

Cultural Models of Shame and Guilt

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Sin hath the devil for its father, shame for its companion, and death for its wages.

—Thomas J. Watson Sr. (founder of IBM)

Men cannot live without shame. A sense of shame is the beginning of integrity.

—Mencius (Chinese philosopher)

In the anthropological and cross-cultural literatures, much attention has been paid to cultural differences in shame and guilt. Indeed, as early as the 1940s, Benedict (1946) famously described Japanese culture as a “shame culture” and U.S. culture as a “guilt culture.” Since then, several empirical studies have documented significant cultural variation in the valuation, elicitors, and behavioral consequences of shame and guilt (e.g., Crystal, Parrott, Okazaki, & Watanabe, 2001; Fischer, Manstead, & Mosquera, 1999; Kitayama, Markus, & Masumoto, 1995; Li, Wang, & Fischer, 2004; Menon & Shweder, 1994; Romney, Moore, & Rusch, 1997; Stipek, 1998). The majority of mainstream emotion research, however, has ignored these empirical findings. In this chapter, we argue that current models of shame and guilt would benefit by incorporating cross-cultural research findings not only to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of shame and guilt, but also to reveal how these models are embedded in Western cultural ideas and practices. We first present the dominant model of shame and guilt in the emotion literature. Then we demonstrate how this model reflects a view of the self that pervades many individualistic cultural contexts, including the United States. Next we show how shame and guilt may differ in cultures that promote a different view of the self. We present findings from the cross-cultural literature supporting this argument. Finally, we discuss future research directions as well as practical implications of existing findings. But first we define our terms.

DEFINITIONS

At their core, “shame” and “guilt” are feelings associated with being negatively evaluated (either by the self or others) because one has failed to meet standards and norms regarding what is good, right, appropriate, and desirable (H. B. Lewis, 1974). For this reason, shame and guilt are often referred to as “moral” emotions (Tangney & Stuewig, 2004). In addition, shame and guilt are referred to as “self-conscious” emotions because they require a concept of the self, or an ability to see the self as an object of evaluation (Tracy & Robins, 2004). Indeed, developmental research suggests that shame and guilt emerge only after children are able to recognize themselves in the mirror (M. Lewis, 1997).

We use the term “culture” to refer to historically derived and socially transmitted ideas (e.g., symbols, language, values, and norms) and practices (e.g., rituals, mores, laws), as well as artifacts (e.g., tools, media) and institutions (e.g., family structure) that are simultaneously products of human action and producers of future action (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181). For example, religious beliefs and practices created by individuals who lived centuries ago now guide and shape the thoughts and behaviors of individuals living today, just as religious beliefs and practices created today will shape the thoughts and behaviors of generations to come. Anthropologists and cultural psychologists have recently used the term “cultural model” to describe organized patterns of ideas and practices related to specific social, physical, and psychological phenomena, including the self and emotion (Fryberg & Markus, in press; Shore, 1996; Strauss, 1992).

DOMINANT MODELS OF SHAME AND GUILT

According to the dominant model of shame and guilt, people experience these emotions when they have done something “bad” or “wrong” in their own eyes or in the eyes of others. Thus, Tomkins, Sedgwick, and Frank (1995) described shame as “the affect of indignity, of defeat, of transgression, and of alienation . . . [it] is felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul” (p. 133). For this reason, as the epigraph by Thomas Watson Sr., the founder of IBM, suggests, shame and guilt are emotions that are devalued and that should be actively avoided.

However, in mainstream emotion research, scholars have also distinguished between shame and guilt. Some researchers have argued that although both emotions occur when someone has committed a transgression that results in being negatively evaluated by others, the emotions differ in the origin of the transgression. When people attribute their transgressions to their global and stable self (“I can’t believe *I* did that”), they experience shame, but when people attribute their transgressions to transient actions or states (“I can’t I believe I did *that*”), they experience guilt (H. B. Lewis, 1987; Tangney, 1991, 1998; Tracy & Robin, 2004). For example, if a person hits a tree while driving, the person feels guilt if she attributes her accident to being sick while driving, whereas the person feels shame if she attributes the accident to her own incompetence. Thus, shame is often viewed as more devastating to people’s self-concepts and self-esteem than guilt.

Emotion researchers have differentiated between shame and guilt in other ways as well. For example, some scholars argue that the emotions differ in their orientation to self or others. While shame typically involves being negatively evaluated by *others* (real or imagined), guilt typically involves being negatively evaluated by *oneself* (e.g., Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002). In other words, whereas shame has an “external” orien-

tation (i.e., being oriented to others), guilt has an “internal” orientation (i.e., being oriented to the self).¹ Shame, therefore, is associated with the fear of exposing one’s defective self to others. Guilt, on the other hand, is associated with the fear of not living up to one’s own standards (Benedict, 1946; Kitayama et al., 1995). Consistent with this distinction, studies have found that compared to guilt, shame occurs more frequently in the presence of others (Smith et al., 2002). Similarly, Helen Block Lewis, an early leader in shame research, argued that people who experience shame are more sensitive to contextual cues and pay more attention to others than are those who experience guilt (H. B. Lewis, 1985; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Finally, in the dominant models of shame and guilt, guilt leads to reparative action, whereas shame does not. For instance, empirical findings suggest that in U.S. contexts, unlike experiencing shame, experiencing guilt leads to higher self-esteem and increases in empathy and perspective taking (e.g., Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Tangney, 1998). Moreover, shame-prone individuals are more likely to engage in avoidance and withdrawal, to experience inward anger, and to blame others than are guilt-prone individuals (e.g., Lutwak, Panish, Ferrari, & Razzino, 2001; Tangney, 1991; Tangney & Fischer, 1995). This pattern of results may explain why in U.S. samples high levels of shame have been linked to mental illness (see Ferguson, Stegge, Miller, & Olsen, 1999; H. B. Lewis, 1987; Scheff, 1998; Tantam, 1998; Tracy & Robin, 2004) and physiological stress (Dickerson, Gruenewald, & Kemeny, 2004; Gruenewald, Kemeny, Aziz, & Fahey, 2004).

In summary, according to the mainstream emotion literature, people experience shame and guilt when they have violated standards or norms (e.g., see Hoblitzelle, 1987; H. B. Lewis, 1987; Tangney, 1991). However, whereas shame occurs when one is negatively evaluated by others for behaving inappropriately, involves global and stable attributions for transgressions, and is associated with maladaptive consequences, guilt occurs when one negatively evaluates one’s own self for behaving inappropriately, involves specific and temporary attributions for transgressions, and is associated with adaptive consequences.

Assumptions of Prevailing Models of Shame and Guilt

This view of shame and guilt, however, rests on assumptions that may not apply to other cultural contexts. For example, the notion that global, stable attributions lead to shame and specific, temporary attributions lead to guilt assumes that there is a stable self that can be differentiated from one’s temporary actions. Similarly, the notion that shame has an external orientation (i.e., is oriented to others’ standards or social norms) whereas guilt has an internal orientation (i.e., is oriented to one’s own standards) assumes that internal and external orientation can be easily separated, and that internal orientation is more powerful and genuine than external orientation. These assumptions reflect a view of the self that is bounded, separate from others, and defined by stable personal characteristics, or what Markus and Kitayama (1991) refer to as an “independent” self-construal. Finally, the dominant model assumes that being negatively evaluated by others or by oneself is bad and should be “actively avoided.” This assumption may reflect the value placed on feeling good in many North American contexts (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999).

Given the significant body of research that has demonstrated that U.S. culture promotes the independent self (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995), and given that most models of shame and guilt are based on Western samples, it is likely that the

view of shame and guilt that pervades mainstream emotion research is an individualistic, or, even more specifically, an American one. Thus, if we look to other cultures rooted in other philosophical traditions that have different views of the self, it is possible that different views of shame and guilt will emerge (Mesquita & Karasawa, 2004; Camras & Fatani, 2004; Kitayama et al., 1995).

For example, in contrast to “individualistic” countries such as the United States that emphasize “independent” concepts of the self, “collectivistic” countries such as China, Japan, and Korea, promote “interdependent” concepts of the self. Individuals with “interdependent” conceptions of the self view themselves in terms of their connections with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Thus, external influences (i.e., other people’s thoughts and feelings) are as important and meaningful as internal ones (i.e., one’s own thoughts and feelings). In these cultural contexts, selves are contextually and situationally dependent, and therefore situational changes in concepts of the self are viewed as normative (Kondo, 1990). For instance, in cultures influenced by Confucian values where individuals are encouraged to constantly cultivate and improve themselves, changes in the self are explicitly valued and expected (Cho, 2000). Moreover, few, if any, aspects of the self are seen as immutable (Li & Wang, 2004). Thus, in these contexts, feeling bad about the self is not only normal, but to some degree expected because it serves the larger goal of self-improvement. In the next section, we illustrate how having an “interdependent” self-construal may result in different models of shame and guilt.

COLLECTIVISTIC MODELS OF SHAME AND GUILT

Given the importance of the self in the emotions of shame and guilt, we hypothesize that having an “interdependent” self-construal should alter the valuation, elicitors, and behavioral consequences of these emotions. Having an interdependent self-construal may even render the distinction between shame and guilt less clear than having an independent self-construal. We discuss this point first.

Distinction between Shame and Guilt

As discussed above, dominant models of shame and guilt clearly differentiate between these two emotions. However, this distinction may apply less in cultures that promote interdependent selves. For instance, Li et al. (2004) produced a list of terms related to shame in the Chinese lexicon by consulting the dictionary and by asking research subjects to generate terms related to shame. Another set of research subjects then grouped the terms into different categories on the basis of how similar or different the terms were to each other. Hierarchical cluster analyses revealed that participants viewed guilt as a component of shame rather than as a separate construct. Indeed, when translated into English, some Chinese terms that are related to shame are often translated as guilt (e.g., *kui* 愧), or as a combination of shame and guilt (e.g., *xiucan* 羞惭 and *xiukui* 羞愧) in English (Li et al., 2004).

Interestingly, research has also revealed that European Americans view shame and guilt as closely related. For example, in a study by Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O’Conner (1982), guilt, shame, regret, and remorse clustered together as a subfactor of sadness. However, this study broadly examined the similarity of 135 emotions, and therefore, compared to the other emotions, it may not be surprising that guilt and shame were

seen as similar to each other. In contrast, the Li et al. (2004) study looked more specifically at the structure of shame and guilt only. In this context, there was little difference between guilt and shame. Therefore, research that examines the structure of shame compared specifically to guilt in European American samples is needed.

In many collectivistic cultures, the differences in the attributions associated with shame and guilt appear less pronounced. Whereas in individualistic contexts shame is associated with global and stable attributions, and guilt is associated with specific and temporary attributions, in collectivistic contexts Wikan (1984) found that shame is associated with temporary and specific actions rather than their global and stable characteristics. Swartz (1988) also argues that among the Swahili of Mombasa, shame may result from the actor's belief that others view his *actions* negatively. These findings suggest that in some cultural contexts shame is associated with the same attributions that are associated with guilt in U.S. contexts.

There is other evidence that shame and guilt may be more similar than different in collectivistic contexts. For instance, when Bedford (2004) interviewed Taiwanese Chinese subjects, she found three subtypes of "guilt" and four subtypes of "shame" in Chinese that are not distinguishable from each other in English. Although most subtypes of shame involved violations of others' expectations and being negatively evaluated by others, one subtype of shame did not involve others' judgments, and therefore resembled U.S. guilt. In addition, many subtypes of shame prompted increases in prosocial behavior, again making it more similar to than different from U.S. guilt. For instance, Bedford argued that *can kui*, a form of Chinese shame, "functions to prompt people to try their best possible" (p. 46) and the fear of *xiu kui*, which one feels when one discovers deficiencies in oneself, is usually enough to deter shame-inducing actions.

In the few instances when the distinction between shame and guilt has been made in collectivistic contexts, the basis of this distinction is also different from that of many individualistic, Western contexts. For instance, in describing shame and guilt in Chinese culture, Bedford and Hwang (2003) argue that guilt is more effective as a regulatory emotion in individualistic cultures because it is associated with a general code of ethics (held by oneself and others), but shame is more effective in collectivistic cultures because it is associated with a code of ethnics that varies by situation and relationship (again, held by oneself as well as others). Thus, in Chinese culture, people experience guilt when they feel an absolute standard is violated, whereas people experience shame when a situation-specific standard is violated. In Western cultures, shame and guilt are not distinguished in this way. Because Confucianism focuses more on situations and relations, and Confucianism is a dominant philosophical tradition in many East Asian contexts, experiencing shame in these contexts is more appropriate than experiencing guilt (Cho, 2000; Bedford & Hwang, 2003).

Recently, Breugelmans and Poortinga (2006) argued that the distinctions between guilt and shame hold across cultures, even when cultures do not have a word for "guilt." They presented Rarámuri and Javanese subjects with scenarios of shame and guilt generated by another group of Rarámuri and Javanese subjects, and asked subjects to rate the scenarios on different attributes associated with shame and guilt, such as "powerless and small," "sweating," and "will change behavior." They then conducted multidimensional scaling analyses on subjects' responses and compared the results to responses provided by Dutch and Indonesian students. A similar guilt–shame dimension emerged in all three samples, leading the authors to argue that guilt is distinct from shame. However, a number of the attributes clustered differently in Rarámuri and Javanese samples when

compared to Dutch and Indonesian samples. For instance, “change behavior,” an attribute that has been viewed as a defining feature of guilt according to dominant models of emotion, is associated with shame in Rarámuri and Javanese cultures, suggesting some overlap between the two.

In summary, shame and guilt may be less differentiated in collectivistic contexts because in these contexts people do not view themselves as separate from their relationships with others, their contexts, or their actions. Consequently, there is less emphasis placed on having an “internal” orientation in collectivistic than in individualistic contexts (Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Therefore, the differences between shame and guilt in individualistic cultures, which largely rest on this distinction, may be less pronounced in collectivistic cultures. Future research is needed to test this hypothesis.

Valuation of Shame

As suggested by the Chinese proverb that opened this chapter, in many non-Western cultural contexts shame is not only valued, but is also viewed as an appropriate emotional response to failure. Indeed, according to the anthropologist David Jordan (n.d.), shame in Chinese cultures is “the ability or tendency to . . . *take delight in the performance of one’s duty*” (see also Bedford, 2004). The positive value placed on shame in many non-Western cultural contexts is consistent with the interdependent goals of self-effacement, adjustment to group standards and norms, and self-improvement. Research supports this point. For example, in a study by Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, and Norasakkunkit (1997), Japanese were found to view failure events that induced self-criticism as more relevant to their self-esteem than did Americans, whereas Americans viewed success situations that enhanced their self-views as more relevant to their self-esteem than did Japanese. These findings suggest that negatively evaluating the self, a core component of shame, is not universally viewed as harmful to psychological well-being. Indeed, negative views of the self may have informational and motivational significance in collectivistic contexts.

For these reasons, shame may be viewed more positively in collectivistic contexts. Indeed, in Indian culture, a popular Hindu story describes how the diety Kali’s shame saved the world (Menon & Shweder, 1994). In addition, Menon and Shweder (1994) presented Hindu and American participants with a list of three emotions (shame, happiness, and anger), and asked them to identify the emotion that was the most different from the other two. Whereas Americans viewed happiness as being the most different from shame and anger, the Hindu Indians viewed anger as being the most different from happiness and shame. These findings suggest that the Hindu Indians viewed shame more positively than did their European American counterparts. In a subsequent study, Rozin (2003) replicated these findings and found that Americans viewed shame and anger as more similar to each other because they are both viewed as negatively valenced, whereas Hindu Indians viewed shame and happiness as more similar to each other because they are both viewed as socially constructive.

Studies conducted in other collectivistic contexts corroborate this point. For instance, Fischer et al. (1999) found that Spanish individuals held more positive beliefs about shame and therefore were more likely to express shame and share their experiences of shame with others compared to their Dutch counterparts. In a survey study of Euro-

pean American, Asian American, and Hong Kong Chinese college students conducted in our lab, we observed that Hong Kong Chinese valued shame more (or devalued it less) than Asian Americans and European Americans, even after controlling for differences in how much shame they actually felt (Tsai, 2006). And in a study comparing the semantic structure of various emotions, Romney et al. (1997) found that shame was viewed as more similar to positive states such as excitement, love, and happiness for Japanese speakers than for English speakers, for whom shame was more similar to negative emotions such as anguish and fear.

Research also demonstrates that parents in Chinese culture are more likely to use shaming techniques in their educational strategies than are parents in U.S. culture (Fung, 1999; Fung & Chen, 2001; Fung, Lieber, & Leung, 2003). Chinese parents readily discuss and disclose children's transgressions in front of strangers to induce shame and to socialize children to behave properly. Consequently, Chinese children learn the word *shame* at an earlier age than do children in the United States and England (Shaver et al., 1992).

Given the greater valuation (or lesser devaluation) of shame in collectivistic cultures compared to individualistic ones, it should not be surprising that in many East Asian and other collectivistic contexts shame plays a more salient role in everyday life (e.g., Crystal et al., 2001). For instance, Wikan (1984) observed that in the Egyptian and Omani cultures, "everyone is judged by *some* significant others to be blemished by shame" (p. 636). Similarly, Kilborne (1992) argues that in many societies where anthropologists conduct their fieldwork, the possibility of experiencing shame is omnipresent and salient during interpersonal interactions. Moreover, compared to U.S. culture, Chinese culture has more elaborate models of shame and guilt. For example, Shaver et al. (2002) found that shame and guilt, along with remorse and regret, jointly formed a separate category of emotions for Chinese, whereas these emotions were part of the sadness category for U.S. culture. Similarly, Russell and Yik (1996) argue that shame is hypercognized in the Chinese language. Li et al. (2004) found 83 shame-related terms in a Chinese dictionary, and their Chinese subjects were able to provide even more terms and phrases that described shame—in total, they came up with a list that contained 113 shame-related terms. Such an abundance of shame terms suggests that the Chinese conception of shame may be more complex than that of English-speaking cultures.

These findings also suggest that shame is a "focal" emotion (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994) in many collectivistic contexts, or an emotion that is salient and commonly experienced. Indeed, in a study by Cole, Bruschi, and Tamang (2002), children from two South Asian cultures—Tamang and Brahman—and U.S. culture were asked how they would feel in certain hypothetical situations. These children were asked to read scenarios and think about what emotions they would feel. Tamang children were more likely to endorse shame as the emotion they would feel in difficult situations compared to Brahman and U.S. children. In contrast, Brahman and U.S. children were more likely to endorse anger as the emotion they would feel than were Tamang children. These findings suggest that shame is viewed as a more appropriate response than anger among certain cultural groups, even among young children. In another line of research, Tinsley and Weldon (2003) found that Chinese managers in Hong Kong are more likely to use shame to resolve conflicts than are U.S. managers. In contrast, U.S. managers are more likely to use shame to punish their employees than are Hong Kong Chinese managers (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). More direct comparisons, however, are needed to confirm this cultural difference.

Elicitors of Shame

The elicitors or triggers of shame and guilt also differ in individualistic versus collectivistic contexts. Because Western cultural contexts assume a self that is separate from others, only the individual who committed the transgression typically feels shame or guilt. However, collectivistic cultural contexts assume a self that is connected to and exists in relationship with others. Therefore, in collectivistic models of shame and guilt, these emotions may be induced by others' actions (Camras & Fatani, 2004). Some research evidence supports this hypothesis. In another study, participants were presented with scenarios in which either they or a close family member was responsible for hypothetical transgressions. Compared to European American participants, Chinese were more likely to report feeling ashamed and guilty in response to a family member's (e.g., mother, brother) transgressions (Stipek, 1998). Similarly, we found that when we asked participants to describe different shame episodes in their lives, compared to European Americans, Hmong Americans were more likely to describe actions committed by another person (e.g., "someone in my clan"). In other words, European Americans experience shame in response to something that they themselves did, whereas East Asians experience shame in response to something that someone close to them did (Tsai, 2006). Consistent with this finding, in his interviews with European American and Asian American college students, Liem (1997) found that when asked to describe a past shame event, Asian American students were more likely to talk about events experienced by close others than were European Americans.

Moreover, although shame may include some degree of public exposure across contexts, individuals with interdependent selves might be more likely to experience shame in the presence of others because they are more attentive to others. In support of this hypothesis, Chinese American and European American dating couples were brought into a lab and asked to discuss an area of conflict in their relationships. Half of these couples discussed the conflict in a room by themselves, while the other half discussed the conflict in the presence of an authority figure. Tsai (1996) found that while European American couples who discussed the conflict in private reported more shame than those who discussed the conflict in public (i.e., in front of the authority figure), Chinese American couples in public reported more shame than those in private (i.e., in a room by themselves). This finding supports Morisaki and Gudykunst's (1994) claim that the relationship between the ashamed person and the people with whom he or she is ashamed is a particularly important facet of the experience of shame for East Asians.

Behavioral Consequences of Shame

Western models of shame and guilt view shame as the "bad" and guilt as the "good" moral emotion, in part because of their different psychological, social, and physical consequences. Cross-cultural studies, however, suggest that shame may have better and more adaptive consequences in collectivistic contexts. For instance, Bagozzi, Verbeke, and Gavino (2003) found that although salespersons in the Netherlands and the Philippines experience shame when they have a painful experience that is threatening to the self, feelings of shame led Dutch salespersons to take self-protective actions, such as disengaging from customers and devoting fewer mental resources to the immediate task at hand. In contrast, feelings of shame led Philippino salespersons to engage in more relationship building and to be more courteous to their customers. In another study, Wallbott and

Scherer (1995) asked members of 37 different countries to describe episodes of shame and guilt. They found that shame caused less disruption in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. As stated earlier, we believe this is because in cultures that promote interdependent selves the experience of shame is consistent with cultural norms.

To summarize, these findings suggest that the valuation, elicitors, and behavioral consequences, as well as the distinction between shame and guilt, varies systematically across individualistic and collectivistic cultures. These findings suggest that some of the core assumptions about shame and guilt held by dominant models in the emotional literature may not apply to more collectivistic contexts. Consequently, they may motivate emotion researchers to consider further the aspects of shame and guilt that may be universal and those that may be culturally constituted. Clearly, much more research needs to be done in this area, especially with other cultural samples. In the next section, we outline some obvious and promising avenues for future research.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

First, more research is needed to differentiate among the various types of shame and guilt observed in different cultural settings. As mentioned earlier, in the Chinese language, there are over 100 terms for shame (Li et al., 2004; Russell & Yik, 1996; Bedford, 2004). In addition to assessing whether these variations of shame and guilt exist in the United States or other individualistic contexts, it would also be important to examine how they differ from each other and why they exist. One possibility is that they reflect different types of the self. For example, researchers who study "face" (i.e., "public self," or the positive aspects of the self that people want others to see) have identified at least three kinds of face: face concerning one's own image ("self face," or presenting positive aspects of the individual), face concerning another person ("other face," or presenting positive aspects of another person), and face that is shared between people ("mutual face," or presenting positive aspects of the relationship) (see Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Since loss of face elicits intense shame in Chinese culture, it is possible that variation in the types of shame reflect these different types of public self. Another relevant distinction is between people who view the self as fixed ("entity theorists") versus those who view the self as malleable ("incremental theorists") (Dweck, 1999). It is possible that in Western cultural contexts, incremental theorists may be more likely to experience guilt than shame (see Tracy & Robin, 2006). However, when they experience shame, they may be more likely to engage in self-improving rather than in self-defeating behaviors. Thus, even in Western cultural contexts, there may be a form of shame that leads to adaptive behaviors as well as one that leads to maladaptive behaviors. Again, examining different forms of shame and guilt should address this and other questions.

Second, although we argue that cultural variation in the valuation, eliciting events, and behavioral consequences of shame are due to different self-construals, no studies have actually demonstrated this link. Therefore, future studies are needed to illustrate that the differences described by many scholars are in fact due to differences between individualistic and collectivistic conceptions of the self.

Third, more studies are needed that measure the physiological and behavioral components of shame and guilt. This is particularly important when studying shame and guilt across cultures because of the difficulty of accurately translating emotion terms (Wierzbicka, 1999). Unfortunately, most cross-cultural studies of shame have

relied on self-reports, despite the fact that physiological and behavioral indices of shame exist (Keltner, 1995; Kemeny, Gruenewald, & Dickerson, 2004). For example, we found that Chinese American couples expressed more shame than did European American couples while discussing an area of conflict in their relationships, despite the fact that there were no group differences in how much shame couples reported feeling (instead, the groups differed in terms of the context in which they reported feeling shame, as mentioned above) (Tsai, 1996). Chinese American couples may have behaviorally expressed more shame because shame is the appropriate emotion to show in collectivistic contexts in response to transgressions. These findings suggest that cultural values may have a differential impact on the reported experience and behavioral expression of shame and guilt. Indeed, in a previous study, we found that cultural factors shaped positive and negative expressive behavior even more than reports of positive and negative emotional experience (Tsai, Levenson, & McCoy, 2006). Thus, whereas participants' reports of shame may have more strongly reflected how they were actually feeling, their behavioral expressions of shame may have more strongly reflected how they thought they *should* or how they *would like* to feel.

Fourth, future research should examine the development of shame and guilt across cultural contexts. As suggested by previous research, the development of shame and guilt are closely linked to the development of the self (H. B. Lewis, 1974). Thus, in U.S. contexts, children may learn to avoid shame at the same time that they are learning to value feeling good about themselves (i.e., having high self-esteem) (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; Twitchell, 1997). Similarly, in collectivistic contexts, the value placed on shame may emerge at the same time children are learning to adjust to group norms. Consistent with this hypothesis, Miller, Wiley, Fung, and Liang (1997) found that while U.S. personal storytelling focused on entertainment (and elicited positive emotions), Chinese personal storytelling focused on morality (and elicited shame). Moreover, by examining the development of shame and guilt across the lifespan, researchers can begin to identify the specific ways in which values and beliefs regarding shame and guilt are socially transmitted.

Fifth, within each culture there exists variation in models of shame and guilt. For example, although the model of shame and guilt that dominates U.S. culture is the one we started this chapter with, less popular models of shame and guilt also exist. Indeed, while Thomas Watson's quote represents the dominant model of shame and guilt in Western cultural contexts, George Bernard Shaw (1903/1987) also expressed a model of shame that resembles the collectivistic cultural model of shame: "The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is." We predict that variation within cultural contexts may be due to the within-culture variation in self-construals. Future research is needed to test this hypothesis.

Finally, more theories of shame and guilt that incorporate cultural factors are needed. At a broader level, more work is needed to integrate different perspectives on cultural similarities and differences in emotion. As Goetz and Keltner (Chapter 9, this volume) argue, different levels of analyses (e.g., at the level of individuals or cultures) might lead to different conclusions about cultural universality versus cultural specificity for self-conscious emotions. They also argue that different components of self-conscious emotions, because of their different functions, vary on the cultural universality continuum. Thus, more theoretical work is needed to achieve a unified understanding about evolutionary and sociocultural influences on emotion.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Because our worlds are becoming increasingly multicultural, cross-cultural research on shame and guilt is becoming increasingly significant in a variety of applied settings. For example, in educational settings, U.S. teachers place great emphasis on promoting their students' self-esteem (Reasoner, 1992). While such gestures may be motivating for students from individualistic cultural contexts, they may be less motivating for students from collectivistic ones. Similarly, while U.S. teachers may find that students from individualistic cultural contexts are harmed when shamed, students from collectivistic cultural contexts may actually be helped when shamed (e.g., motivated to improve their performance). Similarly, in Western clinical practice, therapists are trained to look for and then remove their patients' shame and/or guilt (Kaufman, 1989). Obviously, this is appropriate in cultural contexts for which shame has maladaptive effects. However, in contexts in which shame has adaptive effects, eradicating shame may have negative psychological and social consequences. While more research in the educational and mental health domains are clearly needed, the existing research findings suggest that cultural differences in shame and guilt must be taken into account in these settings.

CONCLUSION

Although words for shame and guilt exist in various languages (Casimir & Schnegg, 2002), an increasing body of literature suggests that the valuation, elicitors, and behavioral consequences of shame differ across cultural contexts. Indeed, the epigraphs at the beginning of this chapter suggest vastly different conceptions of shame. In this chapter, we have proposed that the valuation, elicitors, and behavioral consequences of shame vary as a function of the type of self-construal that is promoted in one's cultural context. In contexts that promote an independent self, shame and guilt are both devalued emotional states; they are experienced by people who commit transgressions, and there are clear distinctions between the two states. Because guilt is based on internal standards and leads to adaptive consequences, it is preferred to shame, which is based on external standards and leads to maladaptive consequences. However, in contexts that promote an interdependent self, shame and guilt are viewed more positively; people can feel shame and guilt for actions that they themselves did not commit, and there is less of a distinction between shame and guilt. Most importantly, in these contexts, experiencing shame is associated with adaptive consequences. These findings suggest that current models of shame and guilt—which assume an independent self—may be incomplete when applied to other cultural contexts. It is our hope that by providing a review of the cross-cultural literature on shame and guilt, we will prevent future models of shame and guilt from suffering the same fate.

NOTE

1. The terms "internal" and "external" have been used in numerous—and sometimes opposing—ways in the literature (e.g., see Kilborne, 1992).

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