

# The Role of Public Exposure in Moral and Nonmoral Shame and Guilt

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Although scholarly traditions assume that shame results more from the public exposure of a transgression or incompetence than guilt does, this distinction has little empirical support. Four studies, using either undergraduate participants' responses to hypothetical scenarios, their remembered experiences, or the coding of literary passages, reexamined this issue. Supporting traditional claims, public exposure of both moral (transgressions) and nonmoral (incompetence) experiences was associated more with shame than with guilt. Shame was also more strongly linked with nonmoral experiences of inferiority, suggesting 2 core features of shame: its links with public exposure and with negative self-evaluation. The distinctive features of guilt included remorse, self-blame, and the private feelings associated with a troubled conscience.

One traditional view on how the related emotions of shame and guilt differ is that shame results more from the public exposure of a defect, failure, or transgression than guilt does. This distinction is usually reflected in dictionary definitions of each emotion—*shame* can be defined as “a painful feeling of having lost the respect of others because of the improper behavior, incompetence, etc. of oneself or another” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1982, p. 1308) and *guilt* can be defined as “a painful feeling of self-reproach resulting from a belief that one has done something wrong or immoral” (p. 622). The distinction is also clear when one considers other terms associated with shame and guilt. Shame resides comfortably within the family of reactions labeled humiliation, embarrassment, and mortification, whereas guilt is linked with reactions such as regret, self-reproach, repentance, and remorse.

## Scholarly Traditions

Scholarly traditions coincide with and probably suggest the origins of what one finds in dictionaries. In most ancient writings the distinction comes through more in portrayals of shame than in

direct comparisons with guilt, which seems most often used for conveying the simple fact that a person has committed a wrongful act, as in “Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods” (Plato, trans. 1924a, p. 120). But the linking of public exposure with shame is unmistakable. Aristotle, who undertook perhaps the most systematic analysis of human emotions of any ancient thinker, defined shame as “the mental picture of disgrace” and “pain or disturbance in regard to bad things . . . which seem likely to involve us in discredit” (Aristotle, trans. 1941, p. 1392). He used pages of further analysis to characterize the varieties of public exposure that moderate the intensity of the emotion. Plato characterized shame as “the fear of an evil reputation” (Plato, trans. 1924b, p. 25).

Probably the most cited literary treatment of guilt and shame is *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850/1962). The public versus private distinction emerges plainly here as well. Hester Prynne and the Reverend Dimmesdale commit the sin of adultery. The child who results from this adultery brings about the intense shame of public exposure, Puritan style, for Hester. Dimmesdale, who manages to keep his paternity concealed, suffers from a persistent, private guilt that leads to a wasting away of his physical and mental being.

## Scientific Traditions

Scientific traditions also support the role of publicity in distinguishing shame and guilt. Darwin (1871/1899) believed that shame “relates almost exclusively to the judgment of others” (p. 114). William James (1890/1950) discussed shame in the context of a person’s social self and suggested that “my social self-love, my interest in the images other men have framed of me . . . these thoughts in other men’s minds . . . come and go, and grow and dwindle, and I am puffed up with pride, or blush with shame, at the result” (p. 321). A procession of researchers have continued to claim that a primary distinction between shame and guilt is the

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public or private locus of negative evaluation (Ausubel, 1955; Benedict, 1946; Buss, 1980, 2001; Campos, Barrett, Lamb, Goldsmith, & Stenberg, 1983; Christensen, Danko, & Johnson, 1993; Crozier, 1998; Erikson, 1950; Gehm & Scherer, 1988; Harder, 1995; Hogan & Cheek, 1983; Johnson et al., 1987; Walbott & Scherer, 1995). Ausubel (1955), in a *Psychological Review* article, concluded that shame is “an unpleasant emotional reaction by an individual to an actual or presumed negative judgment of himself by others” (p. 382) and that guilt is “a special kind of negative evaluation which occurs when an individual acknowledges that his behavior is at variance with a given moral value to which he feels obligated to conform” (p. 378). In a more recent handbook chapter on emotional development, Campos et al. (1983) argued that shame results from the “perception of loss of another’s respect or affection [or] that others have observed one doing something bad” (p. 820) and that guilt results from the “anticipation of punishment because one has not lived up to an internalized standard” (p. 820). And, as a final example, Gehm and Scherer (1988) argued that “shame is usually dependent on the public exposure of one’s frailty or failing, whereas guilt may be something that remains secret with us, no one else knowing of our breach of social norms of our responsibility for an immoral act” (p. 74).

#### Recent Empirical Work Disconfirming the Traditional Distinction

Does the role of public exposure in distinguishing shame and guilt find confirmation in actual empirical work? Remarkably, it does not. In two empirical tests of this question (Tangney, Marschall, Rosenberg, Barlow, & Wagner, 1994; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996), there was **no evidence that shame is a more public emotion than guilt**. In the first study, **children’s and adults’** autobiographical accounts of both shame and guilt experiences were compared (Tangney et al., 1994). **Both guilt and shame were more typically felt when others were present**. Furthermore, **solitary experiences were reported for both emotions, and equally so**. There were **no specific types of moral transgression more characteristic of either emotion**.

In the second study, adult participants again gave autobiographical accounts of experiences of both guilt and shame, and these were compared in terms of **various indices of publicity** (Tangney et al., 1996). As in the first study, **both emotions were experienced predominately in public situations**. Moreover, a surprising 18.2% of shame experiences were solitary, whereas only 10.4% of the guilt situations were solitary. On phenomenological reports of these experiences, there were only slight tendencies for shame accounts to involve more intense feelings of public scrutiny and more focus on others’ thoughts about the individual.

#### The Role of the Self in Distinguishing Shame and Guilt

If **shame and guilt do not differ** obviously in terms of the **public nature** of the situation creating each emotion, **how do they differ?** One way of addressing this question is to argue that shame and guilt **differ in the role that the self plays** in each of these experiences (H. B. Lewis, 1971). The experience of **shame**, according to H. B. Lewis (1971), is “directly related to the **self**, which is the focus of evaluation” (p. 30; e.g., “*I cheated on the exam*”). In the experience of **guilt**, “**the self is not the central focus** of negative

evaluation, but rather **the thing done or undone is the focus**” (p. 30; e.g., “*I cheated on the exam*”). Although the self is associated with negative evaluation in guilt, it is **less the focus of the experience compared with shame**.

The implications of claiming that the role of the self is different in shame and guilt are important. One is **no longer dependent on isolating obvious situational factors** to differentiate the two emotions. **The same situation can create either shame or guilt depending on whether the self is perceived to be implicated strongly by the transgression**. If the transgression suggests a bad, defective self, then shame will result. If the badness of the transgression is the focus, then guilt will result. The greater focus on the self that is characteristic of shame would easily explain why the experience of shame often seems so different from the experience of guilt. For example, **shame is thought to be a more painful and enduring emotion than is guilt** (e.g., Tangney et al., 1996; Wicker, Payne, & Morgan, 1983). This makes sense, as the **realization of a morally flawed self should be more aversive than should preoccupation over an immoral action** without regard to how it reflects on the self.

Substantial evidence supports H.B. Lewis’s (1971) view of shame and guilt (e.g., Ferguson, Stegge, & Damhuis, 1991; Lindsay-Hartz, 1984; Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, & Mascolo, 1995; Tangney, 1992; Tangney et al., 1994; Tangney et al., 1996; Wicker et al., 1983). One set of studies (Niedenthal, Tangney, & Gavinski, 1994) explored how different types of counterfactual thinking associated with shame and guilt might reveal the self versus action distinction. Participants were more likely to undo shame situations by altering aspects of the self and to undo guilt situations by altering actions. Furthermore, inducements to alter the self or alter an action in response to a combined shame and guilt situation amplified shame following alterations of the self and amplified guilt following alteration of an action. **The distinction between a focus on the self and a focus on behavior is clearly an important property that often differentiates the two emotions** (e.g., Bybee, 1998; M. Lewis, 1993).

#### Potential Problems in Excluding the Public/Private Distinction

Although there is clear gain from the understanding of shame and guilt in the empirical and theoretical work inspired by H. B. Lewis’s (1971) insights, there are also potential problems raised by adopting this perspective at the exclusion of the public versus private distinction. One problem is that the **standard dictionary definitions of shame**, for example, backed by centuries of philosophical and scientific thinking, are now rendered unhelpful. It is the **nature of language for the meanings of words to change over time**, but some shifts may be more unfortunate than others. As *shame* has a fairly constant semantic and conceptual heritage, a broad shift in its meaning is especially regrettable.

A second problem is that it is unclear what word would now replace *shame* to label the feeling that dictionaries have traditionally described as shame. What is the appropriate term for the painful feelings of having lost the respect of others because of the improper behavior or incompetence of oneself or another? Is the word **embarrassment** an adequate substitute? Although private feelings of embarrassment may occur, public exposure seems a condition almost always associated with the feeling (e.g., Edel-

mann, 1987). Some scholars suggest that embarrassment has close kinship with shame (e.g., Kaufman, 1989; H. B. Lewis, 1971), and, indeed, the possibility of such a kinship links shame all the more strongly with public exposure. However, most scholars would still insist on distinguishing these two emotions in some way (e.g., Babcock & Sabini, 1990; Buss, 2001; Gilbert, 1998; Keltner & Buswell, 1997). Embarrassment is less associated with moral transgression than it is with breaches of etiquette (Keltner & Buswell, 1997) or ceremonial rules (Goffman, 1967). The experience of embarrassment is also more brief and mild compared with the experience of shame (R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994). Embarrassment entails feeling foolish, self-conscious, and awkward, but, unlike shame, there is little sense that one is either an immoral or an inferior person. When we are embarrassed, others might laugh at us and we might laugh at ourselves, but when we feel shame it is more likely that we suffer others' disgust and anger as well as our own self-loathing (Buss, 2001; Cupach & Metts, 1990; Edelmann & Iwawaki, 1987; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994).

## Empirical Challenges in Examining the Public/Private Distinction Between Shame and Guilt

### *Potential Biases in Personal Accounts*

On the surface, the question of whether shame is a more public emotion than guilt is a straightforward, empirical one. Simply asking people to generate personal accounts of shame and guilt and then comparing these accounts for the presence of public exposure should allow this difference to emerge. But are there inherent biases in this approach? One possibility is that the accounts of guilt generated by participants are overrepresented by experiences in which there is some form of public exposure. Participants may be reluctant, even in the anonymous circumstances of an experiment, to disclose secret accounts of their wrongdoing. Alternatively, private wrongdoings may also be less salient in memory than public experiences, because they may be less intense and thus more readily repressed or forgotten. The recent empirical work is consistent with these possibilities (Tangney et al., 1994, 1996). In both studies, the overwhelming majority of both guilt and shame stories involved the presence of other people.

Can it be that the majority of incidents in which people do things wrong and feel bad as a result involve public exposure? One could argue that it is quite the opposite. Take the moral breach of lying. People may tell many more undiscovered than discovered lies, although both types can create self-reproach. More crimes go undetected than discovered, although both can prick a person's conscience. But, again, people may prefer to keep their private experiences of wrongdoing hidden and may reject opportunities to use experimental settings as a form of confessional. And private experiences may usually be less intense than public ones and thus be less easily recalled in experimental settings.

One might counter these suggestions of reporting bias by noting that shame and guilt are part of a group of social emotions that usually arise in interpersonal contexts (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994, 1995; Vangelisti, Daly, & Rudnick, 1991). It should hardly be surprising that so few accounts of shame and guilt involve private contexts. However, just because an emotion-inducing event occurs in private does not preclude its having a social nature (Buss, 2001). It is likely true that most moral trans-

gressions create emotions because of the interpersonal, social consequences of the transgression (Baumeister et al., 1994), but these implications need only be clear to one party in the interaction. When one lies, steals, and cheats, the moral emotions follow in part from the real effects the actions have on others, regardless of whether the veil of privacy is lifted. Moral transgressions that have no effect on others may have little impact on one's private feelings and, for that matter, receive little reproach when revealed in public. But the social nature of a moral emotion need not be defined by whether the eliciting event occurs in a private or a public context.

Regardless of whether a greater or lesser proportion of guilt and shame experiences occur in private or public contexts, it is probably the case that a well-socialized society should foster the frequent occurrence of the private experience of some sort of moral emotion (Freud, 1930). As others have argued (e.g., Ausubel, 1955), it is highly desirable for members of a society to feel moral emotions in private. Having these feelings signifies that moral dictates have been internalized and helps ensure adherence to these dictates independent of public surveillance. One can wonder what the implications are for how well people are socialized if the majority of accounts of moral emotions only occur in public contexts. However, once again, it may be that many participants choose not to report their private experiences or find them less memorable.

### *Imprecise Use of the Words Shame and Guilt*

Another challenge to addressing the question of the role of public exposure in shame and guilt concerns the imprecision with which the words *shame* and *guilt* are used in labeling emotional experiences (e.g., S. Miller, 1985; Tangney et al., 1996). It seems clear that most people tend to use these terms interchangeably, even if they have experiences in which the emotions occur separately and thus have distinctive qualities (Niedenthal et al., 1994; Tangney, 1989). However, such discrete experiences may be rare, as guilt and shame may co-occur much more often than not. People may find themselves using both *shame* and *guilt* to capture the full sense of their experience but find it difficult to separate the facets of their experience that produced each emotion separately. Any factors that encourage imprecision in use of the words *guilt* and *shame* tend to create accounts that are less distinctive than they might be otherwise. Previous research has found reliable differences in participants' reports of their experiences of shame and guilt, but these differences may be on dimensions unaffected by the possible reporting bias involving private experiences.

## Study 1

How can such challenges to studying differences between shame and guilt be addressed? The problem of the potential bias in the type of accounts that participants naturally generate can be addressed if one finds a satisfactory way of manipulating public exposure. In Study 1, participants were asked to read one of a set of detailed scenarios in which an individual committed a wrongful action. The last part of each scenario varied whether this wrongful action became public. After reading the scenario, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the individual would feel guilt and shame. If shame is more associated with public exposure than

guilt is, this manipulation should affect reports of shame more than reports of guilt.

Also included was a manipulation that should affect reports of guilt more than reports of shame. As dictionary definitions of guilt emphasize the painful feelings of self-reproach resulting from a belief that one has done something wrong or immoral, the scenarios were also varied in terms of whether the individual in the scenario actually believed his or her actions were morally wrong. Although all the events were considered wrong from a normative, moral point of view, the particular features of each allowed the individual in the account some flexibility with regard to how immoral his or her behavior seemed to be. As guilt is defined explicitly in terms of beliefs about committing wrong or immoral behavior, we expected this manipulation to affect guilt more than shame. Furthermore, we expected moral beliefs to enhance guilt regardless of the public exposure of the transgression. In contrast, we expected public exposure to have relatively little effect on guilt, regardless of moral belief.

We approached the problem of people's imprecise use of the words *guilt* and *shame* by assessing each emotion in two ways. The first approach was to use items comprising the words *shame* and *guilt*. The second was to use additional items that, in theory, should be related to either guilt or shame in ways that might make distinctive emotional experiences. We reasoned that although participants may not use the terms *guilt* and *shame* in sufficiently precise ways to reveal the role of public exposure, the actual experience of a transgression being exposed might entail a profile of feelings consistent with what traditional distinctions suggest. For example, public exposure of a wrongdoing, because it usually includes social disapproval, should create a greater desire to hide from others than should private situations. Also, public exposure might create greater physiological changes than would private situations, as measured by reports of increased heart rate and other traditional hallmarks of intense shame reactions. We reasoned that items tapping pangs of conscience and feelings of self-reproach would fit definitional features of guilt better and would be the type of feelings especially responsive to thoughts that an action had violated a moral belief, regardless of public exposure.

A final aspect of Study 1 addresses an additional question concerning the possible role of public exposure in shame. It is possible that shame can result from the imagined as well as the actual loss of respect of another person. These cases in which the disapproval of an imagined other seems to bring about shame may be distinct from actual public exposure and yet may not parallel the fully private experiences of wrongdoing. If we assume that level of public exposure is a valid dimension for distinguishing guilt and shame, into which category fall feelings following from the imagined disapproval of another person—guilt or shame? This is an important question. If an imagined other does not qualify as public exposure by any definition and if a good proportion of instances of shame (characterized by some other defining feature besides level of public exposure) are in fact examples of an imagined other, then public exposure becomes an increasingly rare feature of shame. Some theorists, such as Ausubel (1955), have taken the broader view, suggesting that shame only requires some sense of a disapproving other and that this can be an actual, presumed, or fantasized person. Other theorists seem to have used the apparent fact that shame can occur in strictly public or private situations to

eliminate any form of public exposure as a useful way of understanding shame (e.g., M. Lewis, 1993).

We addressed the question of how an imagined other might play a role in shame by introducing a second type of publicity within the manipulation of public exposure. In addition to a condition in which the individual's wrongful action was publicly exposed, we also included an implicit public condition. In this condition, something happened to make the individual think of a person who would have disapproved of his or her wrongdoing, although it was always clear that this other person would never actually learn about it. If an imagined other has the capacity to bring about shame, then participants should report more shame in both implicit and actual public exposure conditions compared with private conditions.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Eighty-seven female and 81 male undergraduates participated for credit in their introductory psychology course at the University of Kentucky. The study used a 3 (public exposure: private, implicit public, explicit public)  $\times$  2 (moral beliefs: high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (gender) between-subjects design. A fourth factor, scenario version, was dropped from the analysis because it produced no systematic effects on any of the dependent variables.

### Procedure

Participants were run in groups of about 30. They were told that they would be reading a hypothetical account of an event that could have happened to a person like themselves. They were to read the account carefully and, as they did so, were to try to imagine what the central person in the account would be thinking and feeling. The name of this central person was highlighted in bold letters and was always the same sex as the participant. It was emphasized that it was very important both to read the account carefully and to try hard to imagine this person's experience. Then, after reading the account, participants turned to the next page and completed a set of items designed to measure their sense of this person's experience. Once participants had completed these measures, they were debriefed, given their experimental credit, and thanked for their participation.

*Accounts.* Each account was approximately one single-spaced page long and described a same-sex individual committing a moral transgression (i.e., stealing, disobeying parents, or cheating on a lab report). For example, in the account that focused on cheating, Julia [Jason] is a premed major and is taking a difficult organic chemistry course. She has an average grade point average and is worried about her chances of getting into medical school. Her organic chemistry course is not going well, especially the lab portion. She is worried about the most recent lab and is not close to figuring how to do the next lab report. Ultimately, she takes her lab partner's report from her teaching assistant's mailbox and makes a copy of it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As another example, in the scenario focused on stealing, the individual Jim (or Jody) has a summer job as an assistant manager at a movie theater. One of the main aspects of the job is to do the candy inventory every week to monitor possible theft by the high school kids who work concession. One day, he is doing the inventory by himself, feels particularly hungry, and slips some M&Ms into his jacket pocket. In implicit public conditions, after Jim has hidden the M&Ms and is sure that nobody has seen him take the candy, he sees his boss from a distance. In explicit public conditions,

**Moral beliefs manipulation.** We varied the individual's personal moral beliefs about the wrongfulness of the action by including a paragraph of information just prior to the wrongdoing that characterized his or her views. For the cheating account, in the *high moral beliefs* conditions, Julia [Jason] knows it would be very wrong to take the lab report, but, because of her desperation, she takes it. In the *low moral beliefs* condition, she resents that many of the students have an unfair advantage over her and thinks that, given the high stakes, it would not harm anyone for her to copy the report.

**Publicity manipulation.** Following the wrongful act, participants read one of three possible endings. In *private* conditions, after the transgression was completed, the ending simply asked what the individual would be feeling and thinking. In *implicit public* conditions, the individual in the account either came across or was reminded of someone who would not approve of his or her action, and the participant was asked about how the individual would be feeling and thinking. In the account of cheating, for example, a short time after taking the report, Julia [Jason] comes across her lab partner, who greets her cheerfully. In *explicit public* conditions, the individual's transgression is actually discovered by this same person. In the account of cheating, Julia gets a note from her lab partner indicating that she saw Julia take the report. She tells Julia that she won't tell the teaching assistant what happened as long as Julia puts the report back in the box.

### Dependent Measures

For a set of items referring to either feelings or thoughts, participants indicated the degree to which they thought the item was characteristic of the individual's experience (using a 10-point scale: 0 = *not at all characteristic*; 9 = *extremely characteristic*).

**Manipulation checks.** One item ("judged by others") constituted a check on the publicity manipulation, and another item ("violated a personal value") served as a check on the moral beliefs manipulation.

**Explicit measures of shame and guilt.** One item ("shame") measured shame explicitly, and another item ("guilt") measured guilt explicitly. These constituted the main dependent measures.

### Shame-Related Reactions

**Reactions linked to public exposure.** Six items (averaged together) measured reports of bodily changes that might result from the public exposure of a wrongdoing ("racing heart," "sweaty and perspiring," "shaken," "loss of composure," "a trembling and shaking feeling," and "flustered"; coefficient  $\alpha = .89$ ). Four items involved reports of a desire to hide from others ("a desire to disappear," "a desire to hide," "a desire to be alone," and "a desire to escape public exposure"; coefficient  $\alpha = .83$ ), and these items were also averaged. Separate items related to public exposure were "embarrassed" and "humiliated."

**Reactions linked to the self.** Another set of combined items assessed self-related thoughts and feelings of defectiveness and inferiority that prior research and theorizing suggest are typical of shame (i.e., "learned something unflattering about him/herself," "defective," "others seemed superior," "self-respect decreased," "feeling worthless," "inferior to others"; coefficient  $\alpha = .83$ ).

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Jim realizes that his boss had been watching him as he took the candy. In high moral beliefs conditions, Jim sees himself as a very honest person and believes that stealing is wrong but succumbs to the temptation to take some candy without paying for it. In the low moral beliefs conditions, Jim sees himself as a fairly honest person, but he does not see anything wrong with taking a little candy now and then. He figures that everybody does it, and given his low pay and all the effort he contributes to his job, he feels that he has earned some candy if he wishes to take some.

**Anger.** Two sets of items assessed angry feelings directed at others ("a desire to lash out in anger," "resentful," "angry at others," "vengeful," "blaming others," "helpless anger"; coefficient  $\alpha = .83$ ) and angry feelings directed at the self ("anger at him/herself," "feel to blame for what happened," "disgusted with him/herself"; coefficient  $\alpha = .78$ ).

### Guilt-Related Reactions

Another group of combined items focused on **private reactions** to having committed a wrongdoing ("inwardly troubled," "guilty conscience," "a troubled conscience"; coefficient  $\alpha = .81$ ). One item reflected a view that the wrongdoing **did not represent the real self** ("the action did not reflect the 'real self'"). Two items focused on **concerns over others being affected** by the wrongdoing ("concerned over how others were affected," "thought others were hurt"; coefficient  $\alpha = .76$ ). A final set of items involved concerns over **undoing the wrongful action** ("a desire to undo what was done," "wanting to set things right," "a desire to make amends," "would try to make things better," "a desire to apologize"; coefficient  $\alpha = .85$ ).

## Results

### Manipulation Checks

Separate three-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) using a 3 (public exposure: private, implicit public, explicit public)  $\times$  2 (moral beliefs: low vs. high beliefs)  $\times$  2 (gender) design were performed on each of the two items serving as manipulation checks: public exposure ("judged by others") and moral beliefs ("violated a personal value"). For the public exposure item, as expected, there was a main effect for **public exposure**,  $F(2, 156) = 9.64, p < .0001$ . Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test showed that participants in public conditions ( $M = 6.45, SD = 2.24$ ) reported more concern over evaluations from others than did participants in either the implicit public ( $M = 4.72, SD = 2.57$ ) or the private conditions ( $M = 4.58, SD = 2.43$ ). For the **moral beliefs** item, there was an expected effect for moral beliefs,  $F(1, 156) = 16.79, p < .0001$ ; participants in high moral beliefs conditions ( $M = 6.68, SD = 2.36$ ) reported a greater sense that a personal value had been violated than did participants in the low moral beliefs conditions ( $M = 5.10, SD = 2.62$ ). There was also a main effect for **gender**,  $F(2, 156) = 8.14, p < .005$ , with female participants ( $M = 7.99, SD = 1.74$ ) reporting a greater sense of something wrong having been done compared with male participants ( $M = 7.33, SD = 2.22$ ). The only other effect was a **marginally significant Public Exposure  $\times$  Moral Beliefs interaction**,  $F(2, 156) = 2.97, p < .053$ . This interaction reflected the tendency for the effect of moral beliefs to be greater in the private and implicit public conditions than in the explicit public conditions.

### Explicit Measures of Shame and Guilt

Separate ANOVAs were performed on each measure of shame and guilt using the 3 (public exposure: private, implicit public, explicit public)  $\times$  2 (moral beliefs: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (gender) design.

**Shame.** As expected, there was a significant main effect for **public exposure**,  $F(2, 154) = 12.47, p < .0001$ . A Tukey's HSD test showed that participants reported more shame in explicit public conditions ( $M = 8.11, SD = 1.85$ ) than in implicit public conditions ( $M = 6.96, SD = 2.76$ ), which, in turn, were higher in

$$\begin{aligned} & 2 \times 12.47 / 2 \times 12.47 + 154 \\ & = 24.94 / 24.94 + 154 \\ & = 24.94 / 178.94 \\ & = 0.139376327 (\sim 0.139 / \\ & 0.14) \end{aligned}$$

shame than were private conditions ( $M = 5.71, SD = 2.78$ ). There was also a significant main effect for moral belief,  $F(1, 154) = 11.03, p < .005$ , with low moral beliefs leading to less shame ( $M = 6.20, SD = 3.00$ ) than did high moral beliefs ( $M = 7.51, SD = 2.21$ ). These two main effects were qualified by a Public Exposure  $\times$  Moral Beliefs interaction,  $F(2, 154) = 3.15, p < .05$ . As shown in Figure 1, simple effects tests revealed that the effect for public exposure was present in both high,  $F(2, 73) = 7.85, p < .001$ , and low moral beliefs conditions,  $F(2, 73) = 6.85, p < .005$ . However, Tukey's HSD tests revealed a different pattern of effects for public exposure in high versus low moral beliefs conditions. For high moral beliefs, shame was equally high in both implicit and explicit exposure conditions and was, in both cases, significantly greater than in private conditions. For low moral beliefs, private and implicit public exposure conditions were equal and significantly lower, in both cases, than explicit public exposure. Simple effects tests at each level of public exposure revealed that only in the implicit public exposure condition was there a significant effect for moral beliefs,  $F(1, 57) = 11.05, p < .005$ . Finally, there was a significant main effect for gender,  $F(1, 154) = 4.80, p < .05$ ; female participants ( $M = 7.27, SD = 2.58$ ) reported greater overall shame than did male participants ( $M = 6.51, SD = 2.74$ ).

**Guilt.** For the measure of **guilt**, there was only an expected significant main effect for moral beliefs,  $F(1, 154) = 14.14, p < .0005$ , with low moral beliefs leading to less guilt ( $M = 7.14, SD = 2.65$ ) than did high moral beliefs ( $M = 8.26, SD = 1.30$ ).

Although public exposure did not interact with moral beliefs, the pattern of means suggested strongly that the bulk of the effect for moral beliefs was due to the difference emerging in the private and implicit public exposure conditions. This view was reinforced by simple effects tests at each level of public exposure. The **moral beliefs manipulation was significant only in the private,  $F(1, 54) = 8.18, p < .01$ , and implicit public exposure conditions,  $F(1, 55) = 6.43, p < .05$ . In the explicit public exposure conditions, guilt was equally high across levels of moral beliefs.**

**Repeated measures analysis.** To more directly compare participants' reports of guilt and shame, we performed a mixed design ANOVA using emotion as a repeated factor added to the first design. This mixed design yielded a significant main effect for emotion,  $F(1, 154) = 26.51, p < .0001$ ; overall, guilt ( $M = 7.75, SD = 2.09$ ) was higher than shame ( $M = 6.88, SD = 2.68$ ). However, this effect was qualified by two interaction effects: an Emotion  $\times$  Public Exposure interaction,  $F(1, 154) = 10.17, p < .0001$ , and an Emotion  $\times$  Public Exposure  $\times$  Moral Beliefs higher order interaction,  $F(1, 154) = 3.31, p < .05$ . The Emotion  $\times$  Public Exposure interaction reflects the fact that the manipulation of public exposure had a greater effect on shame than on guilt, as revealed in the separate ANOVAs for shame and guilt described above. Figure 1 presents the means representing this interaction. To further examine the nature of this interaction, we performed simple effects tests for the emotion factor at each level of public exposure. Shame was significantly less than guilt in private,  $F(1, 54) = 26.55, p < .0001$ , and implicit public exposure conditions,

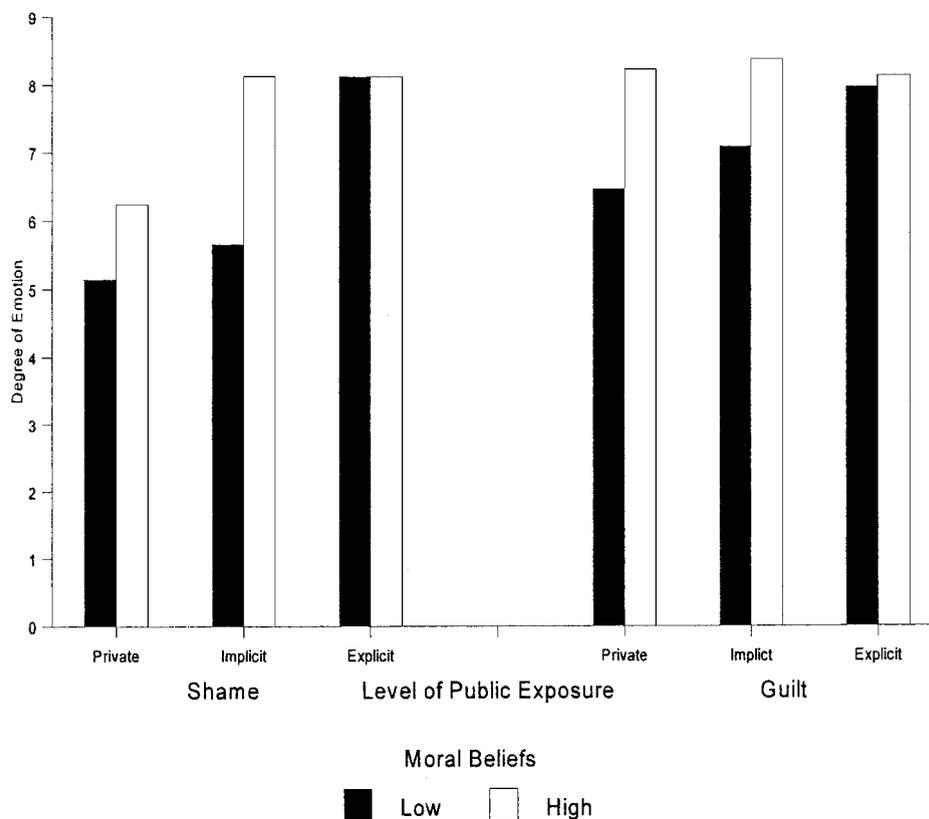


Figure 1. Moral shame and guilt as a function of public exposure and moral beliefs in Study 1.

$F(1, 55) = 11.30, p < .005$ , but not in explicit public exposure conditions,  $F(1, 51) = 0.03, p < .87$ . The Emotion  $\times$  Public Exposure  $\times$  Moral Beliefs interaction reflects the fact that public exposure interacted with moral beliefs in the case of shame, whereas in the case of guilt, there was only a main effect of moral beliefs. Figure 2 characterizes the pattern for each emotion.

### Shame-Related Measures

*Measures expected to be related to public exposure.* An ANOVA performed on the measure of bodily changes resulted in a significant main effect for public exposure,  $F(2, 156) = 14.47, p < .0001$ . Tukey's HSD test showed that participants reported more bodily changes in explicit public conditions ( $M = 7.08, SD = 1.52$ ) than in implicit public conditions ( $M = 5.24, SD = 2.17$ ) and in private conditions ( $M = 5.78, SD = 2.16$ ). There was also a main effect for moral beliefs,  $F(1, 156) = 4.26, p < .05$ ; high moral beliefs ( $M = 6.31, SD = 1.86$ ) created greater change than did low moral beliefs ( $M = 5.63, SD = 2.34$ ). These main effects were qualified by a Public Exposure  $\times$  Moral Beliefs interaction,  $F(2, 156) = 5.49, p < .005$ . As Table 1 shows, this interaction appeared to result from high moral beliefs creating greater reports of bodily changes than did low moral beliefs in private and implicit public conditions but not in explicit public conditions, where the reports were uniformly high.

An ANOVA on the measure of general desire to escape the company of others produced a significant main effect for public exposure,  $F(2, 155) = 14.35, p < .0001$ . Tukey's HSD test showed that participants reported more desire to escape in explicit public conditions ( $M = 7.13, SD = 1.87$ ) than in implicit public conditions ( $M = 5.61, SD = 2.43$ ) and in private conditions ( $M = 4.89, SD = 2.38$ ). A significant Public Exposure  $\times$  Moral Beliefs interaction,  $F(2, 155) = 3.63, p < .05$  (see Table 1), indicated that high moral beliefs tended to enhance a desire to escape public exposure in private and implicit public conditions but not in explicit public conditions.

ANOVAs on each of the two emotion terms considered in the same general family with shame revealed only main effects for public exposure: for *embarrassed*,  $F(2, 155) = 4.71, p < .01$ , and for *humiliated*,  $F(2, 155) = 4.71, p < .01$ . A Tukey's HSD test showed that in both cases, public conditions led to greater humiliation ( $M = 6.87, SD = 2.61$ ) and embarrassment ( $M = 7.46, SD = 2.45$ ) than did implicit public (*humiliated*:  $M = 4.40, SD = 2.99$ ; *embarrassed*:  $M = 5.50, SD = 3.02$ ) and private conditions (*humiliated*:  $M = 3.68, SD = 2.78$ ; *embarrassed*:  $M = 5.20, SD = 2.80$ ).

*Self-related feelings.* ANOVAs were also performed on the other measures that prior research has suggested should be related to shame, although not necessarily through the effects of public

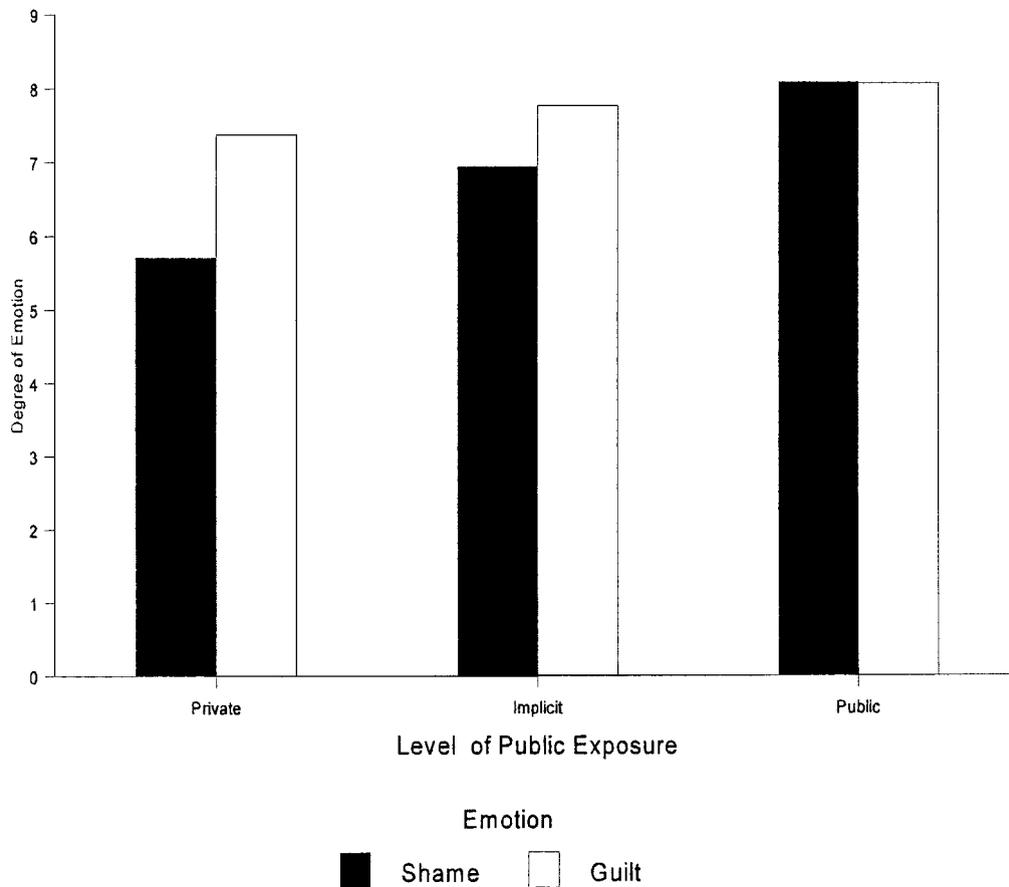


Figure 2. Moral shame and guilt as a function of public exposure in Study 1.

Table 1  
*Expected Bodily Changes and Desire to Escape Exposure as a Function of Publicity and Moral Beliefs*

Moral beliefs	Level of publicity		
	Private	Implicit	Explicit
Expected bodily changes			
Low	5.51	4.22	7.50
High	6.28	6.10	6.80
Desire to escape exposure			
Low	4.65	4.86	7.69
High	5.11	6.26	6.72

Note. Numbers represent means on a 0 (*not at all characteristic*) to 9 (*extremely characteristic*) scale.

exposure. Only the measure of self-directed anger produced any significant effects: main effects for public exposure,  $F(2, 155) = 6.89, p < .005$ , moral belief,  $F(1, 155) = 11.31, p < .001$ , and gender,  $F(1, 155) = 6.62, p < .05$ . In the case of public exposure, a Tukey's HSD test showed that public conditions ( $M = 7.32, SD = 1.56$ ) produced greater self-directed anger than did private conditions ( $M = 5.86, SD = 2.23$ ) and implicit public conditions ( $M = 6.37, SD = 2.34$ ). High moral beliefs ( $M = 6.98, SD = 1.72$ ) produced greater self-directed anger than did low moral beliefs ( $M = 5.92, SD = 2.48$ ), and women ( $M = 6.83, SD = 2.16$ ) reported greater self-directed anger than did men ( $M = 6.14, SD = 2.10$ ). The main effects for public exposure and moral beliefs were qualified by a Public Exposure  $\times$  Moral Beliefs interaction,  $F(2, 155) = 4.42, p < .05$ . This interaction appeared to result from high moral beliefs creating greater reports of self-directed anger than did low moral beliefs in private and implicit public conditions but not in explicit public conditions, where the reports were uniformly high (see Figure 3).

### *Guilt-Related Thoughts and Feelings*

An ANOVA was performed on the measure of the inwardly directed guilty feelings characteristic of private concerns resulting from one's wrongdoing (i.e., "inwardly troubled," "guilty conscience," and "a troubled conscience"). As expected, this produced a main effect for moral beliefs,  $F(1, 156) = 8.20, p < .005$ , with high moral beliefs producing more guilty thoughts ( $M = 7.37, SD = 1.45$ ) than did low moral beliefs ( $M = 6.59, SD = 2.35$ ). There was also a main effect for gender  $F(1, 156) = 5.48, p < .05$ , with women reporting more guilty thoughts ( $M = 7.30, SD = 1.92$ ) than did men ( $M = 6.72, SD = 1.94$ ).

The measure involving concerns over others being affected by the wrongdoing (i.e., "concerned over how others were affected," "thought others were hurt") produced main effects for public exposure,  $F(2, 155) = 21.46, p < .0001$ , moral beliefs,  $F(1, 155) = 10.65, p < .005$ , and gender  $F(1, 155) = 4.20, p < .05$ . A Tukey's HSD test showed that public conditions ( $M = 5.35, SD = 2.37$ ) produced greater concerns than did private conditions ( $M = 4.27, SD = 2.75$ ). The implicit public conditions ( $M = 4.64, SD = 2.51$ ) were descriptively lower than the public conditions and higher than the private conditions, but in neither case significantly so.

A final measure of concerns of undoing a wrongful action (i.e., "a desire to undo what was done," "wanting to set things right," "a desire to make amends," "would try to make things better," "a desire to apologize") produced no effects.

### *Discussion*

The results of Study 1 provide evidence that public exposure is more associated with shame than with guilt. The manipulation of public exposure had a strong effect on the explicit measure of shame, whereas it had no effect on the corresponding measure of guilt. Explicit public exposure of a wrongdoing led participants to expect more shame than if this wrongdoing went unexposed. Guilt, on the other hand, was strongly affected by the manipulation of moral beliefs. Participants expected guilt to be uniformly high across levels of public exposure when the transgression represented a violation of personal standards.

Moral beliefs also played an important but interactive role in participants' reports of shame. When the wrongdoing went unexposed, moral beliefs had little effect on expected shame and, relative to both the implicit and the explicit public conditions, less shame was expected overall. However, in implicit public exposure conditions, moral beliefs did affect expected shame, which was higher in high moral beliefs conditions than in low moral beliefs conditions. In explicit public exposure conditions, moral beliefs again had no effect—but this was because shame was uniformly high across levels of moral beliefs.

This pattern of findings suggests that shame has clear links to moral beliefs, but this link is less strong when a wrongdoing is private. However, if circumstances cause a person to think of someone who would disapprove of his or her transgression if it were to be exposed, then shame increases—but only if the transgression violates a personal standard. Public exposure enhances shame regardless of whether a person believes his or her transgression violates a personal standard.

Although these findings support the view that shame is more associated with public exposure than is guilt, these findings also suggest this association may be complex. Even in private conditions, participants expected the individual in the account to feel shame following a transgression ( $M = 6.11$ ), suggesting that public exposure is hardly a necessary condition for shame to arise. Yet shame was also enhanced by public exposure, but in a way that interacted with the type of public exposure and moral beliefs. Explicit public exposure seems to be especially powerful in its effects on shame, as it may enhance shame regardless of one's personal beliefs about the morality of the wrongdoing. However, as has often been claimed (e.g., Ausubel, 1955), an internalized other may also provide a stimulus for shame—but, again, only if the transgression violates a personal standard.

The potential capacity of implicit public exposure to increase shame has additional important implications in light of the distinctive findings for two other items, "embarrassed" and "humiliated." Embarrassment and humiliation are considered to be in the same general family of reactions as shame, but each is probably even more associated with public exposure than is shame. Although participants clearly thought that both these reactions would increase in explicit public conditions compared with private conditions, unlike with shame, they expected no such increase in implicit public conditions compared with private conditions. This

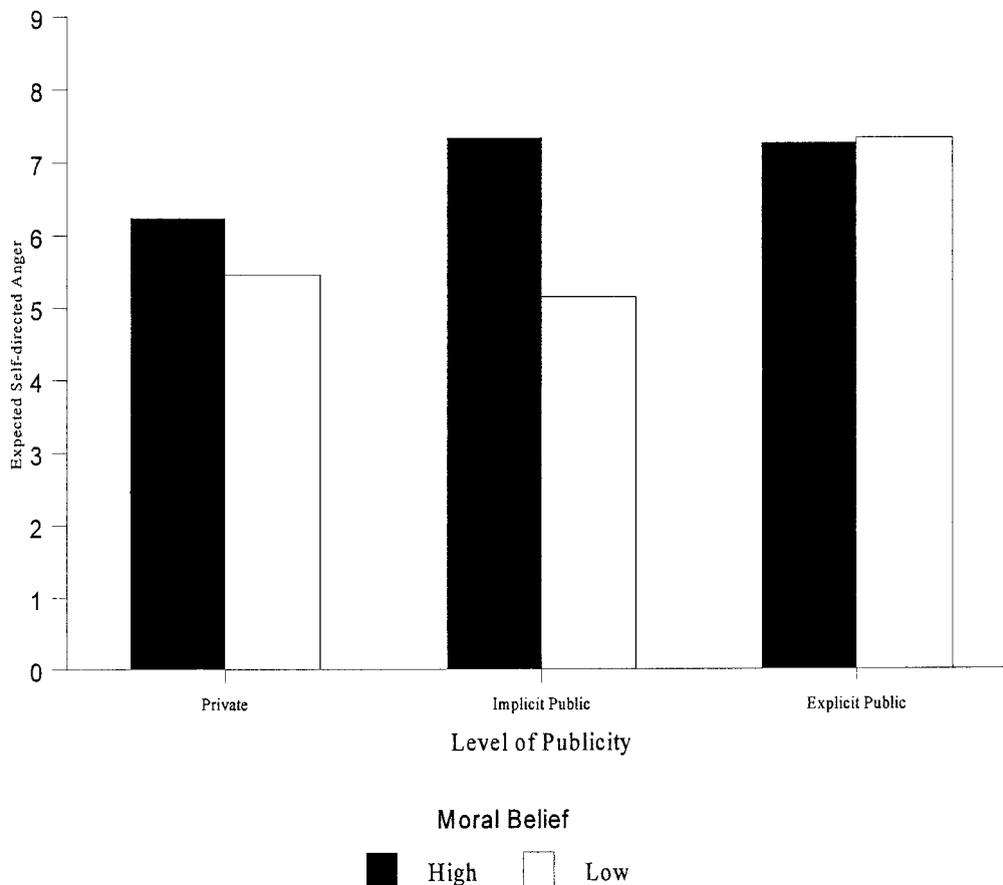


Figure 3. Self-directed anger as a function of publicity and moral beliefs in Study 1.

pattern for embarrassment and humiliation reinforces the sense that shame has a unique feature in that it can be evoked by imagining another person's evaluation of the self.

Explicit public exposure of a transgression created a number of effects on other measures that were consistent with traditional notions of what the experience of shame should be like. Shame has been shown to be a more intense emotion than is guilt (e.g., Tangney, 1998), and the effects of the public exposure on the measures of bodily changes suggest that public exposure may help explain this aspect of shame. Such bodily changes and the like are hallmarks of emotions, and, possibly, it is these types of reactions that are in part what people try to convey when characterizing the feeling of shame. The self is a critical feature in the experience as the transgression is committed by the self, but public exposure may create a firmer linkage of this transgression with the self and set in motion an array of possible social consequences. Public exposure of any sort of behavior, and the evaluative implications of public scrutiny, may be an especially powerful ingredient of the socially constructed self (e.g., Baumeister, 1982; Cooley, 1902; James, 1890; Mead, 1934; Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979; Tice, 1992).

It should be pointed out that, overall, reports of guilt and shame were high. The manipulation of public exposure worked in the sense that increasing privacy reduced shame, whereas it had no effect on guilt. In fact, the mean levels of guilt were the same and equally as high as shame in explicit public conditions, suggesting

that shame and guilt are likely to co-occur in this type of situation. Also, explicit public exposure appears to have broad and strong effects on emotions.

As noted above, the explicit measure of guilt had a clear connection with the manipulation of moral beliefs, as would be expected given how guilt is defined. This connection was reinforced by another aspect of the findings. Unlike with the manipulation of public exposure, participants thought that the manipulation of moral beliefs would affect a person's conscience. In other words, participants thought that a transgression violating a person's moral beliefs would create a sense of being burdened by thoughts about committing the transgression. It is important to emphasize that this sense of how a violation of moral beliefs operates appeared independent of public exposure of the transgression. This pattern of findings links guilt with a burdened conscience and also provides yet another way of suggesting how guilt and shame can be distinct in terms of the role of public exposure in each. There seem to be many situations in ordinary life in which moral transgressions are committed yet go unexposed. It would be useful to have a word that more or less precisely characterizes the privately experienced emotions that this action might generate. Even when the action is exposed, it is still helpful to be able to convey to others that the action bothers one (or would bother one) regardless of the implications of public exposure.

Most of the other measures that have been shown in previous studies to be associated with shame (lowered self-worth, feeling smaller, self-consciousness, hostility) were not affected by the manipulation of public exposure or moral beliefs. Only self-directed anger was higher in public exposure conditions compared with private conditions and in high moral beliefs conditions compared with low moral beliefs conditions. Why were so few of these additional measures affected by public exposure? The reasons may lie in the nature of the public exposure, as operationalized in the present study. Participants were asked to predict the individual's reactions immediately following public exposure. As these accounts ended at the exact point at which the transgression was exposed, there were no explicit portrayals of how the observers might have actually reacted to the transgression. Perhaps some facets of shame either take longer to develop or require direct evaluative signals from an observer.

Although all three scenarios focused on the individual's reactions immediately following public exposure, in other ways the scenarios were quite different. We selected three wrongful actions that differed in terms of many features and yet were similar in that they were each clear transgressions. The two manipulations differed in the many surface details of how they were achieved, but the aim was to be as faithful as possible to the conceptual approach adopted for each manipulation. Through this stimulus sampling procedure (Wells & Windschitl, 1999), we hoped to enhance both the external and the internal validity of our findings. Because the main patterns of findings did not interact with scenario's version despite their varied features, we have some basis for claiming such enhancement.

## Study 2

Despite the apparent overlap with which the terms *shame* and *guilt* are used, the results of Study 1 do suggest that shame has a distinctive association with the public exposure of a transgression. The association is not a simple one, however. Clearly, participants did not think that public exposure was a necessary condition for shame or shame-linked reactions to occur. Yet shame was affected by explicit public exposure in general and affected by implicit public exposure when the transgression violated a personal moral belief. Guilt appeared much less affected by any type of public exposure.

Study 2 focuses on another issue that may also help in distinguishing shame and guilt and that may further elucidate the role of publicity in each emotion. Dictionary definitions of guilt and shame indicate that guilt typically follows from an improper action, whereas shame can follow from either an improper action or some form of inferiority or incompetence. Shame can be both moral and nonmoral, whereas guilt is a moral emotion (e.g., Ausubel, 1955; Ferguson et al., 1991; M. Lewis, 1993; Sabini & Silver, 1997). The implications of this definitional distinction are important. One might expect, for example, that events involving improper actions (as was the case in Study 1) would reveal greater overlap in people's use of *guilt* and *shame* than would events involving incompetence, the publicity of the event notwithstanding. As both guilt and shame can result from a person committing an improper action, guilt and moral shame have a key source in common. However, guilt and nonmoral shame appear to differ in a key source as well. In fact, by definition, guilt should be minimal

compared with shame in most cases of inferiority or incompetence (M. Lewis, 1993).

How does public exposure differentially affect shame and guilt for events involving nonmoral defects, such as inferiority or incompetence? If one can grant that shame is more associated with public exposure in the general sense, then the association should apply to the exposure of incompetence as it does to the exposure of a transgression. The process through which public exposure enhances nonmoral shame may be quite different from the process that occurs in cases of moral shame or guilt, however. From an attributional point of view, improper actions are assumed to be more controllable than are inferiority and incompetence. As a consequence, people are blamed and held responsible for their actions and less so for their capacities (e.g., Weiner, 1986). The public exposure of an improper behavior often brings about social disapproval exactly because the action is blameworthy, and it is this social disapproval that should create or amplify a person's shame. Why does the public exposure of inferiority or incompetence create or amplify shame? Even though inferiority may be uncontrollable, public exposure places an uncomfortable spotlight on a substandard aspect of the self. Such public scrutiny is painful, and nonmoral shame may be partly composed of this sort of pain. Should such public exposure heighten feelings of guilt? Probably not. Inferiority and incompetence have no obvious moral component, and public exposure should do little to alter this fact.

The distinction between moral and nonmoral causes of shame is an intriguing one. The very fact that shame can have these two broad situational causes, whereas guilt usually has a moral cause, suggests that shame and guilt often involve distinct experiences. However, examination of this distinction, especially as it might bear on the role of public exposure in guilt and shame, has received no empirical examination. In Study 2, participants again read accounts focusing on a particular individual whose perspective they were to take and then imagined how this person would respond given the particulars of the account. However, instead of a transgression, the key feature of the account involved an inferior, relatively uncontrollable attribute linked to the individual (e.g., intellectual inferiority). For some of the participants, this feature was publicly exposed, and for others it remained salient but private. We anticipated that participants would expect more shame than guilt over these attributes and that shame but not guilt would be enhanced by public exposure.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Thirty-five female and 21 male undergraduates participated for credit in their introductory psychology course at the University of Kentucky. The study used a 2 (public exposure: public or private)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (emotion: guilt or shame) design with emotion as a within-subject factor. A fourth, 3-level factor, scenario version, was dropped from the analysis because it produced no systematic effects on the main dependent variables.

### Procedure

The procedure was the same as in Study 1, except for the nature of the accounts. Each account described a same-sex individual who was linked to an inferior characteristic or attribute (either low SAT scores, epilepsy, or

lower status background).<sup>2</sup> In the SAT account, a high school student, Jill (or Jim) has recently taken the SATs. She is a serious, hard-working student who has done well academically. She has high hopes of getting into a good college or university and then going on to medical school, and doing well on this test is important in furthering these goals. However, she worries that her current achievements may have been more the result of overachieving than of natural aptitude. Good grades do not necessarily mean a high score on the SATs, and she is nervous about how well she has done.

At this point in the account, participants read one of two possible endings. In the public conditions, Jill [Jim] learns that the results have arrived and that they can be picked up at the guidance counselor's office. A secretary gives her an envelope with her score, and she moves off by herself to open it. It turns out to be a very low score. But, just as she examines it, three of her friends come in and ask her how she did. Before she can do anything, they peer over her shoulder and read the low score. In the private condition, she receives the results in the mail, with no one present.

At the end of each account, participants were asked, "What would Jill be feeling and thinking?"

### Dependent Measures

The relevant dependent measures were the same as those used in Study 1. The main dependent measures consisted of one item ("shame") measuring direct reports of shame and another item ("guilt") measuring direct reports of guilt. A check of the manipulation of public exposure used the item "judged by others."

## Results

### Manipulation Check

A 2 (public exposure: private or public)  $\times$  2 (gender) ANOVA was performed on the item ("judged by others") serving as a check on the public exposure manipulation. This produced a significant main effect for public exposure,  $F(1, 50) = 7.11, p < .05$ ; participants thought that the public condition ( $M = 7.85, SD = 1.61$ ) would create a greater sense of being judged by others than would the private condition ( $M = 6.22, SD = 2.29$ ).

### Direct Measures of Shame and Guilt

Separate ANOVAs were performed on the shame and guilt items using a 2 (public exposure: public or private)  $\times$  2 (gender) design. The ANOVA on the explicit measure of shame revealed a main effect for public exposure,  $F(1, 51) = 9.59, p < .005$ ; participants thought that the public condition ( $M = 6.85, SD = 2.07$ ) would create greater shame than would the private condition ( $M = 5.25, SD = 2.53$ ). The ANOVA on the explicit measure of guilt produced no effects.

To directly compare reports of shame and guilt, we used a mixed design with emotion as a repeated factor added to the first design. The 2 (public exposure: public or private)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (emotion: guilt or shame) mixed design ANOVA with emotion as a within-subject factor resulted in a significant main effect for emotion,  $F(1, 52) = 23.58, p < .0001$ ; overall, participants thought that shame ( $M = 6.70, SD = 2.34$ ) would be higher than guilt ( $M = 5.05, SD = 2.62$ ). There was a marginally significant Public Exposure  $\times$  Emotion interaction,  $F(1, 52) = 3.64, p < .06$ . As Figure 4 indicates, simple effects tests for each level of public exposure showed that shame was greater than guilt in both private,  $F(1, 27) = 4.99, p < .05$ , and public conditions, but in public

conditions this difference was especially pronounced,  $F(1, 25) = 23.96, p < .0001$ . Furthermore, as revealed by the separate ANOVAs performed on shame and guilt noted above, the manipulation of public exposure significantly increased shame but had no effect on guilt.

Most of the measures that we reasoned would have an association with public exposure were affected by the manipulation of public exposure. An ANOVA on the measure of a general desire to escape the company of others (coefficient  $\alpha = .80$ ) produced a main effect for public exposure,  $F(1, 51) = 6.16, p < .05$ , (public conditions,  $M = 7.24, SD = 1.65$ ; and private conditions,  $M = 6.05, SD = 1.65$ ) and humiliation,  $F(1, 52) = 11.78, p < .005$  (public conditions,  $M = 7.28, SD = 1.53$ ; and private conditions,  $M = 5.25, SD = 2.52$ ). There were marginally significant effects for embarrassment,  $F(1, 52) = 3.89, p < .054$ , (public conditions,  $M = 7.96, SD = 1.42$ ; and private conditions,  $M = 6.96, SD = 2.39$ ), and bodily changes (coefficient  $\alpha = .86$ ),  $F(1, 52) = 2.48, p < .12$  (public conditions,  $M = 6.52, SD = 1.50$ ; and private conditions,  $M = 5.79, SD = 1.98$ ). There were no effects for the other shame-related measures or guilt-related measures.

## Discussion

As with Study 1, the results of Study 2 reveal a clear link between shame and public exposure. The manipulation of public exposure had a strong effect on the explicit measure of shame but no effect on guilt. Furthermore, public exposure affected a number of the other measures expected to be influenced by public exposure. In fact, the association of public exposure with shame in this study was perhaps more clear than in Study 1. In Study 1, reports of shame and guilt were equally high in explicit public exposure conditions. Public exposure had its differential effects, mostly by reducing shame compared with guilt as privacy became more complete. However, in Study 2, public exposure enhanced shame relative to guilt as publicity increased. Furthermore, reports of guilt were uniformly low, regardless of condition.

Reports of expected shame were higher than those of guilt in both private and public conditions. This contrasts with Study 1, in

<sup>2</sup> Attributes were selected to cover a range of possible types. For example, the epilepsy account involved a medical condition rather than intellectual inadequacy. The individual Bill (or Barbara) is a college student attending a college away from his home state. While growing up, he suffered from epilepsy. At least once a year he would have a seizure during school. Because they were scary and unattractive events for others to witness, he felt that everyone knew him as an epileptic. He often thought that this was one of the main reasons why he had had so few dates by the time he got through high school. But now, through better medication, he has it under control, and although there is always a chance that a seizure will happen, he has not experienced one in over 2 years. After only a month of college, he has quickly made friends with a group of guys in his dorm and has even managed to find a girlfriend. He has told his new friends about his past problem with epilepsy, but no one seems to treat him any differently because of it. In the private condition, he goes home during the Thanksgiving break to visit his family. He has a short, mild seizure one evening while everyone else has gone to a movie. Within 5 min, everything is back to normal. In the public conditions, he goes to his new girlfriend's home during the Thanksgiving break to meet her family. While everyone is chatting in the living room after the Thanksgiving meal, he has the same kind of seizure as in the private condition.

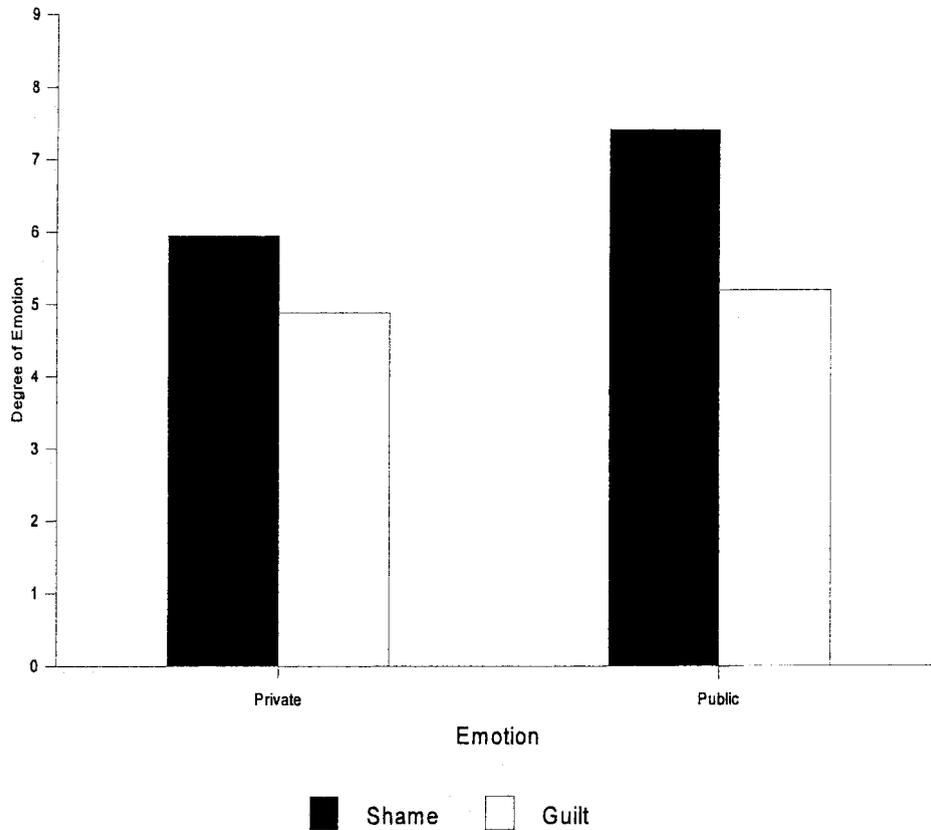


Figure 4. Shame and guilt as a function of publicity in Study 2.

which, overall, reports of guilt were higher than those of shame. As suggested earlier, such a pattern is consistent with definitional distinctions between the two emotions, indicating that shame has connections with moral and nonmoral causes, whereas guilt is typically connected with moral causes alone.

The effects for public exposure appear to reinforce even further this distinction between moral and nonmoral causes. If guilt were to have an association with nonmoral causes, public exposure might be expected to enhance guilty feelings, though less than feelings of shame. But, as just noted, public exposure had no effect on guilt—in contrast to the strong effect it had on shame. Also, unlike in Study 1, in which reports of guilt and shame were the same in explicit public exposure conditions, shame was much higher than guilt in both public and private conditions.

As in Study 1, three distinct scenarios were used to enhance external and internal validity. The inferior attributes were low standing on a test of intellectual ability, a low status background, and a medical condition. The particular details of how publicity came about were also distinct. However, an effort was made to keep these scenarios similar in terms of the construct being manipulated (private vs. public exposure) and the nonmoral nature of the attribute. Again, as in Study 1, because the basic pattern of findings did not interact with scenario version, we can claim enhanced validity.

### Study 3

The purpose of Study 3 was to examine the role of publicity in shame and guilt using an alternative methodology. As noted ear-

lier, one of the challenges in studying shame and guilt is the likely imprecision with which people use the words *shame* and *guilt* in labeling emotional experiences (e.g., Tangney et al., 1996). College students as well as most other people may use these terms in a similar way despite having experiences in which the emotions occur in a distinctive way (Niedenthal et al., 1994; Tangney, 1989). Although Studies 1 and 2 address this problem to a certain degree, the key findings nonetheless rely on college students' use of the terms *shame* and *guilt*. Study 3 addresses this problem by using passages from classic works of literature in which the terms *shame* and *guilt* were used to convey emotions. The procedure takes advantage of the possibility that classic writers may use these terms with greater precision than the average person. These passages were coded for whether they contained public exposure as well as other features thought to be common to either shame or guilt.

### Method

#### Materials and Procedure

Passages were selected from the World Library (1996) product, Library of the Future, which contains 5,000 scholarly works, 2,044 of which are of fiction or poetry, both adult and children's, from ancient times through the early part of the 20th century (more recent works are constrained by copyright restrictions). This product allows one to search for words and phrases across the full set of titles or a subset of titles. It then lists each hit by author, title, and line in the text. We did two searches using the literary

passages.<sup>3</sup> For guilt, we used the words *guilt* and *guilty*, and for shame, we used the words *shame* and *ashamed*. For guilt, this search yielded 1,716 hits in 350 of the 2,044 literary titles. For shame, the search yielded 4,228 hits in 442 literary titles. For each of the searches we selected 50 titles at random, with the restriction that no author could be selected more than once. This restriction was introduced because some authors, such as short story writers (e.g., Poe and Doyle), had the potential to be overrepresented, as each of their many stories were included in the collection. Then we selected the first hit in each title, the second hit, the third hit, and so on until we had 130 hits in total for each emotion. For each hit, we printed the page of text within which the word was contained (sometimes two pages, if it seemed that more text was needed to determine the way the word was being used). We had expected that 130 instances of each emotion would be sufficient. However, preliminary coding revealed an unexpected problem with the guilt passages; only 14 of the 130 actually represented cases where *guilt* or *guilty* was being used to convey an emotion (see more below). Consequently, we selected 200 additional guilt passages and 50 additional shame passages. We did this by first eliminating any titles used in the initial selection. Then we selected titles at random, with the constraint that no author be repeated more than twice. Within each title, a hit was selected randomly. Thus, this selection procedure yielded a total of 330 guilt passages and 180 shame passages.

### *Coding of Passages*

Each passage was read by three undergraduate coders who were unaware of the issues being addressed in the research. Passages were coded for whether the author was using a highlighted emotion term to convey a particular meaning ("yes" or "no"). Disagreement among coders for any passage was ultimately coded in the direction of the two agreeing coders. For each judgment, the percentage of agreement between each pair of coders across all the relevant passages served as a measure of reliability.

### *Judgments Concerning Nonemotion Usages of the Words Shame and Guilt*

The first judgment asked coders to decide whether the word was used "to convey only whether or not a person appears to have committed or has been shown to have committed an unlawful, improper, or morally suspect action(s)." This item was included for two reasons. First, most definitions of guilt, in addition to describing an emotion, have as their first definition its use for describing the condition of culpability (Sabini & Silver, 1997), as in, "the act or state of having done a wrong or committed an offense; culpability, legal or ethical" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1982, p. 622). Because the focus of the present research is on the feeling of guilt, it was important to determine whether a particular instance of guilt was actually an example of this first definition. Coders were guided to see the question as having to do with a factual claim of a wrongdoing, as in, "I believe that you, Fox, are guilty of the theft, in spite of all your denials" (Aesop, trans. 1975, p. 114). Although the factual claim, if accepted, might lead to an emotion, the key issue was whether the word was being used to convey the fact that someone had committed some unlawful, improper, or morally suspect act. As indicated above and as we describe more fully in the *Results* section, we underestimated how often *guilt* or *guilty* was used for this purpose, which caused us to add additional passages. The percentage of agreement (among any two coders) on this item was 83%.

The second judgment asked coders whether the word was used "to convey a situation in which one person is attempting to induce another person to feel bad about this other person's improper or morally suspect action(s) or thoughts etc" or "a situation in which one person is noting that, in general, someone else (or, group of people) should feel bad about their improper or morally suspect action(s) or thoughts etc." This judgment was included because the term *shame* is also used for purposes other than to convey an emotion, and it was important to separate these cases from actual

cases of emotion. Examples in this category could take a number of forms. It could be that a person in the account believes that someone else has done something wrong. This person might think that the other person should feel more ashamed about what he or she did than he or she appears to feel. In such cases, a person is actively trying to induce the feeling in another person, as in, "'Toad!' he said severely. 'You bad, troublesome little animal! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?'" (Grahame, 1903/1961, p. 228). Another possibility could be that a person (or even the narrator) is making a general point about human beings. That is, people should be ashamed about certain tendencies that human beings have to behave in morally suspect ways, as in, "It is enough to make a body ashamed of his race to think of the sort of froth that has always occupied its thrones without shadow of right or reason" (Twain, 1889/1899, p. 65). Percentage agreement on this item was 87%.

A third judgment asked whether the word was used "to convey the sense that something about a person, or, something that a person did, or, something about a situation is 'too bad,' unfortunate, or regrettable (but not in the sense that it is morally bad, improper, or unlawful)." This item was included because of the possibility of other nonemotion uses of the word shame, as in, "'It seems a shame,' the Walrus said, 'To play them such a trick. After we've brought them out so far, And made them trot so quick!'" (Carroll, 1872/1946, p. 60), and these instances also needed to be separated from cases of the felt emotion. Percentage agreement for this item was 97%.

A final judgment used to eliminate passages described reactions to events happening to other people, particularly events involving public exposure of transgressions or inadequacies connected to friends or family. This judgment asked coders to assess whether the emotion term was used "to convey feeling associated with a person learning of, or knowing about, a friend or family member's improper or morally suspect action(s) or inferiority in some area that has (or may soon be) been made public to others." An example here is, "He was received by Mrs. Bennet with a degree of civility which made her two daughters ashamed, especially when contrasted with the cold and ceremonious politeness of her curtsy and address of his friend" (Austen, 1813/1918, p. 344). The percentage agreement was 95%.

### *Explicit Public Exposure*

Two judgments concerned explicit public exposure: involving either a wrongdoing or an inferior attribute. The first judgment, explicit public wrongdoing, asked whether the term was being used "to convey feeling(s) produced when a person has actually lost the respect of others because of the public revealing of his or her improper or morally suspect action(s)" or "to convey feeling(s) associated with a person being publicly embarrassed or humiliated because other people think that he or she has committed an improper or morally suspect action(s)." The key issue for coders was to determine whether a person's immoral behavior has been revealed to others and whether the emotion term was being used to characterize the unpleasant feelings created by this public exposure. An example of this type of usage is

Miss Stacy caught me reading "Ben Hur" in school yesterday afternoon when I should have been studying my Canadian history. . . . I spread the history open on my desk-lid and then tucked "Ben Hur" between the desk and my knee. It just looked as if I were studying Canadian history. . . . I was so interested in it that I never noticed Miss Stacy coming down the aisle until all at once I just looked up and there she was looking down at me, so reproachful like. I can't tell you how ashamed I felt. (Montgomery, 1909/1944, p. 347)

The percentage agreement was 77%.

<sup>3</sup> We used literary passages because they most closely parallel the form of expression used in actual accounts of guilt and shame used in prior research.

The second judgment asked whether the term was being used “to convey feeling(s) produced when a person has actually lost the respect of others because of the public revealing of his or her inferiority in some area (such as low ability, unattractive physical appearance, incompetence, physical or mental disease etc. . .)” or “to convey feeling(s) associated with being publicly embarrassed or humiliated because others think that he or she is inferior in some area (such as low ability, unattractive physical appearance, incompetence, physical or mental disease etc. . .).” The key issue in this case was to determine whether the term was being used to characterize a person’s unpleasant feelings resulting from the public exposure of an inferior quality. An example of this sort of passage is, “There were boys all round him, looking at him curiously, and a feeling of shame came over Philip. He looked down without answering. Others gave the reply. ‘He’s got a club-foot, sir’” (Maugham, 1915, p. 47). The percentage agreement was 87%.

The third judgment asked coders to determine whether the emotion term was used “to convey feeling(s) associated with a person imagining or thinking about what others would think if they were aware of his or her improper or morally suspect action(s) (although they are not in fact aware of this behavior).” This kind of situation involves people feeling bad because there is something immoral they have done; no one knows that they have done it, but they feel bad about it because they start thinking about what others would think, especially others who are important to them, as in,

The image of Emma appeared before him and, under her eyes, the flood of shame rushed anew from his heart. If she knew to what his mind had subjected her or how his brutelike lust had torn and trampled upon her innocence! (Joyce, 1916/1965, p. 122)

The percentage agreement was 80%.

The fourth judgment of this general type asked coders to determine whether the emotion term was used “to convey feeling(s) associated with a person imagining or thinking about what others would think if they were aware of his or her inferiority in some area (such as low ability, unattractive physical appearance, incompetence, physical or mental disease etc. . .), although they are not in fact aware of it.” An example here is,

When the day came for the bride and the bridegroom to go to church, she was ashamed of her ugliness, and afraid that if she showed herself in the streets, she would be mocked and laughed at by the people. (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1987, p. 203)

Percentage agreement was 91%.<sup>4</sup>

The final judgment relating to public judgment involved assessing whether the term was used “to convey the sense that a person is undergoing (or has undergone) an intense physiological change (such as blushing, increased heart rate etc.)” An example is, “She felt hopelessly, helplessly ashamed and miserable. Her knees trembled, her heart fluttered, a horrible faintness came over her; not a word could she utter, and the next moment she would have fled from the platform” (Montgomery, 1909/1944, p. 307). The percentage agreement was 88%.

### *Additional Shame-Related Judgments*

Two additional judgments related to other characteristics thought to be especially characteristic of shame. The first asked whether the emotion term was being used “to convey a sense that a person wishes that he/she was a different kind of person.” An example here is,

But I was ashamed to show more fear than the eider-duck hunter. Hans seemed to accept the difficulties of the journey so tranquilly, with such calm indifference, with such perfect recklessness of all danger, that I actually blushed to appear less of a man than he! (Verne, 1864/1965, p. 62)

The percentage agreement was 81%. The second judgment asked whether the emotion term was being used “to convey feeling(s) associated with a person believing that he or she is basically a deficient, defective, or bad person.” An example is,

What a monster of wickedness, of heartlessness, he had been! Every angry word that he had ever spoken came back to him and cut him like a knife; every selfish act that he had done—with what torments he paid for them now! . . . and she was gone forever, she was dead! He could have screamed aloud with the horror and despair of it; a sweat of agony beaded his forehead, yet he dared not make a sound—he scarcely dared to breathe, because of his shame and loathing of himself. (Sinclair, 1906/1972, p. 192)

The percentage agreement was 77%.

### *Guilt-Related Judgments*

Another set of judgments was expected to highlight features in the passage, especially characteristics of guilt, such as private pangs of conscience, self-blame, and self-reproach. The first judgment asked whether the emotion term was being used “to convey feeling(s) caused by a person’s private conscience creating concerns over having done something improper or morally suspect (without regard to what other people might think of the behavior).” An example is, “instead of that serenity of conscience . . . I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures, such as no language can describe” (Shelley, 1818/1949, p. 90). The percentage agreement was 72%. The second judgment asked whether the emotion term was being used “to convey a situation in which a person feels he or she is deserving of blame or punishment for committing an improper or morally suspect action(s).” An example is,

My stripes were sore and stiff, and made me cry afresh, when I moved; but they were nothing to the guilt I felt. It lay heavier on my breast than if I had been a most atrocious criminal, I dare say. (Dickens, 1850/1910, p. 58)

The percentage agreement was 73%. The third judgment asked whether the emotion term was being used “to convey feeling(s) associated with a person’s self-reproach because of a belief that he or she has committed an improper or morally suspect action.” An example is, “Well, Watson . . . The man who had the guilt upon his soul of having brought such a fate upon his own family might well be driven by remorse to inflict it upon himself” (Doyle, 1910/1928, p. 1061). The percentage agreement was 69%.

### *Results*

The initial analysis involved separating passages into categories on the basis of whether they involved cases of felt emotions versus other usages of the terms. As noted earlier, preliminary coding revealed that many of the guilt passages simply conveyed the fact of another person’s culpability, and this was overwhelmingly the case (281 of the 330 passages, a full 85%). However, only 1 of the shame passages involved using the emotion term to serve this function. It was also expected that some of the shame passages would involve inducing another person to feel bad about a wrongdoing, and this was also the case. Seventeen (9%) of the 180 shame passages served this function, whereas only 5 (2%) of the guilt

<sup>4</sup> A number of the passages were translations. However, we reasoned that they still represent an author’s attempt to convey an emotion using the most apt label possible and therefore were appropriate to include.

passages did so (of these 5, 3 were also placed in the nonemotion group just noted). In addition, it was expected that a small number of the shame passages would involve observations that a situation or circumstance was unfortunate, and this was also true. Eleven (6%) of the shame passages served this function, whereas none of the guilt passages did so. For the purposes of comparing the emotions of shame and guilt, we eliminated all instances of non-emotion uses of each term. We eliminated five additional shame passages that involved reactions to a relative's or friend's wrongdoing or inadequacy. This resulted in 146 shame passages and 46 guilt passages to use for comparing emotions in the main analysis.

### *Shame and Guilt in Relation to Public Exposure*

We first examined whether shame passages were more likely than guilt passages to include some sort of explicit public exposure of a transgression. A loglinear analysis of the proportion of passages containing such explicit public exposure revealed a significant effect for emotion term,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 6.07, p < .05$ . For shame passages involving a transgression, 24% (36 of 146) contained explicit public exposure; for guilt passages involving a transgression, 8% (3 of 46) contained public exposure. Next, we examined whether shame passages were more likely than guilt passages to include some sort of explicit public exposure of an inadequacy or inferiority. A loglinear analysis of the proportion of passages containing this kind of explicit public exposure revealed a significant effect for emotion term,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 4.01, p < .05$ .<sup>5</sup> For shame passages involving an inadequacy or inferiority, 15% (21 of 146) contained explicit public exposure; for guilt passages, 0% (0 of 46) contained public exposure. Finally, across all passages (with transgressions, inadequacy, and inferiority combined), for shame passages, 38% (55 of 146) contained some form of explicit public exposure; for guilt passages, 7% (3 of 46) contained public exposure.

### *Shame and Guilt in Relation to Implicit Public Exposure*

Next we examined the prevalence of implicit public exposure for actions and inadequacies separately. A loglinear analysis of the proportion of passages containing implicit public exposure of a transgression produced a significant effect for the emotion term,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 6.90, p < .005$ . Unexpectedly, there was a greater proportion of guilt passages (28%; 13 of 46) than shame passages (12%; 17 of 146). There was no difference in the occurrence of implicit exposure of inadequacies,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 0.01, p < .93$ ; both frequencies were low: 7% (3 of 46) for guilt, and 7% (10 of 146) for shame.

### *Additional Judgments Expected to Be Related to Shame*

It was expected that shame passages would contain more frequent examples of intense physiological change, but the prevalence of coders endorsing this was low, and there was no difference between the two emotions on this judgment,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 0.07, p < .79$ . Five percent (8 of 146) of the shame passages and 7% (3 of 46) of the guilt passages involved such intense change.

Two additional judgments were expected to show greater association with shame than with guilt: a desire to be a different type

of person, and a belief that one is a deficient, defective, or bad person. For the first judgment, 26% (38 of 146) of the shame passages contained this desire, compared with 20% (9 of 46) of the guilt passages, a nonsignificant difference,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 0.78, p < .37$ . For the second judgment, 22% (32 of 146) of the shame passages contained this desire, compared with 35% (16 of 46) of the guilt passages, a nonsignificant difference in the opposite direction expected,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 3.03, p < .08$ .

### *Judgments Expected to Be Related to Guilt*

Three judgments were expected to show greater association with the guilt passages compared with the shame passages: feelings caused by a person's private conscience creating concerns over an improper or morally suspect action, a sense of deserving blame or punishment for such an action, and self-reproach because of an improper or morally suspect action. Loglinear analyses comparing these judgments as function of emotion term were all significant in the expected direction. For private conscience, 70% (32 of 46) of the guilt passages and 29% (42 of 146) of the shame passages were judged to contain such concerns,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 22.08, p < .0001$ . For self-blame, 40% (17 of 46) of the guilt passages and 20% (28 of 146) of the shame passages involved such concerns,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 5.95, p < .05$ . Forty-three percent (20 of 46) of the guilt passages and 25% (37 of 146) of the shame passages involved self-reproach,  $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 14.12, p < .001$ .

### *Discussion*

These results using passages from classic literature add further evidence that shame is more likely than guilt to be associated with public exposure. Thirty-eight percent of the shame passages indicated that some sort of explicit public exposure of either a wrongdoing or an inadequacy produced the emotion, compared with 7% of the guilt passages.

These results also suggest that shame does not require obvious public exposure to arise, as more than half of the shame passages contained no explicit public exposure. In fact, this pattern supports this view even more strongly than has previous work examining the role of public exposure in shame and guilt. In prior work that used participant-generated accounts of shame and guilt, the large majority of passages of both emotions generated by the undergraduate participants contained public exposure, approximately 85%. As argued earlier, the surprise in this prior work is not that the large majority of accounts contained public exposure but that guilt accounts were also so heavily dominated by public exposure. Overall, the method used in Study 3 seems to have allowed private experiences of both guilt and shame to emerge. This creates a very different sense of how prevalent public exposure may be in these two emotions. Guilt was dominated by private experiences, whereas shame seemed much less so.

We speculated earlier that participant-generated passages of shame and guilt may be biased in favor of accounts containing public exposure. Not only may people be reluctant, even in anonymous circumstances, to disclose secret experiences of wrongdoing

<sup>5</sup> To perform the test, we adjusted frequencies because of the zero value for guilt.

ings, but there is also the possibility that private experiences of improper behavior are more likely to be repressed or forgotten than are public experiences. The fact that so few of the participant-generated accounts were private seems to go against the natural prevalence of people's transgressions. The present findings are consistent with these possibilities.

Are literary passages subject to their own biases? Perhaps literary passages are biased in favor of private accounts of both emotions. In fictional works, the reader is often privy to the private transgressions of characters and to the private thoughts and feelings that these actions generate. Writers of fiction may find that the interior life of a person makes for especially interesting reading because normally it remains secret. However, the public exposure of wrongdoings also makes for good reading. *The Scarlet Letter* has at least two main story lines, the public shame and disgrace suffered by Hester and the private guilt of Dimmesdale. Both themes are interesting in their own right, and both appear to instruct the reader about human emotions. And, besides *The Scarlet Letter*, there are scores of other literary works, such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky's (1866/1951) *Crime and Punishment*, that capitalize on the themes of private guilt and/or shame (W. T. Miller, 1993).

It is worth emphasizing that the passages were not dominated by particularly intense examples of either emotion. This may have been in part due to the coding directions for the intensity-related judgment, which may have suggested an overly high level of intensity before a passage could be judged as such. Furthermore, many of the literary works probably contained powerful examples of each emotion, but the selection procedure was not designed to ferret out or favor passages of this or any sort. It is possible that the low frequency of intense examples of guilt and shame in the literary passages reflects people's typical experience of these emotions. Previous research using participants' accounts of guilt and shame not only may favor instances of public exposure of a transgression, as conjectured earlier, but also may favor more intense experiences. It may be in part because actual public experiences of moral emotions tend to be relatively more intense than private experiences that they are more likely to be reported by participants in experimental settings.

None of the self-related dimensions thought to be characteristic of shame differentiated shame from guilt. It may be that the level of detail in the passages did not allow for key information regarding these other dimensions to emerge. In prior research using participant-generated experiences, the level of detail may have been greater as instructions in these studies encouraged such detail. However, it may say something about the general importance of public exposure that, despite the challenges of coding aspects of the passages, the differentiating potential of public exposure emerged in the analysis.

Another noteworthy aspect of the results is the frequency with which guilt and shame were not used to convey emotions. Most striking is the especially large proportion of guilt passages simply conveying the fact of someone having committed a wrongdoing. A fairly high frequency was expected because, after all, this usually corresponds to the first dictionary definition of guilt, but the obtained number is an unexpected preponderance of the cases.

The high frequency of the nonemotion use of guilt may have implications for how guilt as an emotion is understood (Ortony, 1987). As noted earlier, recent views on guilt suggest that guilt, compared with shame, is more about actions (e.g., H. B. Lewis,

1971; Tangney, 1996). This distinction has found strong empirical support in the work by Niedenthal et al. (1994), in which the counterfactual "If only I hadn't done X" was more associated with guilt than with shame. Perhaps at least part of this association is due to the pervasiveness of the nonemotion function of the term *guilt*. The frequent linking of the term *guilt* with factual claims of culpability may lead to an overstated sense of the role of actions in guilt as an emotion. It may also lead to an understating of the role of the self in feelings of guilt. Of course, the linking of guilt with actions and shame with the self is hard to justify in the extreme sense of the distinction. By definition, a transgression suggests at least a certain degree of culpability, and, therefore, the self must be implicated (Sabini & Silver, 1997). A transgression, decoupled entirely from the self, is a blameless accident for which one can be excused and from which a full-blown emotion is unlikely to follow. Theoretical views that highlight the action versus self distinction do not necessarily characterize it in extreme, either/or terms (e.g., H. B. Lewis, 1971), but the present results suggest that this distinction may tend to be inflated. To the extent that guilt is less about the self, it may be less of an emotion.

Guilt passages proved distinct from the shame passages in a number of other important and expected ways. Not only were they much less likely to contain explicit public exposure, they were also more likely to involve self-reproach, self-blame, and pangs of conscience. This is important because such reactions are arguably features of private as opposed to public concerns over a wrongdoing. In other words, these results suggest that when a person violates an internalized standard, a certain emotion often follows. This emotion involves a profile of affectively tinged reactions involving self-reproach, pangs of conscience, and the like, reactions that seem well encompassed and labeled by the term *guilt*.

Unexpectedly, although the overall frequency of implicit public exposure was low, guilt passages were judged to be more typical of such concerns than were shame passages. Further examination of the guilt passages suggested that many seemed to combine a conscience troubled over committing a transgression with the reasonable fear that the transgression would be exposed. Perhaps the term *shame* was less likely to be used because the transgression had not yet been exposed. However, as the results from Study 1 suggest, the consequences of implicit public exposure on emotions are likely to be especially complex. For example, the likelihood of feeling varying degrees of shame or guilt appears dependent on whether the people feeling the emotion believe what they did was morally wrong.

#### Study 4

Although Studies 1 and 2 allowed us to manipulate public exposure and the moral nature of the event, the scenario methodology has a number of potential limitations. The main limitation is that participants' responses may not correspond precisely to how participants would respond in actual situations (Parkinson & Manstead, 1993). In an effort to counter this problem, we used scenarios in Studies 1 and 2 containing the kind of detail that we reasoned would enhance participant's ability to vicariously experience the situation. We encouraged participants to read the account carefully, and we urged them to make a special effort to imagine the target person's experience. Also, as mentioned earlier, we constructed three scenario versions in both studies. Each set of

three versions was sufficiently different in surface detail, yet similar in underlying conceptual content, to allow us to claim enhanced external and internal validity, as version did not interact with the manipulated variables.

Study 3, in a sense, uses yet another form of scenario methodology. Although many fiction writers undoubtedly use emotional experiences from their own life as inspiration for their fiction (and, to this extent, their works are personal accounts), the written passages may also be interpreted as emotion knowledge rather than evidence for how people actually respond. However, these writers were not playing a role exactly like our participants in Studies 1 and 2. These writers generated their own details, either from their own experience, from their imaginations, or from the witnessed experiences of others. In doing so, they may have been much closer to the real or vicarious experience of these emotions than were our participants. Moreover, because we used multiple writers who were writing about widely disparate domains, this procedure is an example of extensive stimulus sampling.

As a general point about using literary examples of emotions, it would be unsettling to assume that fictional treatments of emotion, taken from multiple authors, are too far removed or distinct from everyday experience. Our view is that acclaimed writers might actually be better at using emotions terms precisely and are certainly better at capturing the human experience in ways that seem to fit with the ordinary person's experience. Writers who fail at capturing experiences in ways that others can recognize as true of their own experience probably never enter into the ranks of classic writers. Thus, we believe that the findings from these literary passages are a legitimate, adjunctive methodology for the empirical examination of emotions (Spackman & Parrott, 2001).

Although we believe the results of the first three studies correspond with people's actual emotional reactions, in Study 4 we used a third type of methodology that relied on participants' remembered personal experiences. We reasoned earlier that participant-generated accounts of guilt and shame used in prior research (Tangney et al., 1994, 1996) may be biased in favor of accounts containing public exposure. Thus, we used a method of generating personal experiences that was designed to minimize such a potential bias. In these prior studies, participants were asked to provide accounts of shame and guilt experiences without any stipulation as to whether they were public or private experiences. In Study 4, we asked participants to remember either a private or a public experience (of a wrongdoing or a nonmoral failing) and then assessed whether guilt or shame best characterized their feelings. We assessed tendencies to feel shame or guilt in four ways. First, participants were asked to indicate the first and second best emotion terms to describe how they felt during their experience. Second, they were asked which of the two emotions, shame or guilt, they felt more. Third, they indicated the intensity of their feelings of shame and guilt. Finally, they indicated the extent to which they felt a group of reactions often associated with either shame or guilt.

### Method

#### Participants and Design

Participants were 36 female and 24 male undergraduates who volunteered to participate for extra credit in an introductory social psychology

class at the University of Kentucky. All members of the class present on the day that the experiment was administered agreed to participate. Their mean age was 21.88 years. The study used a 2 (public exposure: private vs. public)  $\times$  2 (type of event: moral vs. nonmoral)  $\times$  2 (gender) design.

#### Procedure

Participants were told that they would receive a brief questionnaire to complete and that no identifying information should be placed on the questionnaire. The anonymity of their responses was emphasized.

*Manipulations of publicity and type of event.* On the first page of the questionnaire, participants were asked to think of a private or public situation in which they felt bad because of something they had done wrong (moral conditions) or because of something involving an inferior aspect of themselves (nonmoral conditions). To further participants' sense that their responses would be anonymous, we asked them not to write down any details of their experience.

The private/moral condition was worded to emphasize a private, inwardly experienced situation. The exact wording was, "Please think of a situation in which your conscience was privately bothering you because of something wrong that you did that no one knew about."

The public/moral condition was worded to emphasize a publicly experienced situation. The exact wording was, "Please think of a situation in which you were feeling bad because something wrong that you did was revealed or publicly exposed to another person or to other people."

The private/nonmoral condition was worded to emphasize a private, inwardly experienced situation. The wording was, "Please think of a situation in which you were feeling bad, privately, because you began thinking of an inferior aspect of yourself that no one knew about."

The public/nonmoral condition was worded to emphasize a publicly experienced situation. The wording was, "Please think of a situation in which you were feeling bad because an inferior aspect of yourself was revealed or publicly exposed to another person or other people."

*Dependent measures.* All participants were asked, "What one emotion term or word would best describe how you were feeling?" Next they were asked what would be the next emotion term or word to best describe how they were feeling. On the following page of the questionnaire, they were asked to think about their experience again and were asked, "Which of the following two emotions did you feel more? Guilty or Ashamed?" Then, using 20-point scales (1 = *not at all*; 20 = *a whole lot*), they were asked how strongly they felt guilty and how strongly they felt ashamed.

Participants then completed an affect checklist containing sets of items designed to tap reactions related to either guilt or shame. A 4-point scale was used for these items (0 = *not at all*; 3 = *a whole lot*).

*Shame-related reactions.* Six items tapped various aspects of public exposure: "blushing," "embarrassed," "humiliated," "mortified," "wanting to hide," and "self-conscious" (coefficient  $\alpha = .79$ ). Six items measured negative self-evaluations: "defective," "small," "inferior," "freakish," "depressed," and "like a failure" (coefficient  $\alpha = .82$ ).

*Guilt-related reactions.* Four items focused on self-blame and remorse: "remorseful," "blameworthy," "sorry," and "bad conscience" (coefficient  $\alpha = .86$ ).

*Other reactions.* Three items measured hostile feelings: "angry," "vengeful," and "mistreated" (coefficient  $\alpha = .75$ ). Five items measured anxious feelings: "distressed," "concerned," "anxious," "afraid," and "shaky" (coefficient  $\alpha = .72$ ). Four items tapped confident and calm feelings: "confident," "at ease," "calm," and "in control" (coefficient  $\alpha = .72$ ).

Finally, participants were asked how many people knew about either the aspect of themselves or what they had done.

## Results

### Manipulation Checks

As a check on the manipulation of publicity, a 2 (public exposure: private vs. public)  $\times$  2 (type of event: moral vs. nonmoral)  $\times$  2 (gender) ANOVA was performed on the item asking the number of people present during the event. This resulted in a main effect for publicity,  $F(1, 52) = 133.65, p < .0001$ ; as expected, participants in public conditions reported more people present ( $M = 5.68, SD = 2.81$ ) than did participants in the private conditions ( $M = 1.66, SD = 1.67$ ). The only other effect was a Publicity  $\times$  Type of Event interaction,  $F(1, 52) = 5.64, p < .05$ . This interaction reflected a tendency for moral events to have more people present than did nonmoral events in public conditions; also, even in private conditions some participants reported a number of people present for nonmoral events. As a check on the manipulation of type of event, we performed an ANOVA on the item asking how inferior participants felt. The only effect was a main effect for type of event,  $F(1, 52) = 29.65, p < .0001$ . Also as expected, participants in nonmoral conditions reported more inferiority ( $M = 2.00, SD = 1.01$ ) than did participants in the moral conditions ( $M = 0.70, SD = 0.95$ ).

### Guilty Versus Ashamed

A loglinear analysis was performed on participants' responses to the question asking which of two emotions they felt more, guilty or ashamed, using the 2 (public exposure: private vs. public)  $\times$  2 (type of event: moral vs. nonmoral)  $\times$  2 (gender) design. This analysis produced main effects for both public exposure,  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 4.75, p < .05$ , and type of event,  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 4.75, p < .05$ . Consistent with expectations, shame was selected more frequently in public conditions (86%) compared with private conditions (56%) and in nonmoral conditions (81%) compared with moral conditions (56%; see Table 2).

### Intensity Ratings of Guilt and Shame

ANOVAs were performed on the ratings of how strongly participants felt guilty and ashamed, using the full design. For guilt, there were main effects for both public exposure,  $F(1, 52) = 4.58, p < .05$ , and type of event,  $F(1, 52) = 17.02, p < .0001$ . As expected, ratings of guilt were greater in private conditions ( $M = 12.83, SD = 4.94$ ) than in public conditions ( $M = 9.93, SD = 5.17$ ) and were greater in moral conditions ( $M = 14.17, SD = 3.53$ ) than in nonmoral conditions ( $M = 8.60, SD = 5.20$ ).

Table 2  
Proportion of Participants Selecting Shame (Versus Guilt) as a Function of Public Exposure and Type of Event in Study 4

Type of event	Public exposure (%)		<i>M</i>
	Private	Public	
Moral	37	78	56
Nonmoral	73	93	81
<i>M</i>	56	86	

There were no effects for ratings of shame, which were generally high across all conditions.

### Other Affective Reactions

ANOVAs were performed on the two composite measure tapping shame-related reactions. For the measure of feelings associated with public exposure (e.g., "embarrassed" and "humiliated"), main effects emerged for both public exposure,  $F(1, 52) = 10.71, p < .005$ , and type of event,  $F(1, 52) = 4.02, p < .05$ . As expected, ratings of such feelings were greater in public conditions ( $M = 2.01, SD = 0.73$ ) than in private conditions ( $M = 1.52, SD = 0.66$ ) and were greater in nonmoral conditions ( $M = 1.94, SD = 0.68$ ) than in moral conditions ( $M = 1.59, SD = 0.76$ ). There was also an unanticipated Type of Event  $\times$  Gender interaction,  $F(1, 52) = 9.35, p < .005$ , which arose because the effect for type of event occurred only for men. For the measure of feelings associated with inferiority (e.g., "defective" and "inferior"), there was a main effect for type of event,  $F(1, 52) = 14.75, p < .0001$ , with these feelings being greater in nonmoral conditions ( $M = 1.57, SD = 0.67$ ) than in moral conditions ( $M = 0.98, SD = 0.79$ ), and a Type of Event  $\times$  Gender interaction,  $F(1, 52) = 8.88, p < .005$ , reflecting the fact that the effect for type of event occurred only for men. An ANOVA on the measure of guilt-related reactions (e.g., "remorse" and "regret") produced a single main effect for type of event,  $F(1, 52) = 19.52, p < .0001$ . As expected, these reactions were greater in moral conditions ( $M = 2.17, SD = 0.70$ ) compared with nonmoral conditions ( $M = 1.17, SD = 0.89$ ). An ANOVA on the measure of hostile feelings (e.g., "angry" and "vengeful") produced main effects for both public exposure,  $F(1, 52) = 4.74, p < .05$ , and type of event,  $F(1, 52) = 6.77, p < .05$ . Hostility was greater in public conditions ( $M = 1.35, SD = 0.82$ ) than in private conditions ( $M = 0.88, SD = 0.87$ ) and was greater in nonmoral conditions ( $M = 1.43, SD = 0.93$ ) than in moral conditions ( $M = 0.80, SD = 0.69$ ). An ANOVA on the measure of confident feelings (e.g., "confident" and "calm") produced a single main effect for type of event,  $F(1, 52) = 4.49, p < .05$ , with participants reporting greater confidence in moral conditions ( $M = 0.35, SD = 0.49$ ) compared with nonmoral conditions ( $M = 0.14, SD = 0.24$ ). Finally, an ANOVA on the composite measure of anxious feelings (e.g., "anxious" and "distressed") produced a Type of Event  $\times$  Gender interaction,  $F(1, 52) = 10.85, p < .005$ , which reflected a tendency for men to report more anxious feelings in nonmoral conditions compared with moral conditions and for women to show the opposite pattern.

Table 3 displays the correlations between the explicit measures of guilt and shame, the shame-related measures, the guilt-related measures, and the other reactions. As expected, guilt was positively correlated with guilt-related feelings and negatively correlated with hostile feelings. Also as expected, shame was positively correlated with feelings associated with public exposure and feelings associated with inferiority. It was also positively correlated with anxious feelings.

### Participant-Generated Emotion Terms

Participant-generated emotion terms were characterized by a wide variety of terms, making these data less useful than expected for assessing guilt and shame per se. For the first emotion term,

Table 3  
Correlations Among Explicit Measures of Guilt and Shame and Composite Measures of Other Affective Reactions in Study 4

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Guilty	—						
2. Ashamed	.14	—					
3. Embarrassed/ humiliated	-.10	.43**	—				
4. Defective/inferior	-.08	.46**	.58**	—			
5. Remorse/regret	.73**	.17	.02	-.06	—		
6. Angry/vengeful	-.37*	.23	.43**	.34**	-.41**	—	
7. Anxious	.23	.27*	.43**	.38**	.29	.20	—

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

participants generated 25 different terms, and for the second emotion term, they generated 32. Many participants used idiosyncratic words to characterize their experience, words such as *freakish*, *bitter*, *paranoid*, *horrible*, *dishonest*, and *stupid*. Participants' sense of what could be classified as an emotion term was very broad. However, at least for the first term, there was enough apparent consistency in participants' selections to allow for a useful analysis.

Table 4 summarizes the terms generated by participants for the first term. Terms were classified as shame if participants wrote either *shame* ( $n = 3$ ) or *ashamed* ( $n = 5$ ) and were classified as guilt if participants wrote either *guilt* ( $n = 4$ ) or *guilty* ( $n = 8$ ). Another category, publicity-related terms, contained specific shame terms in addition to terms often associated with the public exposure of wrongdoing or inferiority: *embarrassed* ( $n = 16$ ), *humiliated* ( $n = 1$ ), and *mortified* ( $n = 1$ ). An additional category included only selections of the word *embarrassment*. A final category, guilt-related terms, contained both specific guilt terms and guilt-related terms: *remorse* ( $n = 1$ ) and *regret* ( $n = 1$ ).

Table 4  
Proportion of Emotion Terms Generated as a Function of Public Exposure and Type of Event in Study 4

Type of event	Public exposure (%)		M
	Private	Public	
Moral			
Shame	12.5	14.3	13.3
Publicity related	12.5	57.1	33.3
Embarrassment	0.0	42.1	20.0
Guilt	37.5	14.3	26.7
Guilt related	37.5	28.6	28.6
Nonmoral			
Shame	23.0	6.7	14.3
Publicity related	30.8	80.1	57.0
Embarrassment	7.7	60.0	35.7
Guilt	15.4	13.3	26.7
Guilt related	15.4	13.3	14.3
M			
Shame	17.2	10.3	
Publicity related	20.7	69.0	
Embarrassment	3.4	51.0	
Guilt	27.6	13.8	
Guilt related	27.6	20.7	

Loglinear analyses were performed on the proportion of participants who selected terms in each of the five categories. Only two significant effects emerged: The manipulation of publicity increased participants' selections of publicity-related terms,  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 11.96, p < .0005$ , and of embarrassment,  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 11.62, p < .0005$ . The proportion of participants who selected publicity-related terms was 69% in public conditions and 21% in private conditions. The proportion of participants who selected *embarrassment* was 51% in public conditions and 3% in private conditions.<sup>6</sup>

Discussion

The results of Study 4 using participants' actual experiences support the empirical and conceptual themes emerging from the first three studies. Overall, participants reported that the feelings produced by their public experiences, both moral and nonmoral, were better described by shame than by guilt. The contrast between public and private experiences was especially evident in moral domains. In the private moral conditions, shame was selected only 37% of the time (thus, guilt was selected 63% of the time), but in public moral conditions, shame was selected 78% of the time (guilt, 22%). Not only was shame more linked with public experiences than was guilt, but guilt was more linked with private experiences than was shame (especially with moral events). In the private moral conditions, in which guilt was most commonly selected, we emphasized that participants should recall a situation in which their conscience was privately troubling them because of something wrong they had done. We reasoned that it is exactly this kind of situation in which people experience guilt, and participants appear to confirm this view.

Intensity ratings of shame and guilt were largely consistent with what occurred with selections of guilt versus shame. Guilt was reported to be much stronger in private than in public conditions. Although there were no significant effects for intensity ratings of shame (ratings were high across conditions,  $M = 15.37, SD = 3.84$ ), shame was strongly correlated with other publicity-related feelings (e.g., humiliated and embarrassed), whereas intensity ratings of guilt were uncorrelated with such feelings. In addition, intensity of guilt was highly correlated with the composite measure of remorse, regret, and a troubled conscience, whereas intensity of shame was not.

The results also provide further support for linking shame with nonmoral events. Participants reported that the feelings produced by their experiences of inferiority, both public and private, were better described by shame than by guilt. In contrast, their experiences of doing something morally wrong were better described by guilt than by shame. Furthermore, moral experiences produced more intense guilt than did nonmoral experiences. Although the intensity of shame was unaffected by type of event, it was strongly correlated with the composite measure of inferiority feelings. Guilt, however, was uncorrelated with such feelings.

<sup>6</sup> Although the analysis of participant-generated terms was undermined by the many idiosyncratic terms selected by participants, it is worth highlighting how often the term *embarrassment* was generated in public conditions. It appears that many participants found *embarrassment* to be the prototypical term for characterizing negative, public exposure. This finding supports prior research and theory on the nature of embarrassment (e.g., Keltner & Buswell, 1997).

Prior research suggests that shame should be associated with hostility, but intensity ratings of shame were only weakly related to hostility. However, hostility was affected by the two manipulations; hostility was higher for both public and nonmoral experiences, the conditions under which shame was also most closely linked. Also, hostility was strongly related to feeling humiliated. In contrast to shame ratings, intensity ratings of guilt were negatively correlated with hostility, as would be expected.

### General Discussion

The results across the four studies linking shame with public exposure are especially important to highlight. As noted earlier, the association of public exposure with shame is consistent with long-standing philosophical, literary, and scientific traditions, so it would be unfortunate to find this association unsupported empirically. It is certainly preferable for dictionary definitions of emotion terms to coincide with how people label their actual emotional states. We also noted earlier that another unfortunate consequence of the word *shame* losing its connection with traditional definitions is that there seemed no alternative word to take its place. The present findings suggest that another word is unnecessary. If one wants to label the feelings caused by the public exposure of a transgression or incompetence, the word *shame* is up to the job.

Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988) made the point that the study of emotions can be hindered if researchers rely too heavily on people's use of emotion terms to inform them about the nature of emotions. Ortony et al.'s structural analysis of emotions relied on isolating various factors that combine to produce situations in which a distinct emotional state should arise. The label for these situations is less important than understanding the structure of each situation and the cognitive appraisals entailed by each. We argue that the public exposure of a transgression or incompetence is one such situation. This situation is common to most people's experience and produces a distinctive emotional state. Fortunately, this situation also seems to be one to which a particular emotion term, *shame*, can be consistently linked.

Some researchers have stressed that there are no prototypic or distinct situations that differentially give rise to shame and guilt (Tangney, 1992, 1996). Rather, the way a situation is interpreted, as reflecting either on the entire self or on a specific act, determines the emotion. Other researchers, such as Olthof, Schouten, Kuiper, Stegge, and Jennekens-Schinkel (2000) and Ferguson, Eyre, and Ashbaker (2000), have stressed that there are distinct situations that may differentially elicit shame and guilt. Shame is more likely to be aroused in both moral and nonmoral situations, whereas guilt is only aroused in moral situations. Also, Olthof et al. (2000) demonstrated that shame, unlike guilt, is more likely to occur in situations that highlight an unwanted identity. The present results certainly support the association of shame with nonmoral situations and reintroduce the traditional view that the public exposure of either moral or nonmoral events is also distinctively linked with shame (and that privately felt concerns over moral transgressions are distinctively linked with guilt).

Another conceptual benefit of being able to maintain the link between shame and public exposure is that it preserves a connection between shame and the notion of shaming. Definitions of shaming focus on the act of causing another person to feel shame, usually through some form of public censure or approbation. A

core feature of a shame-inducing action is its public nature. Thus, when someone is shamed, there is a clear sense in which he or she has also been dishonored and disgraced. Divorcing the notion of shaming from its public elements would strip it of its core. It would be odd to have the word *shaming* linked to public exposure so intimately but for *shame* to have no association with such exposure. It is interesting that, in many instances, shaming occurs because the person committing a transgression appears to be untroubled by his or her behavior. That is, in the realm of the person's private feelings, his or her misbehaviors seem to produce neither guilt nor shame. It then becomes the task of someone else to induce shame through admonishment and its accompanying public exposure.

Sometimes, shaming can go too far. The public exposure or the severity of the admonishment creates the experience of humiliation rather than shame. It may be that one of the reasons that shame is often linked with hostility is that shamed individuals, rather than feeling shamed, perceive the shaming as unjustified humiliation. They may recognize that they have committed a transgression, but they may also feel that the public exposure itself is unjustified. As a result, the focus of attention can shift to the perception of having been mistreated rather than on the person's own transgression. This shift may produce hostility rather than the negative self-appraisals associated with shame. There may be a tendency for any public exposure to seem unjustified and unnecessary from the biased point of view of the transgressor. If this is true, shaming will more often backfire on the shamer and create especially maladaptive, hostile feelings. In this context, it is worth emphasizing that, in Study 4, intensity of shame was only weakly correlated with hostility, whereas feelings of humiliation were strongly correlated with hostility.

One important question to address is how to integrate the perspective on shame suggested by the present findings with more recent research inspired by H. B. Lewis's (1971) work. One possibility is that the word *shame* may refer to two quite different emotional experiences; that is, there may be two types of shame. One type, resulting from the public exposure of defects or transgressions, may be encompassed by the cluster of emotional appraisals that concern the loss of one's reputation, the decrease of one's status, disapproval in the eyes of important others, and the future constraints that these entail. A second type, resulting from a more private negative evaluation of the self, may be characterized by emotional appraisals of self-contempt and helplessness. The motivations and action tendencies set into motion by these two clusters of appraisals seem likely to be fairly distinct. We suspect that the first type may be more associated with hostile reactions, especially when the public exposure is perceived as humiliating rather than shaming. The second type may be more associated with self-directed hostility and depression. In any event, an appreciation of the variety of emotional reactions that can be labeled *shame* may ultimately help explain how the label is both more associated with public exposure than is guilt and yet compatible with the private experience of self-devaluation.

The distinctive association of shame with nonmoral events, also documented in the present studies, provides another way of suggesting the possible dual character of the feelings that people label as shame. Nonmoral events, which concern inferior aspects of the self, can induce negative feelings regardless of public exposure, although public exposure seems to heighten these negative feel-

ings. That the label *shame* appears to capture well these negative feelings anchors the emotion to negative self-appraisals in general. This link between shame and negative self-appraisals becomes all the more secure in the light of the relative weakness of this link for the label *guilt*, especially for nonmoral events.

Just as it is useful to have a word that captures the feeling associated with the public exposure of a transgression or incompetence, we argue that it is also useful to have a word that captures the private feelings of a troubled conscience caused by a personal wrongdoing. There are likely to be many situations in everyday life in which wrongdoings are committed and remain undiscovered. That we feel bad about these wrongdoings even though no one knows about them can be extremely useful information about the self. Such feelings inform us that we have internal standards of behavior that govern us even when our behavior escapes public monitoring. When our wrongdoings not only violate personal standards but also hurt others, feeling bad tells us that other people matter to us beyond concerns over public disapproval and the fear of punishment. Even when the wrongdoing is exposed, it is still helpful to be able to convey to others that the action bothers us internally. In a sense, our capacity to feel bad in private tells us that we are socialized appropriately. We worry about ourselves when the bad things that we have done fail to cause guilt, and we worry about others when we believe they lack this capacity. The word *guilt* seems a good label for this feeling we want to discover in ourselves and to infer in others.

### Conclusions

The results of the present studies suggest a number of straightforward points about shame and guilt. First, shame appears more closely linked to the feelings caused by the public exposure of a transgression or incompetence than does guilt. Recent empirical evidence has run counter to this traditional claim (Tangney et al., 1994, 1996), and contemporary theorizing has highlighted the differential role of the self in guilt and shame rather than other possible distinctions (e.g., Leith & Baumeister, 1998; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Tangney, 1998). Thus, the present findings argue for reclaiming public exposure as a complementary way of fully understanding this important, complex emotion. Second, guilt seems to have a special link with the feelings associated with a privately troubled conscience. Recent theorizing on guilt has minimized this linkage (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1994), but the present findings suggest that people find it useful to have a label to characterize these feelings. Third, shame has a close connection with nonmoral experiences of incompetence or inferiority as well as with moral transgressions, whereas guilt is largely associated with moral transgressions. This distinctive aspect of shame may help explain why shame has a closer connection with negative self-appraisals than does guilt.

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