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# 11

## Differentiating Guilt and Shame and Their Effects on Motivation

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From the perspective of the structural theory of emotions (de Rivera, 1977, 1991), emotions are transformations of an individual's relationship to objects, persons, or events in the world. Any particular emotion can be described in terms of a specific dynamic structure that distinguishes it from other emotions. The structure of any emotion is a gestalt comprised of several interrelated parts. The first part is the "situation," which consists of one's interpretation of the meaning of a given emotional event. Any specific situation is one of many choices that can be made about how to interpret a given event. The situation is the result of a transaction between a person and an event, and is not simply a passive response. The second part of an emotion is the "transformation," which involves a change in one's way of being in the world, including one's experience of one's body, other people, space, and time. Emotions involve not only distinct physiological changes, but also broader transformations in the ways one's body or relation to the world is experienced (e.g., as expanding or shrinking, strengthening or collapsing). Finally, emotions involve an "instruction," or impulse to act in certain ways. These interrelated parts of the emotion always have a particular "function"—to preserve certain core personal values. The function of an emotion may be regarded as adaptive or maladaptive, depending upon the extent to which the person's perception of the situation makes sense and the extent to which the function promotes personal development.

Working from this perspective, we set out to examine, describe, and discriminate experiences of guilt and shame in terms of their different situations, transformations, instructions, and functions. Many theorists have sought to understand shame (or guilt) as a field of emotions, subsuming such emotions as humiliation, embarrassment, and shyness under the "shame-field" umbrella (e.g., Lewis, 1971; Miller, 1985). In contrast, we sought to differentiate shame and guilt from each other and from other similar emotions, such as humiliation, anxiety and depression.

We first report the results of two studies. In the first study, we developed structural descriptions of shame and guilt, using a phenomenological methodology. In the second study, we tested the validity of the resulting descriptions with a different sample of subjects. These subjects matched different parts of the resulting descriptions with their own narrative descriptions of experiences of guilt and shame. In the last section, we discuss the structures of guilt and shame, with a focus on their role in the motivation of psychological and social activity.

### STUDY 1: THE STRUCTURES OF GUILT AND SHAME

The purpose of Study 1 was to produce structural descriptions of guilt and shame. We used a phenomenological method called "conceptual encounter" (de Rivera & Kreilkamp, 1981). Using this method, an investigator engages the research participants in an encounter in which they compare the investigator's conceptualization of a phenomenon (in this case, guilt and shame) with their own concrete experiences of the phenomenon. During the course of the encounter, the analysis of concrete instances may change the investigator's conceptualization of the phenomenon. On the other hand, a sound conceptualization may change how a participant experiences concrete instances of the phenomenon. Thus, the emotion descriptions that are developed through this method are the results of an interactive process occurring between investigators and participants.

Research participants included 19 persons (10 males and 9 females) between the ages of 18 and 65. The conceptual encounter method involved three phases each for guilt and shame. In the first phase, in an individual interview, each participant described a specific personal experience of guilt and an experience of shame. The investigator (Lindsay-Hartz) asked the participant to be sure to describe an experience of guilt (or shame), as opposed to an experience of humiliation, embarrassment, depression, or other similar emotions. In the second phase, after encouraging each participant to describe all he or she could remember about the experience, the investigator then probed for more details, using a series of 20 questions designed to explore all aspects of the experience. These questions included such items as queries about what the person felt like doing and queries about

how the person's experience of self and others was changed. (See Lindsay-Hartz, 1980, for the script of the 20 questions used.)

In the final encounter phase of each interview, possible structural descriptions of guilt and shame were tested, revised, and validated. The investigator (Lindsay-Hartz) gave participants possible descriptions of the various aspects of guilt and shame ("situations," "transformations," "instructions," and "functions"), and asked them whether the descriptions captured the essential aspects of their guilt or shame experiences. The descriptions came from three sources: (1) models of guilt and shame developed by other theorists (e.g., Freud, 1923/1961; Lewis, 1971; Lynd, 1958; Piers & Singer, 1953); (2) ideas developed from the second phase of the interview with the research participants; and (3) the results of analyses of interviews of other participants. Because of the interactive nature of the conceptual encounter process, participants were presented with different hypothetical descriptions as the various descriptions were tested and revised throughout the course of the study.

The investigator asked the participants questions such as these: "Does the description fit? Why? Why not? Does the description reveal anything new about the experience? Can you suggest any revisions of the descriptions?" Within a given interview, once a given description was seen as appropriate, it was tested further. The investigator asked the participant whether the description fit any other experiences of shame or guilt. Most importantly, the investigator challenged the participant to try to think of experiences of guilt or shame that did not fit the description in question.

We analyzed qualitatively all collected examples of guilt and shame, in order to develop descriptions of the characteristics of guilt and of shame. In contrast to an attempt to describe a "family resemblance," our goal was to develop abstract descriptions of guilt and shame that would describe *each and every example* of guilt and of shame. We neither expected nor found sets of explicit, concrete features that were common to each of the descriptions provided by subjects. Rather, we attempted to create abstract descriptions that would convey common *meanings* implicit in the various interviews.

We used a variety of procedures in our attempt to create such descriptions. First, we looked for phrases and words present in each of the examples that might provide clues to the structure of the emotion. For example, in the process of analyzing the examples of guilt, we discovered that the words "I could . . ." or "I could have . . ." were repeated several times by every participant and were not used to describe experiences of shame. In one description of guilt, a young woman said, "I could have done something—maybe I could have forced her to go to the hospital earlier and she wouldn't have died." The words "I could . . ." no matter what the content that followed, suggested something characteristic of guilt: Participants felt that they could have prevented something bad from happening, convinced that they had some control. In our analyses, we used such key phrases and words to describe and

implicit in the concrete examples collected. The various other methods of qualitative analysis used are detailed elsewhere (Lindsay-Hartz, 1980).

The process of involving the research participants in the qualitative analyses provided rebuffs of some ideas, and confirmation and development of other ideas. For example, influenced by psychodynamic theorists (Piers & Singer, 1953; Lewis, 1971), we first hypothesized that shame involved a failure to be who one wants to be or to achieve some ego ideal, and we thought that participants were describing such a phenomenon. To our surprise, most of the participants rejected this formulation. Rather, when ashamed, participants talked about being who they did *not* want to be. That is, they experienced themselves as embodying an anti-ideal, rather than simply not being who they wanted to be. The participants said things like "I am fat and ugly," not "I failed to be pretty"; or "I am bad and evil," not "I am not as good as I want to be." This difference in emphasis is not simply semantic. Participants insisted that the distinction was important; in clinical practice, moreover, Lindsay-Hartz (1987, 1992) has found this distinction to be important to patients in therapy, as it serves to differentiate feelings of shame from feelings of inferiority.

The qualitative analyses culminated in descriptions of each structural part of guilt and shame—the situation, transformation, instruction, and function—and a final summary statement. Although space does not permit our listing the entire text of the descriptions of the four parts of guilt and of shame, the summary statements are presented in Tables 11.1 and 11.2. (See Lindsay-Hartz, 1980, 1984, for the complete text of each description and for further illustration.)

Quotes from a 20-year-old female research participant illustrate the components of the experience of guilt, as summarized in Table 11.1.

#### *Situation*

I felt guilty when my mother died. . . . I felt like it was all my fault. Like if I would have paid more attention to her and helped her, that she wouldn't be dead right now. . . . She was an alcoholic. And I knew it, and instead of helping her and trying to understand her, I'd fight with her. [She died] of a stroke. I also blame that on myself because we had an argument before she went to the hospital. . . . [After she died] I started thinking over and over of all the things I could have done to keep her from doing what she did. . . . At one point after she died, I thought I hated her, like, good riddance. . . . I was mad because she died before my graduation. . . . I used to fight with her every day because I didn't want to do [physical therapy for her cerebral palsy]. She used to take that as an excuse sometimes, to drink. . . . I didn't sit down and try to talk to her. . . . I should have been more open. . . . I didn't push my own problems aside. . . . so I could help her. It's the heart keeps on telling me it's wrong. [There were] things I could have done. Things I did that didn't work out. I should have tried harder.

#### *Transformation*

I felt lost. . . . It's like a split personality. Like an angel and a devil. . . . I

TABLE 11.1. Summary Description of Guilt

Emotion component	Content
Situation	We experience this emotion when <i>there is a violation of the moral order for which we take responsibility with our conviction that we could and should have done otherwise and that there then would have been no violation</i> . A violation of the moral order involves something bad and wrong happening or involves our doing what we should not or not doing what we should. The moral order, consisting in part of particular moral values, is implicitly upheld by the members of a community to which we belong, and we must uphold such values to belong to the community. Since we are responsible for the violation of the moral order . . .
Transformation	. . . we find ourselves <i>on the boundary</i> of our community. On the boundary, we are neither here nor there. It is as if we were a bad person; we lose certain of our rights and feel out of place and alone.
Function	Wanting to <i>uphold the moral order and be reconciled</i> with the community and be <i>forgiven</i> , and <i>believing that we have some control</i> over events . . .
Instruction	. . . we attempt to <i>set things right</i> and in some way repair the breach in the moral order.

TABLE 11.2. Summary Description of Shame

Emotion component	Content
Situation	We experience this emotion when, upon viewing ourselves <i>through the eyes of another, we realize that we are in fact who we do not want to be and that we cannot now be otherwise</i> . We usually try to avoid being who we do not want to be. Yet, we have somehow not avoided this, often because we have been unaware of the implications of our acts or have not understood something about ourselves that is now revealed to us.
Transformation	Being who we do not want to be, we <i>shrink</i> in relation to our previous image of ourselves and we are <i>exposed</i> before the other. As we shrink, a single characteristic or action seems to define the whole of who we are; we are worthless; and our view of the world may shrink to one small detail.
Function	Upholding our <i>ideals about who we want to be</i> and <i>maintaining our commitment to a social determination of who we are</i> . . .
Instruction	. . . we wish to <i>hide</i> in order to <i>get out</i> of the interpersonal realm and escape our painful exposure before the other.

something evil in me. . . . I feel that I'm evil, but yet I know I'm not evil. . . . Like you're a human being, but you're missing something. . . . I don't have the right to be happy when I feel guilty. I could have done anything [to help my mother] if I really wanted to. And that's the question, why I didn't want to. . . . there's something else. . . . I don't think it's [my hating her and being angry] an answer. I'm looking for something. That doesn't satisfy me. . . . I figure there's a reason, has to be a reason for everything.

#### Function

I think it's important if you care about people to at least give a real big effort to do it. . . . I feel like a person should feel those things. He should help. He should try to understand. If he wants to be a complete human being, if he wants people to care for him, he has to care for other people. . . . [If you don't], you're missing understanding, love, and relationship. I figure if I don't do those things, people won't like me, and I'll be a bad person. . . . I know I did what I thought had to be done, what should be done [to help my mother.]. . . . I felt like I tried and it didn't work. I also felt like I didn't try. That I tried, but not hard enough. . . . all the things I could have done.

#### Instruction

I just wanted to die when I felt guilty. . . . [If I'm] feeling guilty, I eat, I stuff my face. . . . I figure that's one sense of punishment that I'm giving myself. . . . I feel like you have to help people, you have to care for people, even if they don't care for you back.

In this example, the violation of the moral order (the situation) consisted of the wrongness of the participant's mother's untimely death and of her sense that she participated in her mother's death by hating her and by not doing all that she could have done to support her life. She took responsibility ("I felt like it was all my fault"), with the conviction that there were "things I could have done" to prevent her from dying. In terms of the transformation that accompanies guilt, we can see that the participant experienced a split in her identity ("It's like a split personality") and the loss of the "right to be happy." Furthermore, adding to her confused identity, the motive concerning why she acted as she did remained in part a mystery. The guilt functioned to maintain the participant's belief that she had some control over events ("I tried, but not hard enough. . . . all the things I could have done"). Her guilt also functioned to uphold her moral values (to "care about people"). Finally, her guilt motivated her to set things right and balance out the moral order. This participant looked to accomplish this act by punishing herself, following an "eye for an eye" philosophy. She also felt motivated to make reparations ("you have to help people, you have to care for people") elsewhere in the world, as a way of setting right the moral order.

Table 11.2 gives the summary description for shame. Quotes from a 25-year-old female participant illustrate the components of shame experiences. This woman felt ashamed when she called her employer and told her that she was breaking her promise to take a job at the employer's nursing home.

*Situation*

Offering something [to take the job] . . . and then taking it back . . . it makes you worth nothing . . . like a liar, or really a fake. It's a feeling of being a fake, a phony. It [to be a humanitarian] was something that I may have thought I could do at one time. All of a sudden I realized that I couldn't. . . . Shame has something to do with . . . something you can't control. Even if it's [confronting something about yourself] in front of the person, of the other one, that person, you're ashamed in front of yourself also. It's like her presence brought about the real confrontation of myself with myself.

*Transformation*

Shame is just total. . . . [It] makes you like a worthless kind of person, like a liar, really a fake. It's a feeling of being a fake, a phony. . . . Here I am—bad. . . . I was, like, ashamed of *mybeing*. . . . It's like I'm being looked at, I'm being judged or examined in some way. . . . Just by your mere existence is causing you shame. . . . It was a total feeling of terrible-ness. . . . Time . . . seemed like an eternity, but it was like frozen. . . . Me and the phone were in the middle of this big empty space . . . as if I were in the middle of an arena and being looked at. And here I am this tiny speck all alone . . . small and inadequate . . .

*Function*

When I realized how it was making me feel [ashamed], then all of a sudden this whole idea of humanitarian came to my head, and—gee, it would be such a great thing to do and you don't want to do it [fake the job at the nursing home]. . . . I had this vision of myself as some kind of humanitarian . . . doing good stuff for people. . . . I want to be a good person. . . . It's like her [her employer's] presence brought about the real confrontation of myself with myself. . . . It's like here this woman faces this every day. She's the kind of woman I should be. [To not be ashamed, I'd have to not] care what other people think.

*Instruction*

Shame is, like, give me a hole to crawl into. Let me just cover myself up and nobody can see me. . . . Shame is just total—you want to disappear. . . . [I wanted to] get out of the room so fast . . . to get out of it. I wanted a hole to open up in the ground and just suck me and cover me up. . . . I wished I wasn't born. . . . In person—phew!—I never would have been able to look into her eyes. Like on the phone, I still had the feeling, like if we were together, I would have wanted to just leave, get out of the room so fast. . . . I can't put it a better way than to say, like if there could only be a hole in the ground I could sink into and nobody would see me . . . the actual feeling is hiding everything . . . hiding every inch of myself. You want to hide yourself. You want to be where you cannot be seen. There is no way out. Just by your mere existence is causing you shame. There's nothing you can do except *get out* of the situation when you're being looked at.

Although guilt and shame are both self-evaluative emotions, they are quite different emotional experiences. To produce further evidence that the

abstract descriptions in Tables 11.1 and 11.2 indeed capture the differences between guilt and shame, and to demonstrate that these descriptions differentiate guilt and shame from related emotions, we performed an additional study.

## STUDY 2: TESTING THE STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS OF GUILT AND SHAME

Although the abstract descriptions developed during Study 1 appear to differentiate the essential features of guilt and shame, it might be argued that the research participants were influenced by the investigator's beliefs and suggestions throughout the course of the study. In Study 2, we assessed the validity of the structural descriptions of guilt and shame, using a more objective methodology.

The purpose of Study 2 was to determine whether subjects could match the statements produced in Study 1 with their own experiences of guilt and shame, in a manner that discriminated between their guilt and shame experiences. We presented subjects with unlabeled statements describing different parts of the experiences of guilt and shame. Because guilt and shame are conceptually often confused or merged with anxiety and depression (see, e.g., Beck, 1967; Gottschalk, 1971), we gave the subjects unlabeled statements describing these emotions as well. We asked the subjects to select from all these statements the descriptive statements that best fit their own personal experiences of guilt and shame. We predicted that subjects would match the guilt descriptions with their guilt experiences and the shame descriptions with their shame experiences. We also predicted that subjects would not match the descriptions of anxiety and depression with their experiences of guilt and shame. Such results would demonstrate that the guilt and shame descriptions differentiate guilt and shame not only from each other, but also from related emotions.

In research interviews, we have found that persons presented with a structural description of an emotion often report seeing something new in their experiences that they did not see before. A reasonable explanation of this phenomenon is that the structural description captures something central or important about the experience in question. From this view, whether or not a person gains insight into his or her experience after being presented with an emotion description might be taken as an index of the validity or utility of the description in question. Thus, a second purpose of Study 2 was to determine whether our guilt and shame descriptions were valid in the sense that they could lead subjects to have insights into the nature of their experiences. We predicted that subjects would report more insight about their guilt and shame experiences after selecting our target guilt and shame statements than after selecting alternative statements.

We formulated a total of 20 statements describing characteristics of

four different emotions—guilt, shame, anxiety, and depression. For each emotion, we included a statement describing (1) the situation, or central event, of the emotion; (2) the transformation, or change in experience of self, others, and surroundings; (3) the instruction, or the motivation to act in a certain way; and (4) the function of the emotion, or the values and goals of the person highlighted or created by the emotion. We also included a summary statement that contained an integrated description of the four components. The statements used for guilt and shame were developed in Study 1 (see the "Content" column of Tables 11.1 and 11.2 for the summary

TABLE 11.3. Summary Descriptions of Depression and Anxiety

Emotion component	Content
<i>Depression</i>	
Situation	We experience this emotion when <i>we are in a situation which conflicts with the assertion of our values. If we asserted our values, something important to us would be destroyed.</i> These values, which dictate either what we feel ought to be or how we want things to be, require us to take certain actions. However, the conflict between the situation and the assertion of our values is overwhelming.
Transformation	Consequently, we <i>lose our energy and withdraw</i> from the world.
Function	Wanting both to <i>preserve our values and protect</i> things important to us from being destroyed . . .
Instruction	. . . we convince ourselves that we <i>cannot</i> act and must give up trying to act.
<i>Anxiety</i>	
Situation	We experience this emotion when <i>we are beginning to face something that is unknown, and there is an anticipated risk. We may or may not become who we must become.</i> The person who we must become in facing the unknown situation relates to the vital core of our identity, and is based on our own expectations and the expectations of the community to which we want to belong.
Transformation	Facing the unknown situation, we find ourselves <i>impaired.</i> We are critical of ourselves, experience bodily impairment, and find it difficult to think, perceive, or act.
Function	Finding ourselves impaired and wanting to <i>take responsibility and to belong</i> to a community . . .
Instruction	. . . we desire to <i>hold on</i> to where we are at. We may seek things that are familiar, secure and comfortable and hold on to our certain membership in other communities.

Note. These statements are loosely based on descriptions by de Rivera (1977, 1991), Goodman (1981), and Kane (1976).

statements). The summary statements for anxiety and depression were loosely based on descriptions by de Rivera (1977, 1991), Goodman (1981), and Kane (1976), and appear in the "Content" column of Table 11.3 (the "emotion component" labels have been added here to provide clarity).

The situation, transformation, instruction, and function statements consisted of expanded descriptions of each of the four parts described in the summary statements and can be found in Lindsay-Hartz (1980). As examples of these statements, we present the instruction statements for guilt and shame:

*Instruction (Guilt)*

When we experience this emotion, we experience a desire to *set things right.* We might attempt to set things right in a number of ways. First, setting things right can involve confessing the wrong we have done, acknowledging that things have to be set right, and making reparations (or atoning) for what we have done wrong. Making reparations may involve repairing the actual wrong; or, if this cannot be done, making reparations may involve trying to make amendments for our wrong action in other ways and/or vowing never to do such a thing again. Second, although there are many wrongs which we cannot undo, we may wish to undo them or try magically to undo them by undoing other things which are reversible. Third, we may attempt to set things right by setting things right elsewhere in our world. For example, we may order the objects in our house, or in our thoughts we may order words or numbers. Fourth, we may find ourselves following an "eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" philosophy. Since we are responsible for things' not being right, we will be punished; and we may fear this punishment. In order to gain control over the punishment, some persons often punish themselves or seek out punishment. (p. 227)

*Instruction (Shame)*

When we experience this emotion, we experience a desire to *hide*, in order to *get out* of the interpersonal realm in which we find ourselves. Typically, we wish to "sink into the ground." We desire to bury ourselves and to be enclosed, covered, hidden, and alone. "Sinking into the ground" is a way to cut off our contact with the world, to enter a more secure space, and to escape the interpersonal realm and socially defined reality. If only we could sink into the ground, we would be all alone; and then the other's view of us and our social identity would be meaningless. (p. 228)

Thirteen persons (eight females and five males) between the ages of 18 and 36 participated. Subjects volunteered in response to announcements made in their undergraduate psychology class or to leaflets distributed in a middle-class residential neighborhood. Each subject participated in an individual interview on shame and an individual interview on guilt. In the first part of these interviews, the interviewer elicited a detailed description of a guilt (or shame) experience, and asked a series of questions designed to inquire about the meaning of the central event of the subject's experience and to gather information about all aspects of the experience. (See Lindsay-Hartz, 1980, for the complete schedule of questions.)

The next phase provided the data of immediate interest and was designed to test the validity of the abstract descriptions of guilt, and shame produced in Study 1. Within each individual guilt and shame interview, the interviewer gave each subject four sets of emotion component statements (i.e., situations, transformations, functions, and instructions). Each set of emotion components contained a separate description of guilt, shame, depression, and anxiety, respectively. All statements and statement sets were unlabeled. That is, no emotion label (e.g., "guilt") or component label (e.g., "situation") was included. The order of presentation was random both within and between sets. Within each individual guilt or shame interview, for each set of statements, the subject was instructed (1) to select the statement that best described his or her guilt or shame experience; (2) to go through each selected statement and indicate what parts of his or her experience fit the description; and (3) to indicate whether any parts of the statement selected led the subject to see something new about his or her experience, or highlighted something that he or she had not thought about before. Insight was coded as present if a subject responded "yes" to this final question. The interviewer asked each subject to explain what insight he or she had gained.

The interviewer then repeated the interview for the second emotion, following the procedure described above. During the second interview, the interviewer told the subjects that they could select the same statements as they selected for the first emotion if they thought they were appropriate.

After both individual interviews were completed, the interviewer gave each subject the four summary statements for guilt, shame, anxiety, and depression, and asked each subject to select the one statement that was the best overall description of his or her guilt experience and the one statement that was the best overall description of his or her shame experience. Again, the subjects were allowed to choose the same statement twice if they so desired. As before, the interviewer asked the subjects to indicate which parts of their experiences fit the selected description and which parts of the selected description did not fit their experiences, and to recount any insight gained. We expected that the subjects would match the guilt statements with their guilt experiences and the shame statements with their shame experiences. Table 11.4 shows the actual matches made. About half of the matches were made as expected, which was greater than the one out of four that would be expected by chance. The number of matches for the situation, instruction, and summary statements were statistically significant for both guilt and shame ( $p < .05$ , binomial test, one-tailed). For the transformation statements, the number of matches approached significance for shame ( $p = .08$ ), but not for guilt. The matches with the function statements did not approach significance for either shame or guilt.

We hypothesized not only that the subjects would match their experiences with the predicted statements, but also that they would more often gain insight into their experiences when they made the expected matches

TABLE 11.4. Matches between Emotion Statements and Emotion Experiences

Statement type	Matches	Guilt experiences		Shame experiences	
		Percentage reporting insight	Matches	Percentage reporting insight	Matches
<b>Situations</b>					
Guilt	11 (.85)**	45%	3 (.23)	0%	3 (.23)
Shame	1 (.08)	00%	8 (.62)**	63%	8 (.62)**
Depression	1 (.08)	00%	1 (.08)	100%	1 (.08)
Anxiety	0 (.00)	00%	1 (.08)	00%	1 (.08)
<b>Transformations</b>					
Guilt	3 (.23)	33%	1 (.08)	00%	1 (.08)
Shame	2 (.15)	00%	6 (.46)	67%	6 (.46)
Depression	5 (.38)	40%	3 (.23)	00%	3 (.23)
Anxiety	3 (.23)	00%	3 (.23)	33%	3 (.23)
<b>Instructions</b>					
Guilt	7 (.46)*	86%	5 (.38)	00%	5 (.38)
Shame	3 (.23)	33%	7 (.54)*	43%	7 (.54)*
Depression	0 (.00)	00%	0 (.00)	00%	0 (.00)
Anxiety	3 (.23)	67%	1 (.08)	00%	1 (.08)
<b>Functions</b>					
Guilt	4 (.31)	100%	4 (.31)	00%	4 (.31)
Shame	1 (.08)	00%	4 (.31)	50%	4 (.31)
Depression	5 (.38)	00%	3 (.23)	00%	3 (.23)
Anxiety	3 (.23)	33%	2 (.15)	00%	2 (.15)
<b>Summaries</b>					
Guilt	8 (.62)**	13%	3 (.23)	00%	3 (.23)
Shame	0 (.00)	00%	8 (.62)**	38%	8 (.62)**
Depression	4 (.31)	25%	1 (.08)	00%	1 (.08)
Anxiety	1 (.08)	00%	1 (.08)	00%	1 (.08)

Note. We compared the number of expected matches to the number of unexpected matches, using the binomial test (Siegel, 1956). For the "Matches" columns, the listed numbers are frequencies; the numbers in parentheses are proportions.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

than when they made unexpected matches. As a test of this latter hypothesis, we calculated the percentage of subjects who reported insight when they made the expected matches, and compared this percentage with the percentage of subjects who reported insight when they made the unexpected matches. As hypothesized, subjects reported insight 52% of the time after matching their experiences to predicted emotion statements ( $n = 34$  reports of insight), but only 14% of the time after matching their experiences to unpredicted statements ( $n = 9$ ;  $\chi^2 = 34.37$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

We then looked at the percentage of subjects reporting insight for each set of statements (see Table 11.4). For each set of statements (e.g., the

situation statements), we compared the percentage of subjects reporting insight when an expected match was made with the percentage reporting insight when an unexpected match was made. For 23 of the 26 possible comparisons, we found that a greater percentage of subjects reported insight with the expected than with the unexpected matches ( $p < .001$ , binomial test, two-tailed). Thus, the guilt and shame statements were more likely to provide subjects with insight into their respective guilt and shame experiences than were alternative statements describing other emotions.

These patterns of insight reports suggest that the ability of an emotion statement to generate insight into a subject's guilt or shame experience may provide information about the validity of that emotion statement, above and beyond that provided by an analysis of the proportion of predicted versus unpredicted matches alone. For example, although almost as many subjects matched the guilt instruction statement with guilt experiences (7) as with shame experiences (5), no subject who matched the guilt instruction statement to a shame experience reported insight. In contrast, six of the seven subjects (86%) who matched the guilt instruction statement with their guilt experiences reported insight.

Moreover, the insights that subjects gained were sometimes very powerful, as in the following instance. A young male professional described feeling guilty because he was often late for work. After matching his experience with the guilt situation statement, he suddenly recalled a core experience of guilt. When he was 8 years old, his dying and delirious father started choking him. He felt enraged and wished his father would die so that he could escape. He was rescued by an uncle, and his father then died. He had felt guilty for wishing his father dead, right at the time his father did die. When he later matched the guilt function statement with his "late for work" guilt experience, he stated that it gave him insight about "forgiveness." He said, "I didn't really know about being forgiven. I repressed it." He became aware that seeking forgiveness was an important part of his experience of guilt.

When asked whether the value placed on being forgiven applied also to his guilt experience with his father, he said, "I also forgave my father." Then he paused and in a noticeably lighter, relieved, but excited tone said, "Would he forgive me? I never thought of that! I think that he would. . . . I know he would. That's exactly what—I mean, all what he was up to was just to get close to me [before he got sick]." His new insight that he did long for his father's forgiveness, and his conviction that his father would forgive him, came with the force of an organizing "aha" experience.

When this subject returned a few days later for the second interview on shame, he spontaneously noted that he had gotten much out of the guilt interview and had felt quite relieved and energized afterwards. Since the interview, he had not been late for work once and no longer felt guilty about such past incidents.

In this example, we can see that this subject's insights about forgiveness were particularly helpful. After obtaining this insight, he reported that his guilt was relieved and that he no longer needed to punish himself by being late for work. Nor did he have to cover over his past guilt over his father's death with guilt that he created in the present by being late to work. Prior to reading the guilt function statement, he had not been in touch with his intense longing for his father's forgiveness; this longing emerged as he read and thought about the function statement.

Overall, these results suggest that of all the statements tested in Study 2, the situation, instruction, and summary statements provided the best descriptions of subjects' shame and guilt experiences. Although the number of subjects who matched the shame transformation statement with their shame experiences approached significance, subjects did not regard the guilt transformation statement or the guilt and shame function statements as adequate descriptions of their guilt and shame experiences.

We now turn to a discussion of the results that were inconsistent with our hypotheses. We first note that although the number of expected matches with the guilt and shame instruction statements were statistically significant, there were a number of "crossover" matches—that is, guilt instruction statements matched with shame examples, and shame instruction statements matched with guilt examples. We examined the comments made by the subjects when they made these "crossover" matches. We found that the subjects who selected the guilt instruction statement to describe their shame experiences all described a desire to hide (the shame instruction) when they described their experiences of shame. However, they were attracted to the idea of "setting things right" (a part of the guilt instruction statement) as a way of resolving their experiences of shame. Those subjects who selected the shame instruction statement to describe their experiences of guilt all spontaneously noted during their interviews that they felt a bit of shame mixed in with their experiences of guilt. Thus, the presence of "crossover" matches does not appear to provide a serious challenge to the validity of the guilt and shame instruction statements.

We also examined the comments made by the subjects when they made their matches with the transformation and function statements, to try to learn why these statements were not selected as the best descriptions of shame and guilt. For the guilt transformation statement, the subjects' comments indicated that our statement did not succeed in communicating our ideas. Although subjects generally indicated that parts of the guilt transformation statement seemed appropriate, including "feeling lost and alone," "feeling as if we are bad," and "running around in circles," many subjects noted that they could not relate the metaphor of "being on the boundary" to their experiences of guilt. Thus, based on the comments of subjects and on an examination of the examples of guilt collected in the first and second studies, we revised the description of the transformation of guilt to include the following:

When we are experiencing this emotion, our way of being in the world involves a dynamic tension. We feel like a bad person, yet know that while we did a bad thing, we are not really bad. We feel out of place and feel lost and alone, unconnected with other things or persons. We feel unsettled and not at peace. We may become stuck repeatedly thinking about our past actions or past events, unable to leave such thoughts behind, yet unable to come to terms with them in the present. In terms of our past actions, our motivations are clouded. We may not be entirely certain why we did a bad thing or what we actually did that was wrong.

We shall need to conduct future studies to test the appropriateness of this revised description of the transformation of guilt.

For the shame transformation statement, some of the subjects' comments indicated that feeling "exposed" may not be essential to experiences of shame. Most of the subjects who did not select the shame transformation statement nevertheless spontaneously mentioned that they felt "small" when feeling ashamed. Thus, although the number of matches with the shame transformation statement was not significantly greater than matches with alternative transformation statements, one might argue that the major portion of the transformation statement—the experience of shrinking and feeling small and worthless—is an appropriate description of experiences of shame.

As indicated, subjects did not regard the guilt and shame function statements as suitable descriptions of their guilt and shame experiences. Many of the subjects commented that *none* of the function statements seemed applicable to their experiences. They had difficulty understanding these descriptions and relating them to their experiences. Nevertheless, subjects reported insight more frequently when they matched their experiences to predicted rather than unpredicted function statements. In addition, when subjects selected a summary statement as expected, they often commented that the function part of the summary was an accurate description of their experiences. Perhaps people have difficulty getting enough distance from the values and goals described by the function statements to see the relations between these rather abstract concepts and a particular emotional experience. It is also possible that a description of the function of an emotion becomes clear or meaningful only in the context of a broader description of the emotion. Alternatively, it is possible that the function of any given emotion is not as readily specified in one's experiences as are other components. Understanding the function may require inference and further reflection. In this case, we may need to devise a different kind of validity test, perhaps one that uses trained judges. Future research may contribute to our understanding of the functional aspects of guilt and shame.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR MOTIVATION

Analysis of each aspect of guilt and shame (the situation, transformation, instruction, and function) reveals something different about these emotions

and the ways in which they affect our lives. A discussion of all these aspects and their interrelationships is beyond the scope of this chapter. We focus here on the instructions of guilt and shame and their direct effects on motivation, the complicated interplay between the components of the situations and the motivation of moral and prosocial behavior, and the adaptiveness and maladaptiveness of guilt and shame as related to their functions. Finally, we explore the ways in which guilt and shame cloud or clarify our motives.

The psychological situation of guilt involves a violation of the moral order, for which we take responsibility. The primary motivational instruction of guilt is the felt desire somehow to "set things right," to restore the balance in the moral order. Various outcomes are possible, depending upon the opportunities afforded by the circumstances. If the circumstances permit confession, reparation, or a request for forgiveness, then the guilt may be ended. If such actions are not feasible, the person may seek magically to undo the wrong, to inquire repeatedly how he or she could have done something that would have prevented the wrong, to make up for the wrong by "right" action elsewhere in the world, or to punish the self.

Self-punishment, one manifestation of the instruction of guilt, often seems to carry out an "eye for an eye" philosophy. Some of our research participants reasoned that they could balance out the wrong for which they felt responsible by punishing themselves. Other participants described trying to set things right by cleaning obsessively ("cleaning the floor with a toothbrush") and trying to order objects in their environment when they felt helpless to set right the actual moral situation. The particular way in which an individual is motivated to "set things right" may depend in part on that individual's level of social and moral development. For example, Zahn-Waxler and her colleagues (Zahn-Waxler & Kochanska, 1990; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979) have reported that children exhibit reparative and self-punitive behaviors after causing distress in others as early as the second year of life. A more advanced level of development may perhaps lead to spontaneous confessions or to symbolic reparation when specific reparation is impossible.

If an experience of guilt is not resolved, it may persist as an unresolved tension. Unresolved guilt may lead to continual attempts to restore the moral balance by "being good," punishing the self (as in Freud, 1923/1961), giving up rights, performing actions that appear to be symbolic substitutes for making reparations, undoing a wrong, or making order out of disorder. Unresolved guilt can also lead a person to "choose" to feel guilty in future situations that do not really warrant guilt, or even to create circumstances to match a sense of unresolved guilt (as described by Freud, 1916/1957). We can speculate that this phenomenon would contribute to a person's being very guilt-prone or susceptible to being "guilt-tripped." Additional research is needed to explore this process further.



Many might suggest that guilt motivates moral behavior primarily through guilt avoidance—the tendency to act morally in order to avoid the feelings of guilt that one knows would result if one had failed to act as such. Although people certainly do resist (or attempt to resist) temptations because they do not want to feel guilty, we suggest that there is a far richer and more complex interplay between the experience of guilt and the motivation of moral and prosocial behavior. Several conditions increase the likelihood that a person will perceive his or her situation as a moral violation and will be motivated to correct a wrongdoing either before, during, or after its occurrence. These conditions include (1) the tendency to take responsibility for preventing bad things from happening; (2) the conviction that one has some control over such bad things; (3) the propensity to empathize with others; and (4) the desire to honor personal and moral commitments. These components do not motivate moral behavior simply through guilt avoidance, but rather operate as central aspects of a person's social or moral disposition relative to others. They are often directly implicated in the situational perception of guilt and in the motivation of moral and prosocial behavior. We now take a closer look at the interplay between these components and the production of guilt and moral behavior.

First, the motivation to make reparations has its origins in the acceptance of responsibility for a moral violation. The mere existence of a moral violation is not a sufficient condition for guilt; to feel guilty, we must take responsibility for the violation, with the conviction that we could have done something to prevent it. In addition, it does not matter whether we are objectively responsible for the violation; only a subjective sense of responsibility is required. For example, perhaps the earliest guilt-like reactions occur when toddlers misattribute responsibility to themselves for acts that they did not perform (Hoffman, 1983). Zahn-Waxler et al. (1979) reported that upon seeing their mothers cry, 2-year-olds sometimes made apologetic statements such as "Did I make you sad?" or "Sorry, I be nice." Similarly, but at a more advanced level of development, survivors of traumas often feel guilty and take responsibility for an awful event with the conviction that they could have done something to prevent the trauma, no matter how irrational the conviction. For example, one of our research participants, a police sergeant, felt guilty when he simply watched two of his men standing next to him get shot by a sniper no one knew was there. He said:

I was the one making decisions here [to lead his men down the street] . . . It was my responsibility. . . . He got hit and I didn't. . . . I brought him to that door. . . . Maybe if I was slower or faster . . . if I had been on the right side instead of the left side. . . . Did I do something wrong? Was there any other way I could have handled it? . . . I was responsible. . . . Maybe we could have hit the door a second earlier.

The fact that guilt is not an automatic response, but only occurs when a person takes responsibility for what ought not to have happened, leads to

an interesting paradox. On the one hand, people who are quite guilty in an objective sense—sociopathic criminals, or bureaucrats like Adolf Eichmann—often do not experience any guilt. They cannot, because they do not accept responsibility for the evil caused by their behavior or do not view what they have done as wrong. On the other hand, saints—whose lives are filled with loving acts—often appear to experience an immense amount of guilt, perhaps because their identification with humankind leads them to accept responsibility for all human evil (see Houselander, 1951). Most people fall somewhere between these extremes, and Fingarette (1967) has convincingly argued that people choose to accept varying degrees of responsibility for their fellow humans as their own humanity develops. The acceptance of responsibility means that one must think that an injustice or wrong could have been prevented if one had acted differently.

There seem to be many opportunities for persons to make such judgments. Montada and Schneider (1989) have suggested that "existential guilt" (the acceptance of responsibility for social ills because of one's own unjustified relative privileges) may motivate much prosocial behavior. In fact, their data suggest that existential guilt is a far better predictor of prosocial political behavior than is sympathy. Similarly, Chapman, Zahn-Waxler, Cooperman, and Lannotti (1987) showed that children's ability to experience guilt is a better predictor of personal helping behavior than is empathy. Note that this is not to say that guilt is the motivation for helping behavior. Rather, the acceptance of responsibility is a better predictor than empathy, and this acceptance also leads to feelings of guilt when a person sees the self as responsible for the wrongness of some situation. Thus, we would predict that the more a person has a tendency to take responsibility for things, the more that person will encounter opportunities to experience guilt and the accompanying impulse to set things right. Likewise, the more a person experiences guilt, the more likely the person will be to develop a tendency to take responsibility for things.

A second component of the situation of guilt is the conviction that one has some control over bad events. Because taking responsibility involves the conviction that a person could have done something to prevent the violation of the moral order, we would expect that people who are more likely to be convinced that they have or had control would have more opportunity to take responsibility, and thus to experience guilt and the accompanying motivation to set things right. Hence, we would predict that people with a higher internal locus of control, as opposed to an external locus of control, will be more likely to experience guilt. We also would predict that guilty experiences (and guilt-inducing child-rearing techniques) will reinforce and strengthen the development of an internal locus of control, as well as the attribution of having some control and having a sense of responsibility for bad events. We hope that future research will explore these predicted relations.

The third component, an ability to empathize with others, is important

in one's experience of another as harmed or in pain. Experiencing guilt, which involves experiencing something as a violation of the moral order, requires some ability to notice the effects of events on others. We would expect that people who show more ability to empathize will encounter more opportunities to experience guilt than will people with more limited empathic abilities. Hoffman (1982) has suggested that guilt over harming others has its origins in empathic reactions to the distress of others, which occur early in infancy. Hoffman suggests that empathic concern becomes transformed into guilt in the second year of life, when children become aware that their actions lead to pain in others.

Several findings support this assertion. First, there are similarities in the developmental course of empathic concern and guilt-like reactions. Zahn-Waxler and her colleagues (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979, 1992) reported that in naturalistic situations where toddlers were both witnesses and causes of the distress of others, prosocial and reparative responses increased in frequency during the second year of life. Second, young children's reparations are often accompanied by expressions of concern for others. For example, after an 18-month-old accidentally hit a babysitter, the child said, "Sorry, Sally," patted her forehead, and kissed her. A 2-year-old who pulled a cousin's hair and was told not to by the mother crawled to the cousin and said, "I hurt your hair, please don't cry," and then gave her a kiss (Zahn-Waxler & Kochanska, 1990). Working with older children, Thompson and Hoffman (1980) asked 6-, 8-, and 10-year-olds to complete stories in which a protagonist harms another person. Children who were asked to think about the victim of each story attributed more guilt to the story protagonist than children who were not asked to do so, further suggesting that being oriented toward thinking about the plight of others can enhance the experience of guilt. These findings are consistent with the view that guilt has its origins in feelings of empathic concern.

The fourth component that contributes to the situation of guilt is the desire to honor personal and moral commitments. We suggest that the more people are committed to a community of others (close relationships, family, or the larger community), the more likely they will be to experience guilt. Persons who are more committed to their community may be more likely to define the moral concerns of the community as their own and to feel an obligation to uphold them. Likewise, we predict that experiences of guilt will foster ties to others, because upholding a moral standard strengthens one's ties to the community defining that standard. It is also likely that persons who maintain strong commitments to their communities will be more likely to empathize with the plights of others in their community; thus, as discussed above, they will be more likely to experience guilt. These predictions are supported by findings indicating that persons with little or no commitment to others, such as sociopaths (persons with antisocial personality disorder), experience little if any guilt (Cleckley, 1982; American

Thus, the components of taking responsibility, the conviction one has or had some control, the propensity to empathize with others, and the desire to honor personal and moral commitments all function as important influences on the situation of guilt, and both affect and are affected by moral and prosocial motivations in complex ways. Future research is needed to clarify further the nature of this rich interplay.

Because *both* the absence of the ability to experience guilt and the presence of excessive guilt-driven behavior appear extremely dysfunctional, it would be helpful to find some way to distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive guilt. De Rivera (1989) has proposed one way of making such a distinction. He has suggested that whether guilt (or any other emotion) is a "good" or a "poor" choice is dependent on the particular situation in which a person finds himself or herself. A "good" or adaptive choice may be defined as one that leads a person primarily to focus on caring for some person or prospect other than the self (with the ego receding to the background), while a "poor" or maladaptive choice may be defined as one that leads a person to focus on the ego (with concern for the other receding). This line of thought suggests that the experience of guilt is adaptive to the extent that it is congruent with a genuine caring for others who have been injured, and maladaptive to the extent that it is motivated by a fear of rejection or is used as a defense against a realization that one cannot control certain unwanted events (leading to a denial of certain limitations).

Alternatively, the adaptiveness or maladaptiveness of an emotion may be explored by looking at the function of the emotion in the context of the individual person's life. For example, one of our subjects reported that she felt guilty when she "took \$10" from her mother and "lied about it." One might suggest that her guilt served an adaptive function by highlighting her commitments to the moral value of honesty and respect for other's property, her belief that she had control over her stealing, and her wish to be reconciled with her parents. However, not all guilt experiences are so clearly adaptive. For example, persons who have experienced the traumatic death or injury of someone else while they have remained unharmed often experience a debilitating sense of survivor guilt. Survivor guilt is likely to develop in a variety of contexts, including survivors of family suicide or death, survivors of plane or car accidents, spouses of rape victims, war veterans who have witnessed the death of fellow soldiers, and Holocaust survivors. Consider the case of parents of children with fatal diseases, who often experience self-blame and guilt, and become convinced that they could have done something to prevent their children's disease (Chodoff, Friedman, & Hamburg, 1964). In these circumstances, a parent's sense that he or she could have controlled such an uncontrollable event as cancer can create a maladaptive sense of guilt that impedes the commencement of more adaptive processes, including accepting the uncontrollable and meaningless nature of the child's disease and mourning the loss.

However, in addition to its maladaptive elements, even survivor guilt

may serve adaptive functions. Survival guilt can function as a defense, helping people preserve a comforting sense of control and order in the face of uncontrollable, impersonal, and meaningless horrible events, even when such order and control come at the cost of the torture of guilt. For a while, parents of dying children may need to cling to such a sense of control and order. Furthermore, in cases where individuals have survived trauma or death to others, survivor guilt may function to preserve ties of loyalty and community to those who were killed or injured. For example, after surviving torture in Argentina while other political prisoners were tortured and killed, Jacobo Timerman (Moyers, 1981) described this aspect of guilt:

I know that going to a psychiatrist, I will lose all the world of pain, to which I am so loyal, after seeing the people who were killed in prisons. And I don't want to lose this relation with the world I was in. I don't know if this is clear to you, I feel like a kind of loyalty to the people who were killed. . . . I feel this [abandoning my guilt and putting it behind me] is disloyal. I belong to that world, and I want to belong to that world, and I don't want to belong to any other world.

Although there may be more life-sustaining ways of developing a sense of loyalty and connection to lost others, survivor guilt may sometimes function as an adaptive first step in dealing with the meaninglessness of a horrible trauma to others. Ultimately, judgments about the adaptiveness or maladaptiveness of a particular experience of guilt are embedded in the complex tapestry of people's lives.

Whether a guilt experience is adaptive or maladaptive, it always intensifies one motivation—the desire to set things right. At the same time, it often clouds the understanding of a person's specific motivation. Guilty people often search for motives for their actions, but to no avail. For example, one of our research participants felt guilty because she did not return a sketch she had promised to give back to a child. She concluded, "I just never did it." Although she considered the possibility that perhaps she broke her promise to return the sketch because she wanted it, she was uncertain of this motive. When guilty, a person may consider many motives for wrong action (or lack of action), but important motives seem to remain a mystery. Ultimately, persons fall back on the word "just": "I just did it," or "I just didn't do it," or even "It just happened."

This clouding of motives may occur for a variety of reasons. For example, persons may be unwilling to admit undesirable motives to themselves or to an interviewer, and thus may gloss over their motives by stating, "I just did it." Similarly, persons may find it difficult to integrate unacceptable motives with their beliefs that they are basically good persons. Alternatively, difficulty in gaining clarity about motives may indicate that the guilt involves some unconscious processes. Consider the example of the research participant whose remarks have been used earlier in this chapter

to illustrate the structure of guilt. This participant felt guilty when her mother died. She was convinced she could have done *something* more to help prevent her mother's death, and was confused about her motivations for not doing more. This participant pondered the reasons why she did not help more. She said:

And that's the question, why I didn't want to . . . there's something else. . . . I don't think it's [my hating her and being angry] an answer. I'm looking for something. That doesn't satisfy me. . . . I figure there's a reason, has to be a reason for everything.

We can see here how guilt often involves a clouding of one's understanding of one's motivations.

Because our motives when guilty often remain a mystery, guilt is easily enlisted as a defense that protects us from exploring potentially worrisome motives (see also Gray's [1987] exploration of the defensive functions of guilt). When guilty, we feel "as if" we are bad. Because of the "as if" quality of guilt, as long as we feel guilty, the reasons why we acted as we did remain obscured. As a result, guilt enables us to avoid integrating the negative implications of our actions with our sense of identity.

Unlike experiences of guilt, experiences of shame do not obscure our motives in a cloud of mystery. Instead, when ashamed, we are quite clear, and what we are clear about is our sense of identity as a horrible, ugly, bad, or awful person. We are who we do not want to be; we embody an anti-ideal. Indeed, when guilty people become clear about their motives, then they often begin to feel ashamed instead of feeling guilty.

The primary motivational instruction of shame is the impulse to get out of the interpersonal realm, usually by hiding. Others can see the awful, ugly, or bad person we think we are; and we wish not to be this person. If only we could sink through a hole in the floor and disappear, even from ourselves, then we would not have to face what seems to be the fact of who we are. (See the statement above describing the instruction of shame.)

The instruction to get out may have several manifestations. Ashamed people frequently wish to get up and run out of the room, which they sometimes do. At other times, they simply look down, avoid eye contact, and lower their shoulders, seeming to shrink in size. One of our research participants continually had to leave the interview room to "go to the bathroom" and take other breaks, in order to cope with his urge to run out of the room. Another participant described moving and giving no one his new phone number or address, in response to feeling ashamed and wishing to hide. Therapy patients often wish to flee therapy and get out of the therapist's presence when experiences of shame first emerge. Failure to help patients with their sense of shame often means disaster for the therapy, because the patients may then quit therapy prematurely. Working as a therapist, Lindsay-Hartz has observed that intense experiences of shame and

urges to get out of the interpersonal realm may also motivate suicidal actions. Some people may see suicide as the ultimate way to escape the interpersonal realm.

Shame also seems to motivate some people to react with rage. This type of rage reaction can be seen as a common defense against shame, but it is not an essential part of the experience of shame. Patterns of narcissistic injury (leading to shame), followed by rage, are well documented in the clinical literature (Kohut, 1977; Lewis, 1971; Morrison, 1989); have been supported by experimental research (Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992); and were also evident in the experiences of some of the participants and subjects in these studies. As long as one remains in the interpersonal realm, then one's worthless, horrible self is exposed to oneself and to all others. If one feels helpless to hide or to get out of the interpersonal situation in which one finds oneself, then shame can motivate one to attempt to obliterate the other. Attacking the other, or symbolically putting out the eyes of the other, is another way to escape the interpersonal realm. An ashamed person may literally become physically violent, as Lansky (1987) has documented in cases of spouse abuse. An ashamed person may become verbally enraged, hurling insults and hateful attacks at others. By putting another down, one may attempt defensively to repair and in comparison raise up one's shattered sense of self-worth.

Comparing shame with guilt, we can see that the opportunity for empathy is much reduced during experiences of shame. While ashamed, one focuses on the painful experience of being a negative self. Beyond a conviction that others view one negatively, one is not likely to be thinking much about any feelings that others may be experiencing. Consequently, we would predict that shame-prone people may evidence less empathy than guilt-prone people, and that people who evidence greater ability to empathize may experience more guilt than shame. Similarly, children who are frequently shamed during their childhood, leading to a painful preoccupation with a negative self-image, may not develop as much ability to empathize with others. Further research is required to explore the connections among empathy, shame, and guilt. What is clear is that guilt and empathy are likely to be found together, and that shame, low empathy, and high self-preoccupation are likely to be found together. Indeed, Tangney (1991) has found that empathic responsiveness is positively related to the tendency to experience guilt and is inversely related to the tendency to experience shame.

As is the case with guilt, clarifying whether or not a particular shame experience is adaptive or maladaptive is furthered by reviewing the adaptiveness of the function of that shame experience in the context of a person's life. According to the findings of our first study, described earlier, shame functions to uphold our ideals about who we want to be and to maintain our commitment to a social determination of who we are. Feeling ashamed can be adaptive if the functional values summarized are adaptive. For example,

one of our subjects, who felt ashamed when he violently shook his girlfriend in a fit of rage, described his shame as functioning to support his ideal of being a kind, good, nonviolent person and to maintain his commitment to the socially positive value of such an identity. His shame served adaptively to help him face the destructiveness of his violent behavior, to highlight the motives for this behavior, and to motivate him to change it.

Shame may be regarded as a maladaptive "choice" of emotion when it involves supporting unattainable or unrealistic ideals (such as the ideal of having a different skin color or sexual orientation, or the ideal of having unflawed parents). Shame may also be maladaptive when a person accepts the view of others that a particular way of being is unacceptable when it need not be viewed that way (e.g., viewing a racial characteristic or "disability" as lowly or terrible). In such cases, an adaptive choice may involve the challenge of educating others about the positive value of such characteristics, or accepting that others may not always share one's perceptions. A person may also be able to join other communities whose social definitions of what is ideal and anti-ideal are more adaptive for that person. For example, a person may join with others who value something such as his or her racial characteristics or sexual orientation, even if the dominant culture does not.

Like guilt, shame can be enlisted as a defense. As a defense, shame can be either adaptive or maladaptive, depending on whether it provides needed protection or cripples personal development. For example, shame involves taking a single unworthy action or characteristic to be the whole of a person's identity. This process can defensively prevent the person from thinking clearly about his or her identity in a more integrated manner. Furthermore, the belief that the person cannot change his or her shameful identity sets up a defense of passivity and helplessness. As painful as shame is, it can be invoked to relieve a person of the task of making difficult but desirable changes in his or her life.

In the place of feeling ashamed, other, more adaptive choices sometimes exist. An adaptive choice may involve accepting that some aspect of one's self is contrary to one's ideals, but not taking this aspect to be the whole of who one is, and committing oneself to change in this area. For example, one of our subjects felt ashamed when she overheard two boys say that she was fat. She took her weight to be the whole of who she was—a fat, ugly person—and was not able to appreciate in the moment of shame the fact that she had a pretty face and a pleasant personality. She also felt helpless to do anything about her being fat. Later, she was able to confront this experience of shame, to realize that her fatness was not the whole of herself, and to decide that she could go on a diet and change how she looked, which she did. Her shame first functioned in a defensive manner, prompting her to hide, to feel helpless, and to avoid thinking about herself or the experience. However, her shame did highlight her ideal of being an attractive, thin person. Later, she became committed to changing her weight and appear-

ance. Sometimes, facing something about which a person feels ashamed can motivate that person to commit to change and can resolve the experience of shame. Ward (1972) long ago recognized that facing experiences of shame in psychotherapy can be an adaptive and important turning point.

Guilt and shame appear, at first glance, to be similar emotions. However, our studies have shown that they are qualitatively different from each other. They differentially affect our motivations and actions, and these differences affect our lives markedly and profoundly. We hope that by studying the differences, therapists and researchers can explore and develop techniques to help individuals with patterns of making maladaptive choices begin making better choices and freeing themselves from the entanglements that these emotions can generate.

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## You Always Hurt the One You Love: Guilt and Transgressions against Relationship Partners

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Psychology and other social sciences have recently rediscovered personal relationships. Much of what people want, think, feel, and do, beyond the issue level of existence, is in the service of acquiring, maintaining, renegotiating, or terminating the close personal relationships in which they are involved. Furthermore, human relational behavior has an evolutionary/biological history. That is, humans evolved as group-living and highly sociable creatures, and these features promote reproductive capacity as well as individual survival and the development of culture (Hinde, 1979; Hogan, 1983). Extensive documentation has accumulated that personal relationships are more than just ubiquitous in human experience; they are fundamental to existence. For example, it is conceivable that without the propensity for such relationships, humans would not have survived as a species (Hogan, 1983).

Although guilt is sometimes described in relation to its societal and interpersonal functions, a major controversy remains with respect to the role of guilt in the context of personal relationships. Specifically, is guilt one of the so-called "social emotions," which arise from threats to the self in the context of other people (e.g., shyness, embarrassment, audience anxiety, etc.), or is it an essentially private emotion arising from the recognition that one has violated a personal standard of moral relevance? Put another way, what is it that people feel guilty about and why? The nexus between personal