusted her mother and that she had seen her father as paranoid. She explained that this situation had never been part of further discussions between her and her parents; however, she highlighted the point that she felt ashamed of her thoughts about her father and of her mother's behaviour.

At the end of the session, Toni drew the card "jealousy". She remembered her father's jealousy, which she had previously experienced as pathological due to her mother's incriminations which had established fixed ideas about her father.

### **12.8.2.10 Group Development Process Session 8**

The eighth house is defined as the house of other people's resources and is connected to Scorpio. It is interlinked with issues of money, sex and power and relates to family inheritance, family secrets, power and repute.

This house refers to questions such as: “What stops the love and/or the flow in life?”, “What stops the flow of money?”, “What is the risk of unrestricted power?”, “What is the risk of giving up in terms of marriage, belief system and values?”, “What does a person need to give up to gain power and how does a person reach his/her highest potential?”

The eighth house is viewed as the house of transformation and relates to the second house, which refers to the individual’s life values and individual resources.

The Saboteur in the eighth house (Scorpio)—Other people’s resources

During this session and the group sharing, Toni explained that she was aware of several family secrets that she felt were habitually kept by her family. These secrets were linked to the fact that hers was a poor family, a family which had lost much of its wealth in the Second World War. She also pointed out that she did not feel in control of her living conditions and she connected this belief to her grandparents’ and parents’ feelings during the Second World War of being disempowered and having lost most of their possessions. She also felt that she was “unsuccessful” in her family and occupational life in order to be loyal to her ancestors. She feared that she placed the connection to her ancestors at risk by taking full control. This idea seemed to scare her, because she felt that she hardly had any connection to her parents and would not like to lose her (experienced) connection to her ancestors. At the same time, Toni knew that she needed to free herself from the burden of her ancestors. However, she said that she had not found the right way to do this yet. She felt very alone in this task and was not surprised when she drew the card “solitude” at the end of the session.

### 12.8.2.11 Group Development Process Session 9: Spirituality

The ninth house is the house of spirituality and it is linked to the sign Sagittarius. As this is the house of spirituality, it is connected to issues of faith, to the relationship with the divine and the question of what is bigger than the individual person. This house also relates to the question of, for example, how an individual person surrenders, what spiritual rituals a person conducts and which spiritual path a person follows.

The ninth house is strongly connected to the fifth house, which relates to creativity and good fortune.

The Wanderer in the ninth house (Sagittarius)—Spirituality

With regard to her spirituality, Toni felt very comfortable: she was Christian, but had taken on some spiritual beliefs from Buddhism and Hinduism. She did not go to church, but believed in a higher power. She explained that she was always searching for spirituality in her life, but that she did not feel bound to any specific institutional religion. She had attended Buddhist meditation, enjoyed praying in Hindu temples and wandering through old churches. She sometimes felt guilty because she had turned away from the church. However, she had always felt ashamed of confessing her sins to the priest and maintained that she was happy that

she had decided for herself who to talk to about her inner feelings, sins, guilt and shame.

At the end of the session she drew the card "pleasure and chocolate" and she stressed that spirituality for her was a real pleasure that could be compared to the indulgence of chocolate.

### **12.8.2.12 Group Development Process Session 10: The Highest Potential**

House 10 is the house of the highest potential and relates to the sign of Capricorn. In this house, the topics of rejection and failure are the challenges. The central question is what the reason might be that individuals do not reach their highest potential. This central question relates to living one's dream in life and is therefore associated with the balancing of the soul and the mind. The shadow side of this house is that it carries the fear of individual power and the challenge to feel what it is like to be in the unknown.

The Addict in the tenth house (Capricorn)—Highest potential, Chakra 5 and Chakra 7

Toni's Addict archetype was placed in the tenth house. The facilitator explained to Toni during the session that this archetype was strongly related to the topic of shame. Toni was asked where and when in her life she felt most ashamed. Toni recalled that during her childhood she felt ashamed when she failed in school, when she was not the best and when she was seen with her parents in public. She said that she was also ashamed that she was so different from her parents and her sister and that often she would not talk, so that the differences would not become too obvious. Toni later realised that possibly she had not reached her highest potential due to her solidarity with her family and ancestors.

Toni was questioned where and when the most pleasant moment was that she experienced with her mother and where she saw the strengths of her mother. She responded that she did not recall any exceptionally pleasant moment with her mother and that she was not sure where her mother's strengths lay. However, she explained that because she herself had never been able to identify her mother's strengths, she started failing in certain subjects she knew her mother was good in. To the present day, Toni explained, she would call her mother, who was an accountant, to help her with invoicing her clients because she believed she would not be able to calculate her prices correctly. Toni explained that her mother made fun of her because she was not able to calculate her invoices properly. During this session she realised her (unconscious) effort in finding an area of expertise in which she could see her mother as "bigger" than herself. She said in the session that she had only just realised that she had always wished for a strong mother and that she had tried to create a certain "bigness" in her mother by making herself smaller. At the end of the session she admitted that she was very sad and upset with herself about not being able to see her mother for what she was. She blamed her own inability to see her mother's strength, but even now she was unable to identify her

mother's abilities. Toni attributes this inability to see her mother's strength to the fact that her mother hardly looked after her during childhood. She also felt that her inability to see her mother's strength was a reflection of her mother's inability to recognise Toni's worth as a daughter. Toni could feel strong anger towards her mother and realised that this was the first time she had expressed her anger, because being angry and showing anger was taboo in her family. She felt very ashamed of her feelings of anger, too.

The card Toni drew was "acceptance" and she realised that she had to accept her mother as her mother and her anger towards her to be able to see her mother's strengths clearly.

### **12.8.2.13 Group Development Process Session 11: The Relationship to the World**

The eleventh house represents the relationship to the world and is in the sign of Aquarius. It is connected to how a person sees the world and how he/she sees himself/herself in the world. This house relates to the question of how an individual takes the highest potential into the world and how he/she keeps up the flow in life. Additionally, it refers to how a person inspires others and sees through the lens of his/her possibilities. The facilitator explained that this house is connected to the mantra "I surrender the outcome to the divine".

The Student (Academic) in the eleventh house (Aquarius)—Relationship to the world

Toni saw herself as a student and a lifelong learner. Although she held university degrees, she aimed at developing herself, learning more, and always returned to the student role with pleasure. She interpreted relationships with others as learning experiences and tried to grow through them.

At the end of this session, Toni drew the card "failure". She explained that she enjoyed studying, but that she could not cope with failure and felt very ashamed when she failed in formal learning situations and tests.

### **12.8.2.14 Group Development Process Session 12: The Unconscious**

The twelfth house is the last house. It represents the unconscious and is connected to the sign of Pisces. This house is also called the house of addiction and is viewed as the house that controls everything. Since this is the house of the unconscious, it is also seen as the house of intuition and gut feeling. Through this house, an individual's contract with life is expressed through unconscious ways, such as dreams, conversations and synchronicity. A deeper reflection on this house can lead to a deeper (spiritual) guidance.

The Artist (Author) in the twelfth house (Pisces)—The unconscious

Toni reported during the session that she was happy and surprised that her Artist was in her twelfth house. She explained that she always had a drive for artistic

lifestyles and felt very ashamed that she led such a "normal life". Her dream was to live in a politically and eco-friendly artistic community, driven by the desire to change the world through joy and art. After Toni expressed this desire, she blushed and stressed that she felt very ashamed that she had expressed with her "childhood dreams" to live like Pippi Longstocking, a character from a children's book written by Astrid Lindgren. She drew the card "affection" and asserted that she needed to bring more emotions and affection into her life. She felt she would like to enjoy life to the fullest, but currently felt as if she lived in a "glass cage" which cut her off from her emotions, her feelings of love, her desires and her dreams to connect to other human beings who also enjoy the arts and artistic lifestyles. Toni ended by stating that she was feeling much better since she had spoken out about her childhood dreams and her love for artistic and non-materialistic lifestyles.

### **12.8.2.15 The Wrap-Up Session**

The final session of the group development course was a wrap-up session and the discussion was on how the group process had helped the individuals to reflect and develop. The participants were asked to sit quietly for half an hour in an individual space and reflect on the question of which archetypes featured the strongest in their life and which needed to be empowered.

Based on this question, the participants were given a take-away task: they were instructed to define their relevant life topics, how they were dealing with the challenges and their way forward in terms of transformation and their personal vision.

A final session was planned for a month later. Toni worked on the three questions during this month. In the last group process session, the topics were presented and discussed and explored further in a constellation work situation.

In the next part of the article, the findings regarding these three topics are summarised and presented, based upon participant observation, field notes, collateral talks and interviews with Toni after the last group session.

### **12.8.2.16 Step Three: Defining Relevant Life Topics**

During all the group sessions, Toni identified several extremely important topics: of primary importance was her relationship to her children, the transformation of the relationship with her parents (from shame to acceptance), the end of the relationship with her husband (of whom, she realised, she also felt ashamed) and the exploration of her highest potential (with regard to healing, creativity and the exploration of her Nature Child in the context of the self, with her children and her profession). Finally, she realised her previously unconscious childhood dream to connect with others who enjoy similar artistic, political and eco-friendly lifestyles. She understood that it was time to move on and realise her individual dreams.

### **12.8.2.17 Step Four: Dealing with the Challenges—The Example of Shame**

Toni emphasised during an interview that it was a huge challenge for her to deal with the knowledge that she was ashamed of her parents and her husband. With regard to the shame towards her parents, she felt she would like to start talking about her parents and their relationship with her in an acknowledging way. She wanted to trace back the issue of shame in her family and see it from a systemic perspective and in relation to previous family experiences. Furthermore, she drew special attention to her wish that her children not feel ashamed of her and that she would like to consciously address the topic of shame with them. However, she emphasised that she often felt embarrassed about her husband and how he behaved in public. She reflected on the positive effect that a break up with her husband might have on her. Restoring the relationship and working with the feelings of shame in the context of her relationship with her husband did not seem to be an option for Toni.

Since Toni realised that she enjoyed studying and that this was part of the development of her higher potential, she indicated that she would like to study further—not in a classical way of attending university and training courses—but rather in terms of self-development (artistic approaches, spiritual healing, nature-based and eco-psychological approaches to life and well-being). Together with her children she wanted to explore nature more deeply and settle in an artistically, politically active and eco-friendly community. She confirmed that she no longer felt ashamed for having brought these “childhood dreams” into her consciousness, but that she was looking forward to realising them. Having identified her needs, Toni felt a great sadness about having put off her dreams for so long. However, she was motivated to find new ways of self-expression through music, dance, literature and the work on nature- and politically based living communities.

### **12.8.2.18 Step Five: The Way Forward, the Transformation and the Vision**

One year after the group development session, Toni evaluated her development, her transformation and her vision for the future. She affirmed that she no longer felt ashamed of her parents. She was in contact with them on a regular basis and met with them in public. She also gave her children more freedom. She had not yet left her husband, but was in the process of finding a community in which to live. Furthermore, she had decided to stop her counselling work for a while until she had sorted out her own life. Her vision was to engage in a creative, artistic and ecologically friendly community where people are also involved in political contexts. Her ideas about her life in this community were more detailed than a year before. She indicated that she would enjoy gardening and would like to have a dog together with her children, who were open to the idea. At the same time, she had started a dancing course, was playing an instrument and taking singing lessons, thereby



exploring her artistic side more deeply. She felt energetic and revitalised with a vision for her future development.

In the interview session, Toni disclosed that she had tackled some of the shadow parts of her personality and her soul. However, she had become aware that there was still considerable self-development waiting for her, and that what she had focused on was merely the tip of the iceberg.

## 12.9 Discussion

Through the group development sessions that were based on theoretical approaches of Jung and Myss, Toni was able to confront the unconsciousness (Jung 2009, xi). She started realising the richness of her "inner world" (Jung 2009, 264) and managed to bring important parts of her unconscious into her consciousness.

Through the work with shadow aspects, the archetypes and the conscious exploration of her individual processes (Stein 2003), Toni got to know herself more deeply, developed an active imagination of her vision and recovered her childhood memories.

One important shadow aspect was the feeling of shame (as highlighted by Jung 2009), which was connected to Toni's shame for her parents, the fear that her children might feel ashamed of her (based on how she looked, how she behaved, what she did) and the fear of shame due to failure.

Through the group sessions and later in her individual coaching sessions, Toni explored how she could create more meaningfulness in her life and reconnect with her soul and her childhood memories and dreams. The therapy sessions affected her feelings of shame, which she transferred into a newly experienced freedom and constructive positive psychological frameworks, as described by Jung (2009). Furthermore, Toni brought the individual shame experience into her consciousness and, finally, explored it at a collective (family) conscious level (Jung 1971a). Through the exploration of the archetypes (Jung 1971b), Toni was able to explore her shadow aspects and to transform her shame into a consciously acknowledged issue. By addressing her deep-rooted shame for her parents, Toni could let go of the embarrassment she felt for being her parents' child and reduce her feelings of inferiority towards her own children. By realising her shame for her husband, she could take a step forward in admitting that she was ashamed of having married him. In this way, she was able to improve her self-esteem and the meaning that the relationship with her husband had for her during a specific time. Through her self-understanding, Toni recreated her self-image from her personal perspective and felt less vulnerable, less victimised and more empowered (Gamber 2014). One year after the group sessions, Toni felt more mindful, more empowered and positive towards the implementation of her visions into her life (as emphasised by Mayer and Viviers 2014a, b).

As described by Gamber (2014, 249), Toni activated new leisure time resources, musical activities, the exploration of new communities and time (meditative states)

in nature to reconnect with her soul, her dream and meaningfulness. As a result, she was able to reconcile with herself to overcome shame and self-criticism.

Generally, Toni became more mindful of her archetypes and learned how to deal with her emotions, thoughts and behavioural patterns (Myss and Shealy 1993). With regard to the four universal archetypes (Myss 2002), Toni transformed particularly the Victim archetype (related to shame as an underlying issue as described by Myss 2015) and acknowledged the (Nature) Child on a deeper level. As emphasised by Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012), Toni transformed the role of shame in her inner conflicts into a positive force to develop her vision and to understand herself better, based on a systemic family perspective (as emphasised by Harper and Hoopes 1990). The therapeutical group process, as well as her individual counselling sessions, helped her to contain her shame and transform it in the inner and outer world (according to Jung 2009).

## 12.10 Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this chapter was to reflect on a process of psychological development of a single individual in the format of a single case study. During this therapeutical process, the topic of shame was uncovered as an important underlying issue of self-development in the context of archetypal analysis and therapeutic development.

Toni first experienced shame as a soul eating emotion that blocked her deep connection with her parents and her children. Shame was also found to play an important role in her marriage. However, this shame was not transformed during the therapeutical process, unlike the inter-generational shame she felt for her family of origin and the fear of the shame she experienced within her own children. The transformation of shame through conscious self-exploration and self-development led Toni towards a transformation of the relationship with her parents, her children and her husband and is currently guiding her on her way to realise her childhood dreams.

Through the conscious exploration and transformation of shame, Toni felt energetic, relieved, happy and closer to her soul than before. The transformation of shame into acknowledging herself and others had a major impact on her trusting her intuition and her long-hidden dream to become more artistically engaged and to move into an eco-friendly, politically engaged spiritual community in the future.

Through mixed method approaches (qualitative and quantitative), future research should focus on the exploration of the work with and the transformation of shame in therapy and counselling sessions. The impact of shame and shameful experiences across generations should be explored in family therapy and other related therapeutical approaches. Therapeutical interventions and their specific impact on the work with and transformation of shame should be studied and models should be developed for approaching the issue of shame in therapeutical contexts effectively. The cultural context should be taken into account to deal with shame at a culturally adequate level.

From a practical perspective, therapists and counsellors should focus on their own blind spots with regard to shame, shameful and shameless experiences. They should become more self-conscious and aware of shame as an unconscious driver in daily routines, as well as shadow and archetypal work in therapy sessions.

## References

- Behrendt, H., & Ben-Ari, R. (2012). The positive side of negative emotion: The role of guilt and shame in coping with interpersonal conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56(6), 1116–1138.
- Bryman, A., Stephen, M., & Campo, C. (1996). The importance of context: Qualitative research and the study of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 7, 353–370.
- Flick, U. (2009). *Sozialforschung. Methoden und Anwendungen*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Enzyklopädie.
- Gamber, P. (2014). *Familientherapie für Dummies*. Weinheim: WILEY-VCH Verlag GmbH.
- Hall, J. A. (1989). *Jung: Interpreting your dreams—A guidebook to Jungian dream philosophy and psychology*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Harper, J. M., & Hoopes, M. H. (1990). *Uncovering shame: Integrating individuals with their family systems*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Jacoby, M. (2002). *Shame and the origins of self esteem. A Jungian approach*. New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Jung, C. G. (1917). The psychology of the unconscious. *Coll weeks*, 7.
- Jung, C. G. (1968). Commentary on the secret of the golden flower. In M. Fordham, G. Adler, & W. McGuire (Eds.), *The collected works of C.G. Jung* (pp. 12–101) (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1971a). Aion. In J. Campbell (Ed.), *The portable Jung* (pp. 139–162) (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.). New York: Penguin Books.
- Jung, C. G. (1971b). *Psychological types*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1976). *Symbols and the interpretation of dreams, CW* (Vol. 18). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1989). *Nietzsches Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar given in 1934–1939 by C.G. Jung*. London: Routledge.
- Jung, C. G. (2009). *The Red Book. Liber Novus: A reader's edition*. Edited and with an introduction by Sonu Shamdasani. London: W.W. Norton.
- Lee, R. G., & Wheeler, G. (2013). *The voice of shame: Silence and connection in psychotherapy*. San Francisco: Gestalt Press.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Mayer, C.-H. (2011). *The meaning of sense of coherence in transcultural management*. Münster: Waxmann.
- Mayer, C.-H., & Viviers, A. (2014a). "Following the word of God": Empirical insights into managerial perceptions on spirituality, culture and health. In C.-H. Mayer & D. Geldenhuys (Eds.), *Spirituality, culture and health in management. Special Issue, International Review of Psychiatry* (Vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 302–314).
- Mayer, C.-H., & Viviers, A. (2014b). "I still believe..." Reconstructing spirituality, culture and mental health across cultural divides. In C.-H. Mayer & D. Geldenhuys (Eds.), *Spirituality, culture and health in management. Special Issue, International Review of Psychiatry* (Vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 265–278).
- Myss, C. (2002). *Sacred contracts: Awakening your divine potential*. Reading: Bantam Books.
- Myss, C. (2015). The archetypal wheel. <http://www.myss.com/free-resources/sacred-contracts-and-your-archetypes/the-archetypal-wheel>. Accessed 21 September 2015.

- Myss, C., & Shealy, C. N. (1993). *The creation of health: The emotional, psychological, and spiritual responses that promote health and healing*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- O'Reilly, K. (2012). Ethnographic returning: Qualitative longitudinal research and the reflexive analysis of social practice. *Sociological Review*, *60*, 518–536.
- Page, S. (1999). *The shadow and the counsellor: Working with darker aspects of the person, role and profession*. London: Routledge.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Perry, C. (2015). The shadow: The Society of Analytical Psychology. Jungian analysis and psychotherapy. <http://www.thesap.org.uk/the-shadow>. Accessed 21 September 2015.
- Ruiz, D. M. (2011). *The four agreements. A practical guide to personal freedom: A Toltec Wisdom Book*. San Rafael, California: Amber-Allen.
- Stein, M. (2003). *Jung's map of the soul: An introduction* (5th ed.). Peru, Illinois: Carus.
- Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., & Kelly, K. (2006). First steps in qualitative data analysis. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim & D. Painter (Eds.), *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences* (pp. 321–344). Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Wang, X. (2012). The construction of researcher—Researched relationships in school ethnography: Doing research, participating in the field and reflecting on ethical dilemmas. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *26*, 763–779.
- Yin, R. K. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.