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Acknowledgements

To family. To friends.

To Dostoyevsky. To Chomsky.

To black coffee when you want it. But don't need it.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to advance a revised conceptual understanding of the differentiation between the self-conscious emotions of shame and guilt. Chapter 1 begins by outlining the shared attributes of these emotions: both are negatively valenced affective states that individuals are typically motivated to alleviate, and both require self-reflection for their elicitation, thus qualifying as self-conscious emotions. They are inherently moral in nature, shaped by ethical considerations, and social in origin, typically emerging within interpersonal contexts, particularly involving a perceived or actual victim. Subsequently, Chapter 1 critically reviews existing theoretical distinctions between shame and guilt. From a phenomenological standpoint, shame is characterized by a self-focused evaluative stance, whereas guilt centres on the specific behaviour or transgression. Dispositional perspectives suggest that individuals may exhibit a propensity toward either emotion, influenced by personality traits or cultural background. Cognitively, guilt is elicited by self-blame and differs from shame based on its ego-involvement. Attribution theory further differentiates the two by linking guilt to failures of effort and shame to perceived inadequacies in ability. Motivationally, guilt tends to elicit reparative behaviours, while shame is more likely to lead to withdrawal or avoidance. Clinically, shame has been more robustly associated with severe forms of psychopathology compared to guilt. The chapter concludes with a cross-cultural historical analysis of the emergence and evolution of both emotions. Chapter 2 introduces a novel theoretical framework that emphasizes the anticipatory nature of emotional processing. Rather than focusing solely on the present evaluative state, the framework highlights the significance of future-oriented emotional anticipation and introduces the overlooked role of other-reflection, specifically, how the anticipated response of the victim may influence emotional differentiation. Central to this framework is the concept of forgiveness, posited as a critical mechanism affecting the elicitation, intensity, and resolution of both shame and guilt. Building on this theoretical foundation, Chapter 3 presents the concept of *Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness* (PPF), formulated within the structure of Cognitive Appraisal Theory. The chapter explores the potential of PPF to function either as a distinct appraisal dimension or as a core relational theme integral to the experience of shame and guilt. Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical, methodological, and applied implications of the proposed model, offering directions for future research to further validate and expand the conceptual framework introduced herein.

Abstrakt

Diese Arbeit zielt darauf ab, ein überarbeitetes konzeptuelles Verständnis der Differenzierung zwischen den selbstbewussten Emotionen Scham und Schuld zu entwickeln. Kapitel 1 beginnt mit der Darstellung der gemeinsamen Merkmale dieser Emotionen: Beide sind negativ bewertete affektive Zustände, deren Erfahrung Menschen typischerweise zu verringern versuchen. Zudem setzen beide Selbstreflexion voraus, um ausgelöst zu werden, und gelten daher als selbstbewusste Emotionen. Sie sind inhärent moralischer Natur, geprägt durch ethische Überlegungen, und haben einen sozialen Ursprung, da sie typischerweise in zwischenmenschlichen Kontexten entstehen – insbesondere im Zusammenhang mit einem tatsächlichen oder wahrgenommenen Opfer. Im Anschluss daran liefert Kapitel 1 eine kritische Übersicht über bestehende theoretische Unterscheidungen zwischen Scham und Schuld. Aus phänomenologischer Sicht ist Scham durch eine selbstfokussierte Bewertungshaltung gekennzeichnet, während sich Schuld auf ein spezifisches Verhalten oder eine bestimmte Übertretung bezieht. Dispositionelle Perspektiven deuten darauf hin, dass Individuen eine Neigung zu einer der beiden Emotionen zeigen können, beeinflusst durch Persönlichkeitsmerkmale oder kulturelle Hintergründe. Aus kognitiver Sicht wird Schuld durch Selbstvorwürfe ausgelöst und unterscheidet sich von Scham insbesondere durch den Grad der Ich-Beteiligung. Die Attributionstheorie differenziert weiter, indem sie Schuld mit mangelnder Anstrengung und Scham mit wahrgenommener Unzulänglichkeit in der Fähigkeit verknüpft. Motivational betrachtet führt Schuld typischerweise zu reparativem Verhalten, während Scham eher Rückzug oder Vermeidung zur Folge hat. Klinisch gesehen ist Scham stärker mit schwerwiegenden Formen von Psychopathologie assoziiert als Schuld. Das Kapitel schließt mit einer kulturvergleichenden historischen Analyse zur Entstehung und Entwicklung beider Emotionen. Kapitel 2 führt ein neues theoretisches Rahmenkonzept ein, das die antizipative Natur emotionaler Verarbeitungsprozesse betont. Anstelle eines alleinigen Fokus auf gegenwärtige Bewertungen rückt das Modell die Bedeutung zukunftsorientierter emotionaler Antizipation in den Vordergrund und beleuchtet die bislang vernachlässigte Rolle der Fremdreflexion – insbesondere die Frage, wie die erwartete Reaktion des Opfers zur emotionalen Differenzierung beiträgt. Zentrale Rolle spielt in diesem Rahmen das Konzept der Vergebung, das als entscheidender Mechanismus für die Auslösung, Intensität und Auflösung sowohl von Scham als auch von Schuld verstanden wird. Aufbauend auf diesem theoretischen Fundament präsentiert Kapitel 3 das Konzept der Wahrgenommenen Aussicht auf Vergebung (Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness, PPF), das im Rahmen der Theorie der kognitiven Bewertung verortet ist. Das Kapitel untersucht, ob PPF entweder als eigenständige Bewertungsdimension oder als zentrales relationales Thema im Erleben von Scham und Schuld fungieren kann. Kapitel 4 diskutiert die theoretischen, methodologischen und anwendungsbezogenen Implikationen des vorgeschlagenen Modells und gibt Hinweise für zukünftige Forschungsarbeiten zur weiteren Validierung und Ausarbeitung des hier eingeführten konzeptuellen Rahmens.

Chapter 1: General Introduction

“If one should seek to name each particular [emotion], it is plain that the limit to their number would lie in the introspective vocabulary of the seeker, each race of men having found names for some shades of meaning which other races have left undiscriminated” (James, 1890, p. 485).

Human emotions can be understood as mechanisms that drive cognition and behaviour in ways that enhance adaptability to specific situations and environments. From a more outcome-oriented standpoint, emotions may be viewed as extended cognitive-affective states that are triggered when external circumstances either obstruct or fulfil an individual’s pre-existing desires (Wollheim, 1999). These dual frameworks highlight the multifaceted nature of emotions and underscore the importance of varied approaches to their study. The former perspective emphasizes the adaptive function of emotions, while the latter interprets emotions as consequences of achieving or failing to achieve specific goals. Emotions play a crucial role in everyday functioning and social development, influencing behaviour and serving as key motivators of action (Lerner & Arsenio, 2000). They represent subjective responses to stimuli and are typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes. Scherer (2005) conceptualizes emotion as a dynamic episode involving coordinated and simultaneous changes across multiple physiological and psychological subsystems of the organism, triggered by the appraisal of an external or internal stimulus as being pertinent to the individual’s core concerns or goals. According to him, these systemic changes can manifest in subjective experiences and motivational drives, as well as in cognitive, neurophysiological, and motor functions.

Emotions are usually classified as basic or secondary. Basic emotions develop earlier, are biologically based, and are characterized by prototypic and universal facial expressions, whereas the secondary emotions are influenced by culture, need superior cognitive skills, and involve a increased sense of awareness of the self (Lewis, 1992). Secondary emotions such as shame and guilt are widely recognized as central to moral functioning. These emotions inform moral reasoning by shaping judgments of right and wrong, fostering personal responsibility for one's actions, and ultimately serving as motivators for ethical behaviour (Eisenberg, 2000; Tangney et al., 2007).

Similarities of Shame and Guilt

Self-conscious emotions

Historically, there has been broad scholarly agreement regarding the nature of basic emotions, such as happiness and sadness, characterizing them as biologically rooted, universally expressed through facial cues, and emerging early in life due to their independence from self-referential processing, which typically develops around the age of three. However, recent challenges to this perspective suggest that what may appear to be universal emotional experiences could instead be universal physiological or behavioural reactions to internal or external stimuli. For instance, Feldman-Barrett (2017) posits that infants may exhibit facial expressions without necessarily experiencing corresponding emotions. In contrast to basic emotions, self-conscious emotions lack universal biological or behavioural markers. These emotions, such as guilt, are not associated with consistent facial expressions (Tracy & Robins, 2004), and empirical studies have not identified nonverbal indicators specific to guilt (Izard, 1971; Keltner, 1995; Haidt & Keltner, 1999). Nonetheless, despite theoretical disagreements, empirical research on the antecedents and regulation of self-conscious

emotions has expanded significantly in recent years (Tangney et al., 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2004).

Self-conscious emotions, distinct from basic emotions like fear, anger, or happiness, require more advanced cognitive capacities, including self-awareness and the ability to form stable self-representations (Abe & Izard, 1999; Tracy et al., 2010). According to the theory of self-conscious emotions (Tracy & Robins, 2004), these emotions emerge from explicit or implicit self-evaluations and are typically triggered by a perceived inconsistency between the self and one's actions (Tracy et al., 2007). While basic emotions appear within the first nine months of life (Campos et al., 1983), self-conscious emotions emerge closer to year three, coinciding with the development of theory of mind - the capacity to recognize others as separate from oneself and to understand differing mental states (Lewis et al., 1992). Importantly, self-conscious emotions not only involve the personal self but also encompass relational, social, and collective dimensions (Buss, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). These emotions play a vital role in the assessment of one's social and moral standing, and support complex social goals such as maintaining status and avoiding rejection (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Tracy & Robins, 2007). Their role in navigating dynamic social hierarchies may explain why such emotions are predominantly observed in species with advanced social structures, such as humans and great apes (de Waal, 1989; Leary, 2004).

Negative emotions

Negative emotions are widely regarded as signals indicating the need for change within a current situation in order to better align with personal goals (Frijda, 1986; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). These affective states often prompt individuals to engage in self-reflective evaluations of their behaviour, facilitating a cognitive

appraisal process that can aid in learning and in avoiding similar errors in the future (Baumeister et al., 2007). However, the functional implications of negative emotions remain a topic of scholarly debate. Some researchers argue that negative emotions, along with their expression, may result in maladaptive outcomes (Locke & Horowitz, 1990; Sommers, 1984). Conversely, others contend that the counterfactual thinking evoked by these emotions serves a constructive purpose by informing future behaviour (Roese, 1997). Adding to this complexity is the ambiguity in determining whether subsequent behaviour is a direct result of the negative emotion or a byproduct of efforts to regulate or escape it. When participants are experimentally induced to feel unpleasant emotions, behaviours such as procrastination may either stem from the emotional state itself or from attempts to reduce emotional discomfort (Isen, 1984, 1987). In contrast, when positive emotions such as joy are induced, the resulting behaviours are more straightforwardly attributable to the emotional experience, particularly in comparison to control participants who were not subjected to emotion manipulation.

Among negative emotions, shame and guilt are particularly noteworthy due to their frequent co-occurrence and significant conceptual overlap. Both are associated with subjective distress in response to perceived personal failures or moral transgressions (Tangney et al., 2007). Moreover, shame and guilt tend to exhibit strong correlations (Ferguson & Crowley, 1997; Harder, 1995), and both are marked by their negatively valenced affective content. Given this, it is essential to consider their shared and distinct features when exploring their roles in psychological functioning and moral behaviour.

Moral Emotions

Due to their association with action tendencies aimed at upholding social norms and preserving social order, shame and guilt are classified as moral emotions, alongside others such as disgust and schadenfreude (Haidt, 2003; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Moral emotions are generally understood to serve a functional role in promoting social cohesion by motivating individuals to conform to societal expectations and thereby avoid social exclusion (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Kroll & Egan, 2004; Sedikides & Skowronski, 2000). Specifically, Haidt (2003) defines shame and guilt as moral emotions that are oriented toward the well-being or interests of others - whether society at large or individuals beyond the self, including those not directly involved in the transgression.

Social Emotions

Shame and guilt are frequently elicited in contexts involving interpersonal transgressions or situations in which individuals perceive themselves to have caused harm to others. Their emergence is thus inherently dependent on social interaction, which justifies their classification as “social emotions” (Barrett & Nelson-Goens, 1997; Leary, 2000; Parkinson et al., 2005). The social context, particularly the presence or absence of others beyond the harmed party, has been shown to significantly influence the elicitation of both emotions.

Operationalisation

A further point of similarity between shame and guilt lies in the methodological challenges associated with distinguishing them empirically. These emotions are often highly correlated and tend to co-occur, making them difficult to isolate in experimental research. For instance, Shaver et al. (1987) found that self-reports of guilt, shame, regret, and remorse clustered together as a subfactor of sadness,

complicating efforts to differentiate between them. Existing psychological research has yet to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework that fully validates these emotions as distinct constructs. Instead, findings often suggest that shame and guilt function as complementary experiences, frequently co-occurring rather than appearing in isolation. Unfortunately, many empirical studies focus on only one of these emotions, neglecting to report on related negative affective states. This selective reporting can result in biased interpretations, where conclusions are drawn based on a single emotion despite the potential presence of other, more informative emotional experiences.

Discussion

Shame and guilt exhibit numerous overlapping features. Both are negatively valenced emotional states that individuals typically seek to minimize or avoid. They are also categorized as self-conscious emotions, as their elicitation depends on an individual's capacity for self-reflection. Given their reliance on social context for activation and their role in reinforcing ethical behaviour, shame and guilt should be understood not only as moral emotions but also as fundamentally social in nature.

Differentiation between Shame and Guilt

Guilt and shame refer to distinct experiences (Ferguson et al., 1991; Lewis, 1971; Tangney, 1990, 1991; Tangney & Dearing, 2003; Wicker et al., 1983) and nevertheless, historically in psychological research they were used interchangeably. One of the pronounced reasons is that they are elicited in remarkably similar situations (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney et al., 1996) which is further amplified by the variability of interpretation and usage of these terms in everyday language.

Below I outline the most important differences between shame and guilt listed in psychological literature. I further explain the shortcomings of these explanations in their attempt to explain what leads towards experience of one or the other emotion, in similar contexts.

Phenomenological explanation

This explanation posits that there are at least two types of experiences after we commit a transgression. One where we start blaming and hating ourselves and one where we understand that we just made a mistake that we need to repair the consequences of.

The self-versus-behaviour view is presently considered the mainstream way of differentiating shame from guilt (Fontaine et al., 2004; Gausel, 2012). Guilt concerns a particular action, whereas shame pertains to the entire self (Lewis, 1971; Tangney, 1990, 1991). The differential emphasis on behaviour - “I *did* a horrible thing” vs. the self - “I *did* a horrible thing” (Tangney, 1996) further causes shame to be experienced as a more disruptive emotion, often leading to social withdrawal. Actions may lead one to feel ashamed, but in feeling ashamed, one feels like a bad or corrupt person, whereas, one can feel guilty without feeling like a bad person. When feeling shame, the transgressor feels “small” and worthless, and wants to “remove themselves from the scene” (Olthof et al., 2004; Rothschild et al., 2012; Stets & Carter, 2012; Tangney, 1991). Conversely, feeling guilty motivates the transgressor to make amends and motivates prosocial behaviour (De Hooze et al., 2007; Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Izard, 1977; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

In one of the initial experiments investigating this explanation (Tangney, 1992), subjects had to describe situations in which they were more likely to experience guilt and situations in which they were more likely to experience shame.

Tangney concluded after the analysis of the short stories that compared to the guilt experience, the shame experience is more global, more primitive, and less verbal (Tangney, 1992). In another study, Niedenthal, Tangney, and Gavanski (1994) first asked subjects to describe shame- and guilt-eliciting situations. Next, they asked them how they would try to undo these situations. Subjects were more ready to undo their behaviour when claiming to feel guilty whereas they were more ready to undo their traits when claiming to feel shame. Thus, subjects experiencing shame tend to focus on themselves, subjects experiencing guilt on their behaviour.

Criticism of phenomenological explanation. First, it can be argued that it is hard if not impossible to completely separate the focus on the object and focus on self when experiencing shame or guilt. It is unrealistic to expect that blame of self and blame of behaviour can be elicited exclusive of each other. When having a thought resembling of the sentence “I did a bad thing”, one takes into account both the self and the object of the transgression. For both shame and guilt to be elicited, the transgressive behaviour is required (“did”) and so is the responsibility assigned to us (“I”).

Second, building on the previous point, this explanation does not take into account the possibility that transgressor’s focus might change over time, for instance from behaviour to self. In experimental studies, which mostly focus on one or other emotion, the emotion in focus is measured immediately after the transgression is manipulated. However, the response might be different if state emotion was measured at later time. One could posit that the phenomenological experience of these emotions is most probably an outcome of the situation which encompasses our agency and our relationship with the victim.

Finally, the phenomenological perspective on the differentiation does not attempt to explain what is causing the person to experience shame over guilt in similar situations.

Dispositional explanations

Cultural explanation. The form of the dominant norms of a *shame culture* often determines what one ought to be. In shame cultures, the most humans are motivated by the quest for honour and the avoidance of shame before one's peers. I.e., one is truly noble only if one is as one ought to be. When it comes to *guilt culture*, the dominant norm is the imperative saying what one is obligated to do ('Thou shalt'). For instance, one is righteous only if they follow the commandments of God. The consequences also differ accordingly. In shame cultures, the failure to live up to an honour code results in loss of face and ostracism, sometimes beyond redemption, whereas in guilt cultures remorse, repentance, and atonement remain as a potential solution.

Historic review. The distinction between shame cultures and guilt cultures was initially mentioned by the anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1946). In his terms, for instance, Homeric Greece and republican Rome were the prototypes of shame cultures, whereas ancient Israel was the prototype of guilt culture.

According to philosopher Peter Hacker (2017) and his historic analysis, heroic societies with a closed aristocratic warrior class are typically shame cultures. In shame cultures the standards of male behaviour are determined by the honour code of the ruling aristocracy and their military subordinates. This included prowess and valour in battle, hospitality to guests, exchange of munificent gifts with one's host, the zealous guarding of honour against slight or insult, and generosity in giving bounty to one's military retainers. To fall short in any of these dimensions is a reason

for shame. Self-respect is a function of membership in the honour group and of recognized compliance with its code of behaviour. Self-esteem is wholly dependent on public esteem, which is the evidence of individual worth. Hacker (2017) describes how one is dishonoured if one fails to live up to the code (“hero” in Homeric Greece; “chivalry” in medieval Europe; “bushido” in Shogunate Japan). Loss of honour implies loss of public esteem. Loss of public esteem implies loss of self-esteem. There is no moral space for individual conscience or private moral judgement that deviates from the code. The only remedy for dishonour in medieval Japan was for the samurai to commit seppuku. If a samurai’s leader died in battle and he failed to get himself killed too, he was fated to become a ronin, a masterless sword for hire. For to lose one’s status as a member of an honour group implied the loss of one’s very status as a person. One’s self-identity and self-respect were bound to one’s role and to its rights and duties. Similarly, in Viking society (Hacker, 2017), expulsion from an honour group as a consequence of dishonour meant that one became a *nothing* – a man without a name.

The decline and gradual disappearance of warrior aristocracies in the ancient world was co-ordinate with the emergence of a conception of individual identity. This new concept was no longer contingent on public esteem¹. The conception of what is honourable changed further with the collapse of the Greek city-states and the rise of empires. With the rise of Stoicism and the defensive psychological ‘retreat into the inner citadel’, the withdrawal into the private was legitimized. The possibility of a

¹ Despite the decline of military aristocracies, both pride and shame continued to be linked with honour in fourth-century Athens.

good and honourable life without becoming a warrior nor an active member of a ruling elite became possible (Hacker, 2017). According to Hacker (2017), the transformation of Roman society from a republican honour-based culture to a Christian guilt-based culture marked a significant shift in the moral emotional framework of Western civilization. Initially, Roman ideals of *virtus*, *dignitas*, and *auctoritas* emphasized battlefield valour and public service as routes to familial prestige and authority. However, with the institutionalization of professional armies and the rise of bureaucratic governance, the honour code began to erode. This decline coincided with the ascendancy of Christianity, which reoriented moral judgment inward, placing increased emphasis on guilt, particularly in relation to sexuality and bodily conduct. Through the influence of the Catholic Church, this shift gave rise to Christian chivalric codes, wherein shame and guilt coexisted in tension, mediated by the competing forces of secular and religious authority. Ultimately, this evolution led to the emergence of the autonomous moral agent, governed by internalized conscience rather than public esteem. Within this framework, shame became associated with failing to meet societal expectations, while guilt was linked to violations of internalized religious or moral codes.

Individualistic vs collectivistic cultures. For most people, adaptive emotions are those that fit the expectations of their culture, so that an emotion that is adaptive in one culture may be considered neutral or even maladaptive in another, meaning that there is no single “most adaptive” way of appraising and adjusting self to the situation.

Cultural effects on emotional experience can be seen in the fact that some emotions are expressed and observed more in specific cultures. Similarly, some emotion related terms exist in certain cultures (languages), whereas they are absent in

others. Nevertheless, these ‘unspecified’ emotions are arguably felt by people in all cultures despite being reported rarely, or not reported at all (Niiya et al., 2006). Furthermore, there happen to be situations where different cultures use the same linguistical emotional term but for different types of emotion. This indicates that in some sense our understanding, experience and expression of emotions are culturally bound. This could be considered as a benefit stemming from an evolutionary outcome. Otherwise, if we were able to feel all the emotional nuances of all of the cultures of the world, we might be maladapted to life in our own (based on choice or roots) culture. Finally, according to cross-cultural research (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Ho, Fu, & Ng, 2004), Western, individualistic cultures have a negative attitude towards shame, whereas Eastern, collectivistic societies value this emotion, and effectively use shaming techniques to motivate prosocial behaviour.

Role of shame and guilt differs in collectivist compared to individualistic cultures. In many collectivistic cultures, the differences in the attributions associated with shame and guilt appear less pronounced (Wong & Tsai, 2007). In the few instances when the distinction between shame and guilt has been made in collectivistic contexts, the basis of this distinction is also different from that of many individualistic, Western contexts. Whereas in individualistic contexts shame is associated with global and stable attributions (Brown & Weiner, 1984), in collectivistic contexts Wikan (1984) found that shame is associated with specific actions and temporary attributions. More specifically, in Chinese culture, people experience shame when a *situation specific* standard is violated. The reason is most likely Confucianism as the dominant philosophical tradition in many East Asian. This philosophy focuses on using shame rather as a method of learning and improvement from specific situations and relations (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). For this reason,

shame is more effective as a regulatory emotion in collectivistic cultures because it is associated with a code of ethics that varies by situation and relationship. However, when it comes to the individualistic cultures, guilt as an emotion that is associated with a general code of ethics (held by oneself and others) is considered to be more used as a regulatory emotion (Bedford and Hwang, 2003). Furthermore, in collectivistic cultures people are less divorced from their relationships with others, their contexts, or their actions. This means that orientation towards the internal self is less emphasised in collectivistic compared to the individualistic contexts (Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Consequently, the differences between shame and guilt in individualistic cultures, which largely rest on this distinction, may be less pronounced in these collectivistic cultures. Interestingly, compared to U.S. culture, Chinese culture has more elaborate models of shame and guilt. For instance, Li et al. (2004) found 83 shame-related terms in a Chinese dictionary, and their Chinese subjects were able to provide even more (113) terms and phrases that described shame-in total. Such an abundance of shame terms suggests that the Chinese conception of shame may be more complex than that of English-speaking cultures. These findings might suggest that shame is a "focal" emotion (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994) in many collectivistic contexts, or an emotion that is salient and commonly experienced. On the other side, some authors argue that shame in Chinese culture has been hypercognized, meaning that this emotion is overemphasized in Chinese language (Russell and Yik, 1996).

Cultural differences were reported in relation to consequences of shame and guilt. Western models of shame and guilt view shame as the "bad" and guilt as the "good" moral emotion, in part because of their different psychological, social, and physical consequences. In a cross-cultural study, Wallbott and Scherer (1995) asked

members of 37 different countries to describe episodes of shame and guilt. They found that shame caused less disruption in described episodes in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. As stated earlier, we believe this is because in cultures that promote interdependent selves the experience of shame is consistent with cultural norms. Furthermore, the view that shame may lead to more adaptive consequences in collectivistic contexts was confirmed in a cross-cultural study. Bagozzi, Verbeke, and Gavino (2003) found that although salespersons in the Netherlands and the Philippines experience shame when they have a painful experience that is threatening to the self. Feelings of shame led Dutch salespersons to take self-protective actions, such as disengaging from customers and devoting fewer mental resources to the immediate task at hand. In contrast, feelings of shame led Philippino salespersons to engage in more relationship building and to be more courteous to their customers.

Personality-related explanation. Lewis (1971) outlined the individual differences in human experience of shame and guilt. Furthermore, Lewis (1971, 1987b) hypothesized that individuals differ in relation to their affective style in relation to these two emotions (shame-proneness vs. guilt-proneness). A previously mentioned, shame, which focuses on the entire self, can be viewed as an affective state stemming from internal, global, and stable attributions; guilt, which focuses on specific behaviours, can be viewed as an affective state arising from internal, specific, and presumably less stable attributions. Studies show that proneness to guilt correlates positively with empathy, whereas proneness to shame either correlates negatively or not at all (Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Stuewig et al., 2010). Guilt-prone individuals are inclined to take responsibility for their transgressions and errors; when angry, they tend to manage their anger constructively, and they are disinclined toward aggression (Lutwak, et al., 2001; Paulhus et al., 2004; Stuewig et al., 2010; Tangney et al., 1996).

In contrast, proneness to shame is positively correlated with anger, hostility, and the propensity to blame others (Harper & Arias, 2004; Harper et al., 2005; Luyten et al., 2002; Paulhus et al., 2004).

Criticism of dispositional explanations. The explanation of guilt and shame from the perspective of dispositional characteristics suggests a passive position of the one who experiences it. Understanding that we experience shame or guilt because we have a certain personality or come from a certain culture potentially disarms the person of agency.

Criticism of cultural explanation. The differentiation of these two emotions within individual cultures varies from no difference, vague difference to clear difference. This shows that there is no uniform understanding of the differences between shame and guilt across cultures. Furthermore, nowadays in a more globalised world, there is a high level of mixing of shame and guilt cultures which makes it hard to pinpoint firstly what culture the person belongs to and secondly, how that culture interacts with other cultures the person has been exposed to. This further complicates our understanding of the experience of the emotions in question. For this reason, this explanation is limited as it does not offer understanding that is applicable in modern societies, moreover it might be considered rather obsolete. I argue that we need a model of guilt and shame that can be applied cross-culturally.

Criticism of personality-related explanation. Like any dispositional explanation, the issue is that it is very limited as it explains only the proneness (likelihood) to feel one or the other emotion but does not explain how they interact with the most common situational factors. Hence, this does not explain the difference between the emotions or the dynamics in which they arise.

Explanation based on the type of transgression

Public vs Private. Early research by anthropologists Benedict (1947) and Mead (1937) considered the position that guilt and shame have different function based on the behaviour they sanction. Shame sanctions are focused more on addressing what is socially unacceptable, whereas guilt is focused more on sanctioning the failures towards the private norms. This idea was further supported by several psychologists (Ausubel, 1955; Crozier, 1998; Lewis, 1971) and philosophers (Harre', 1990; Wollheim, 1999). They provided conceptual grounds based on patients' narratives, asserting that the focal point of shame is other people's judgement and criticisms. This was found to be an important role in relation of shame (but not guilt) to social regulation and cohesion (Scheff, 1988). In line with these claims, significant number psychologists consider shame representing the experience of being exposed to a real, or imagined, rejecting audience. Furthermore, they support the position that shame is accompanied by the concern for one's damaged image and by self-devaluation and that this results in a tendency to hide or disappear (Fontaine et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2002). Shame is typically triggered by public transgressions and the anticipation or perception of others' negative judgments, whereas guilt tends to be a more private emotional response stemming from one's own internal negative self-assessment (Benedict, 1946; Combs et al., 2010; Wallbott & Scherer, 1995). Shame is described as an experience of feeling visible and profoundly diminished (Darwin, 1872/1965; Kaufman, 1996; Lewis, 2008). Empirical findings further support this notion, indicating that public revelation of one's misdeeds tends to be more strongly associated with shame than with guilt (Smith et al., 2002).

Criticism of the Public vs Private transgression explanation. The distinction between shame and guilt based on the public versus private dimension has been

increasingly challenged, both conceptually and through empirical investigation. Creighton (1990), argued that the internal versus external framework is insufficient for differentiating guilt from shame, as both emotions become internalized over the course of psychological development. Empirical studies also support this view, showing that shame and guilt may arise in either public or private contexts (Tangney et al., 1996). Moreover, some researchers dispute the association between shame and public condemnation. In everyday scenarios, individuals may fear others' disapproval without necessarily experiencing shame. For instance, a son who fails to meet parental expectations might fear disappointing or being punished by them without feeling ashamed (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2018). Conversely, one may experience shame despite being certain that their transgression will remain undiscovered, indicating that even an imagined audience is not essential for the experience of shame (Deonna et al., 2012). While the presence of a real or imagined audience often accompanies shame, it is not a necessary component of the emotion. Lastly, emphasizing the public nature of shame and the private nature of guilt may obscure a crucial element namely, the presence of the person who has been wronged. Some theorists argue that shame can occur without negative self-evaluation, instead arising from external judgment or fear of social disapproval (Ausubel, 1955; Calhoun, 2004; Wollheim, 1999). In this case, shame highly overlaps with what is known as an emotion of embarrassment. This means that both emotions are similar in terms of imagined target audience - the victim.

Proscriptive vs Prescriptive. Based on this explanation, which focuses on the self-regulatory perspective, shame and guilt are related to proscriptive and prescriptive regulation, respectively, and arise from different interpretations of one's own moral failures (Sheikh & Janoff-Bulman, 2010). We experience guilt when we

interpret our transgression using *prescriptive* regulation and focus on positive end-states and moral “shoulds” - we failed to be the moral person we ought to be. Shame, in contrast, is felt when we interpret our transgression using *proscriptive* regulation and focus on negative end-states and moral “should nots” - we became the immoral person we ought not to be. Moreover, based on this explanation, the moral asymmetry between proscriptive and prescriptive regulation is reflected in the different experiences of shame and guilt. Just as proscriptive violations elicit greater distress and disapproval from others, so too shame is felt as more distressing than guilt.

Criticism of the Proscriptive vs. Prescriptive transgression explanation. There is a lack of evidence for a clear delineation of the two emotions based on this explanation. However, if analysed in real life situations, as Miceli & Castelfranchi (2018) stated: “a proscriptive violation (lying) may elicit guilt, and a prescriptive violation (not reciprocating a favour) may elicit shame.” This opposes this explanation and indicates that differentiation between shame and guilt based on moral self-regulation is not a viable solution.

Cognitive Appraisal Theory

It is an overwhelming opinion that there is a direct connection between cognition and emotion, however, the cognitive research yet needs to come up with a uniform model of cognitive explanation of emotions. The most prominent cognitive theory is the appraisal theory. The basic assumption is that before and in the process of experiencing a certain emotion, we make certain cognitive appraisals (assessments) that lead towards elicitation of one specific emotion (Roseman & Smith, 2001). Appraisal theories posit that an individual's assessment of their circumstances (whether actual, recalled, or imagined) plays a central role in both initiating and distinguishing emotional responses. From an evolutionary standpoint, this evaluative

process serves adaptive purposes, prompting organisms to respond effectively to their environment. While many non-human animals rely on automatic, pre-programmed behavioural responses to specific stimuli, often referred to as fixed action patterns (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003), humans exhibit a more adaptable system involving action tendencies that allow for flexible behavioural responses (Frijda, 1986). Emotions in humans facilitate a cognitive separation between perception and reaction, enabling reflective reconsideration before acting (Scherer, 1984). For instance, although fear may initially evoke the urge to flee, an individual might quickly assess that confrontation could deter the threat (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). This illustrates the dual flexibility emotions offer, both in interpreting events and in determining appropriate reactions. This theoretical framework suggests that the evolution of emotions in humans is closely tied to the development of the cerebral cortex, which allows for complex situation analysis and informed behavioural choices (Hebb, 1949). Consequently, appraisal theorists view emotions as inherently adaptive phenomena composed of structured patterns of appraisal and their corresponding neural and physiological processes (Ellsworth, 1994; Roseman & Smith, 2001; Scherer, 2001). Ellsworth & Scherer (2003) provide a more detailed explanation of the function of emotions stating that emotions developed through evolution to (1) evaluate events, (2) set priorities, (3) motivate appropriate behaviour, (4) communicate intentions, and (5) provide flexibility in interpretation and response. These theories attempt to specify the features of situations that are most important for well-being and thus most important to be detected by the appraisals that differentiate emotional experience.

The theorists differ somewhat on the cognitive structure of emotions but the similarities among them are more striking than the differences. There is broad consensus among theorists that the core dimensions of appraisal should encompass

factors such as novelty, inherent pleasantness, certainty or predictability, relevance to one's goals, attribution of agency, coping capacity, and congruence with personal or societal norms (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). Different perspectives on cognitive underpinning of emotions gave birth to specific foci of several theorists. For instance, Weiner (1982) in this research on Attribution theory focuses on causation and agency as important factors of our processing of emotional experience. Another specific perspective includes a superordinate (universal) goal or a core-relational theme (Smith & Lazarus, 1993). Below I expand on both attribution and core-relation theme perspectives of appraisal theory.

Lazarus' Appraisal theory. Appraisal theory is currently the most applied systematic attempt to understand the sources and mechanism of emotions. Different emotions depend on people categorizing the circumstances corresponding to benefit or harm into appraisals (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus, 1970, Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In my research I have decided to refer to Lazarus' appraisal theory (1991) due to the fact that he is the only known researcher who tried to differentiate shame and guilt on the basis of appraisals (see also Smith & Lazarus, 1991). According to this theory, Primary appraisal evaluates whether and how the encounter is relevant to one's well-being and their interest in the outcomes of an experience of a certain event. It is primary because without a stake it is a pre-requirement of an emotional experience. The two primary appraisal components are motivational relevance and motivational congruence (or incongruence). *Motivational relevance* is an evaluation of the extent to which the experience relates to issues the person cares about (Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1987). Motivational relevance relates to the level of importance the situation holds for to the person, it is a requirement for any emotion to be elicited (Smith & Lazarus, 1991) and it determines the intensity of the emotional

reaction. *Motivational congruence* (also called “goal conduciveness”) concerns whether the encounter is assessed as beneficial or harmful (in present or future), which further determines whether the resulting emotion will be positive or negative, respectively (Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984). Furthermore, it is a necessary appraisal component for the elicitation of negative emotions (Smith & Lazarus, 1991).

Secondary appraisal evaluates the person's resources and options for coping with the encounter and it consists of four components. *Accountability* provides direction and focus to the emotional response and the coping efforts that should follow.

Accountability determines who is to receive the credit (if congruent) or the blame (if incongruent) for the outcome of the encounter. For instance, focusing on negative emotions, blame determines whether the elicited emotion will be anger (other-accountability) or guilt/shame (self-accountability). The way to reduce the discrepancy between the circumstances and desired outcome is embodied in the two components of coping (cf. Folkman & Lazarus, 1988; Smith & Lazarus, 1990).

Problem-Focused Coping Potential (PFCP) assesses one's ability to directly bring or keep the situation in line with the own desires and goals. *Emotion-Focused Coping Potential* (EFCP) assesses one's ability to psychologically adjust to the situation if it turns out the opposite of what one was hoping for. For instance, this appraisal component should differentiate between one's reaction with calmness or anxiety.

Finally, *Future expectancy* relates to our thoughts on what will happen, that is whether everything will work out favourably or not, regardless of the effectiveness of coping mechanism (Lazarus, 1991).

Comparison and criticism of Appraisal theory. When it comes to emotional relevance, both shame and guilt are elicited in situations when they feel that the victim is someone who they care about (relevance). For both shame and guilt, there

needs to be a discrepancy between what transgressors feels and would love to feel in the current situation (incongruence). It might be an intuitive expectation to see shame and guilt differentiated in psychological research based on some of the second appraisal components. However, unfortunately, to my knowledge, this type of research has not been done yet.

Smith and Kirby (2009) assert that, within the framework of appraisal theory, emotions and their constituent elements arise from and are distinguished by the cognitive evaluation of environmental stimuli. The appraisals evaluate the extent to which the stimulus matches with goals and expectations, how easy it is to control, and whether it was caused by themselves, others or impersonal circumstances. However, if appraisal theory is about expectations as well, the question is why the secondary appraisal is not considered important for distinction between shame and guilt. I conclude that this cognitive theory does not provide a clear explanation on what the difference between guilt and shame is. Instead, Lazarus (1991) developed a different explanation of overarching themes that are focal points of each emotion core relational theme.

Cognitive Core Relational Theme

Lazarus (2001) doubts that a sequential analysis of information processing describes accurately how emotions are experienced in real life. Based on Lazarus (2001) it is best to combine partial information we have on specific emotion into a meaning-centred whole which is what characterizes to be cognitive-motivational-relational cause of the emotion. A key proposition of this cognitive-relational theory of emotions is that, through the symbiotic interaction of particular harms and benefits, appraisals identify a "core relational theme" which results in a distinct emotion (Lazarus & Smith, 1988). By examining the process of appraising at a higher level of

abstraction than just a listing of separate, partial meanings, we can more closely distinguish different types of emotions. According to Lazarus, this would help us to explain why the arousal of an emotion can be so rapid that it seems instantaneous even under highly complex life conditions. The appraisal must consider diverse kinds of information from both the environmental display and the person's goals, beliefs, and resources.

There is, incidentally, no contradiction between the two levels of analysis - namely, the separate appraisal components and the core relational themes. The same ideas are dealt with at two different levels of abstraction, either as separate partial meanings or as combined relational meanings. The core relational themes are prototypes, which are especially useful in a narrative approach to the study of the emotions. In effect, emotions constitute dramatic stories about particular classes of struggles to survive and flourish under diverse life conditions. To illustrate, the core relational theme for anger is "other-blame", which is defined by combining primary appraisals of motivational relevance and motivational incongruence with a secondary appraisal of other-accountability. Both the primary appraisal components, and other-accountability are necessary for an appraisal of other-blame, because accountability does not translate to blame in the absence of motivational incongruence. If one's circumstances are appraised as beneficial (that is motivationally relevant and motivationally congruent) an appraisal of other-accountability will contribute to a core relational theme of "other-credit" and a very different affective state, such as gratitude, will result (Smith, 1991). According to Lazarus (1991), the core relational theme for fear/anxiety is "danger" or "threat"-the perception that one will not be able to psychologically adjust to a harm should it occur. In this theme, with its focus on the inability to adjust to potential harm, the primary appraisals of motivational relevance

and motivational incongruence are combined with secondary appraisals of low emotion-focused coping potential. In contrast, for sadness the core relational theme is one of irrevocable loss or helplessness about loss, which emphasises the inability to restore the loss or eliminate the harm. This theme is defined by combining secondary appraisals of low problem-focused coping potential and negative future expectations with primary appraisals of motivational relevance and motivational incongruence. There is an intimate relationship between core relational themes and the patterns of appraisal that are designed to discriminate among the individual emotions. Appraisal patterns provide the detailed evaluative decisions that sum up to each core relational theme, which captures the essence of the relationship (Lazarus, 1991).

Self-blame. More relevant to my thesis, the main core-relational theme producing guilt is "self-blame" (Smith & Lazarus, 1991). This theme is also defined by combining primary appraisals of motivational relevance and motivational incongruence with self-accountability.

Considering that guilt and shame are intimately related, they are more difficult to observe as separate phenomena (Blum, 2008; Kubany & Watson, 2003; Silfver, 2007). Furthermore, since they are both self-conscious emotions, this would imply that both emotions involve self-blame (Tangney & Salovey, 1999). However, there is no clear explanation on what the core-relational theme for shame is based on. Smith & Lazarus (1991), in their publication analyse and provide an explanation only for a few emotions which does include guilt but does not include shame. This means that there is no clear way of understanding what the difference between these two emotions would be according to core-relational theme. For this reason, it may be proposed that naming self-blame as a core-relational theme of guilt without providing a core relational theme for shame is not a sufficient explanation of how and why these

emotions differ. However, Lazarus later described how shame and guilt differing based on ego-involvement.

Ego-involvement. In his book, Lazarus (1991) has included the third component of the primary appraisal: ego-involvement. Ego-involvement is relatable to the kind of goal the person is focused on (goal content) and is supposed to help to distinguish among similar emotions, for instance guilt, and shame. More specifically, Lazarus based his concept of ego-involvement on Erikson's (1950,1963) concept of ego-identity. Ego-identity represents the "person-in-the-world", which includes roles, relationships, and functions in society. In his words, "Ego-involvement refer to commitments, which might be thought of as goals that fall within the rubric of what we usually mean by ego-identity" (Lazarus, 1991, p. 102). Lazarus listed six types of ego-involvement that are linked to specific emotions: self- and social-esteem (anger and pride); *moral values* (guilt); *ego-ideals* (shame); meanings and ideas (anxiety); other persons and their well-being (all emotions); and life goals (all emotions). Ego-identity is embedded in all emotions, in ways that is contingent on the type of ego-involvement that is engaged by a transaction.

According to Lazarus, when applied to emotions in question, it is violation of a moral value one is sworn to uphold that elicits guilt, whereas a failure to live up to one's ego-ideals elicits shame. Applying this to the sequence of evaluation (see figure 1), the primary appraisal components need to be present for both emotions to be elicited. This means that if there is goal relevance, then any emotion is possible, including guilt and shame. Similarly, if there is goal incongruence, only negative emotions are possible, including guilt and shame. From this point, further evaluation of the ego-involvement would distinguish what group of emotions might be elicited. If ego-involvement is to manage a moral transgression, emotions that might get

elicited are anger, anxiety, disgust and guilt. On the other hand, if ego-involvement is to manage a failure to live up to an ego-ideal, emotions that might get elicited are anger, anxiety, disgust and shame. As presented, based on this theory, ego-involvement divides negative emotions to two groupings, guilt is grouped in one and shame in another. Shame and guilt get further differentiated from their respective groups of emotions if the transgressor blames themselves. At this point, shame and

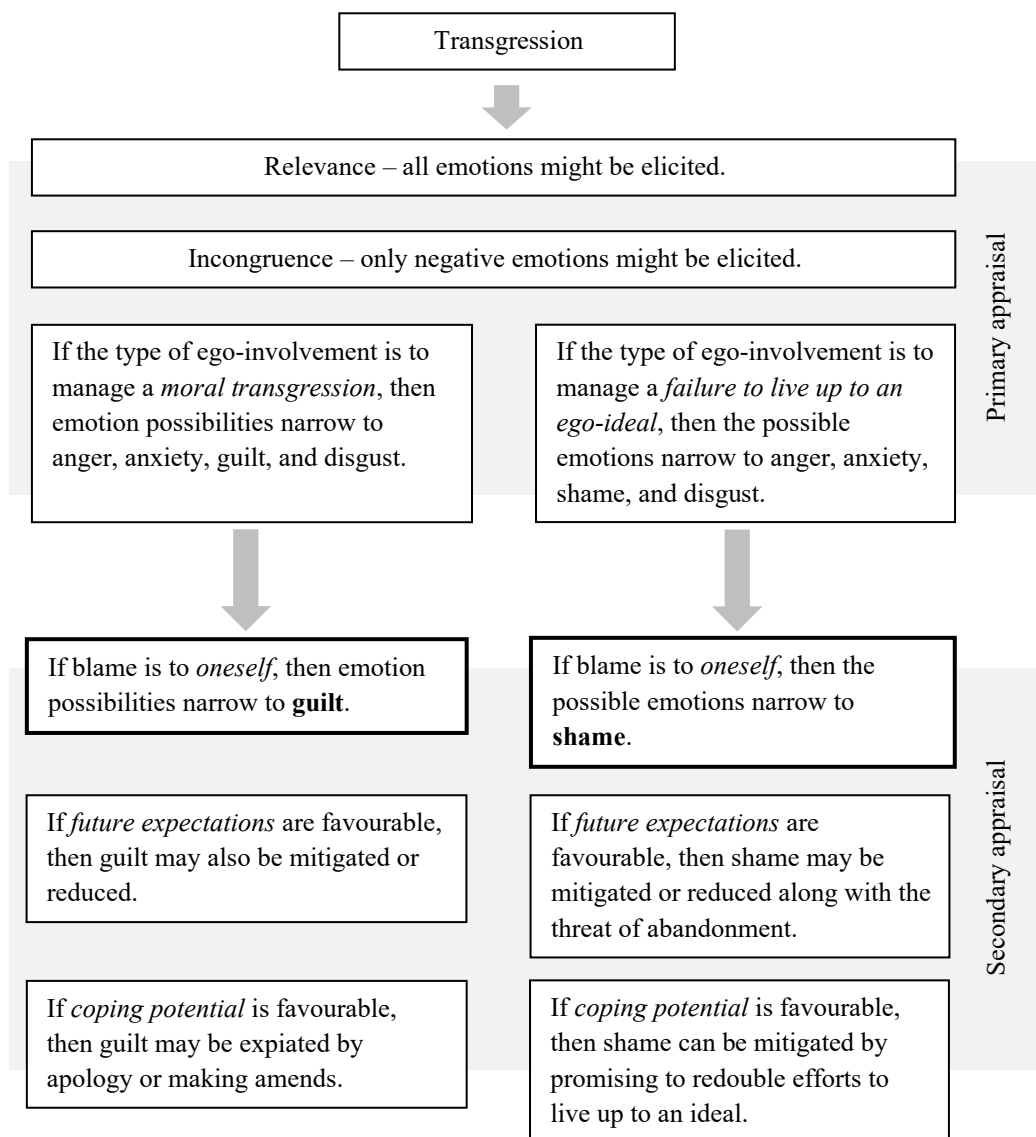


Figure 1: Sequence of evaluations in differentiation between shame and guilt according to proposed model of appraisals by Lazarus (1991).

guilt are differentiated and the further evaluation of the situation is concerned with the maintenance and coping.

According to Lazarus' explanation, transgressing a moral imperative, that is doing or wanting to do something we regard as morally reprehensible would elicit guilt. According to his claim, there does not need to be any actual transgression against a physically present person, since even a fantasized sin can produce guilt. Lazarus claims guilt is a result of transgression of a moral imperative that can be characterised: as a reaction to impulses (hostile and sexual impulses in childhood) repressed due to fear of punishment and loss of parental love (psychoanalytic view); as an evolved concern based on prosocial feelings and empathy towards others (Hoffman, 1982a); and as cognitive understanding when the children learn social significance of violations of standards of conduct (Wicklund, 1975). On the other hand, according to Lazarus (1991) shame is generated by a failure to live up to an ego-ideal. People whose opinion is of great importance to us, such as a parent or carer, are the source of the demanding ego-ideal (Freud, 1914). Shame is elicited when we feel disgraced or humiliated in their eyes because we failed to uphold our internalized version of their expectations.

Criticism of the ego-involvement explanation. Ego-involvement defines the difference between the two emotions on the basis of moral focus. While one cannot ignore the importance of this factor, there are three important flaws. First, the variable in question is not measurable, or is at best vague. It is hard to imagine an operationalised measure that would meet the rigour of construct validity. There is a lot of confusion in the understanding of these two concepts leading to different interpretations of the same transgression. Even more, when a transgression defies both the ego-ideal and moral imperative, the question of whether this elicits shame or guilt

remains unanswered. Second flaw is the one Lazarus himself pointed out in his book after defining the ego-involvement differentiation between guilt and shame (Lazarus, 1991, p. 241): “The shamed person may see the disapproving image of a mother, father, or someone else, and this could be an inaccurate image or a distortion of how these persons might actually have reacted.” According to this, there is no clear evidence that shame draws from the expectation of the exact disapproving reaction by a person (or people) of importance to us, since we might be wrong in our interpretation of these expectations. This indicates an important role of our interpretation, which relies heavily on our moral values. It puts to question how much, or whether at all, the expectations of people of importance to us influence elicitation of shame, and how much of it is our moral values reflected in our interpretations of those expectations. This potentially leads back to the main source of elicitation of emotion of guilt (moral imperative) according to this explanation (Lazarus, 1991), and sets us back away from clear differentiation. Finally, this explanation, while including the social (real or imagined) context of people of importance, does not consider the most important element of the process: the victim.

Attribution theory

While appraisals are concerned with evaluating the significance of what’s happened, attributions relate to individuals’ attempts to explain the occurrence of events (Anderson et al., 1996). For instance, if two football players underperform in the semi-final of the World Cup, they might appraise the loss quite differently (“I’ve done well to get the team this far” or “I’ve let my teammates down”). According to theoretical accounts (H. B. Lewis, 1971, p. 30; M. Lewis, 2000; Tangney & Dearing, 2002), individuals experience guilt when they focus on negative aspects of their behaviour (the thing done or undone) but they experience shame when they focus on

negative aspects of themselves (the self who did or did not do it). Both shame and guilt imply internal attributions. According to Tracy and Robins (2006), shame arises when individuals attribute failure to enduring and uncontrollable aspects of the self, whereas guilt is experienced when responsibility is assigned to specific actions that are perceived as changeable and within one's control (p. 1349). Supporting this distinction, studies have shown (Brown & Weiner, 1984; Covington & Omelich, 1981; Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984) that individuals who blame poor performances on ability (an internal, stable, uncontrollable factor) are more likely to feel shame (for example "I'm a dumb person"), whereas those who blame poor performance on effort (an internal, unstable, controllable factor) are more likely to feel guilt ("I didn't try hard enough"). In addition, Niedenthal et al. (1994) found that counterfactual statements (what is not but could have been) about changing a stable, global aspect of the self-concept lead to greater shame and less guilt than do counterfactuals changing a specific behaviour.

Criticism of Attribution theory. The main issue with differentiation of shame and guilt according to the Attribution theory concerns the absence of the role of the victim and their forgiveness. While the generalisable nature of the theoretical framework needs to be appreciated, the absence of its application to the differentiation of shame and guilt needs to be addressed. My opinion that the focus should be more turned to the perception of what comes and should be done next. The transgression could be related to stable or unstable; effort or ability related limitations, however, the emotion will not be elicited based on that but on our perception of whether we can resolve the situation. For instance, the moment when we commit a transgression, our relationship with the victim is damaged, regardless of the existence and restorability of material damage. The relationship that needs to be mended, requires a more

delicate approach and my belief is that the main differentiation between shame and guilt lies in transgressor's understanding whether this can be done. The mend of the relationship being nothing else but granted forgiveness.

Motivational explanation – Action Tendencies

In recent years, several theorists have proposed that emotions also differ in ways other than expression, physiology, and phenomenology. Each basic emotion corresponds to a specific pattern of adaptive behaviour (Plutchik, 1962, 1980). Arnold (1960) defined emotion as “felt action tendency” (action readiness) and discussed which tendencies might be distinctive for the more elementary emotions. In psychological studies (Frijda, 1987; Frijda et al., 1989) researchers showed how different emotions are associated with different patterns of response. Specifically, Frijda and colleagues (1989), among other findings, reported that both fear and anger are characterized by readiness for aversion; however they differentiate in their second characterisation: fear – protection, and anger - going against an obstacle. Frijda (1986) went even further and delineated action tendencies, or other forms of action readiness, for 17 emotion states.

Demonstration of a relationship between appraisal structures, action readiness modes and emotions have important theoretical implications. Frijda (1986) posits that variations in appraisal patterns, shaped by how individuals interpret and evaluate events, can give rise to distinct modes of action readiness. This conception may be considered to receive support if it can be shown that both appraisal structures and action readiness modes are systematically related to the use of emotion labels, and thereby to one another. Frijda posits that the evaluative process results in a conceptualization of the situation that includes the potential actions available and the urgency with which a response must be enacted. This cognitive assessment can then

trigger physiological changes that prepare the individual for action and form tendencies to respond to anticipated developments. The emotional process unfolds in stages, each guided by cognitive mechanisms operating independently of emotion itself. Rather than culminating in a fixed emotional outcome, the process is dynamic, characterized by continual feedback and revision, leading to a diverse range of emotional experiences. Frijda's view aligns with other cognitive appraisal theories, which similarly frame emotions as outcomes of ongoing evaluative processes rather than responses to discrete stimuli. Central to these models is the idea that certain features of the emotion-eliciting situation, assessed along various dimensions, including goal compatibility, contribute to the emergence of specific emotions. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that shame and guilt elicit distinctly different motivational patterns, often referred to as "action tendencies" (Ketelaar & Au, 2003; Lewis, 1971; Lindsay-Hartz, 1984; Tangney, 1993; Wallbott & Scherer, 1995). Shame is typically associated with behaviours aimed at avoiding or escaping the source of distress, such as concealment or denial. In contrast, guilt tends to provoke reparative actions, including admitting wrongdoing, offering apologies, and attempting to rectify the consequences of one's behaviour. Collectively, the research indicates that guilt fosters adaptive and constructive responses, while shame is more likely to lead to defensive behaviours and social withdrawal.

Criticism of motivational explanation - action tendencies. First criticism of differentiation between shame and guilt based on action tendencies (readiness) relates to the lack of explanation of the cause. The explanation does not offer any explanation on why in certain occasions we have a more pro-solution rather than pro-avoidance approach. More importantly, I think that this explanation is deeply flawed as it does not accurately define the urge (action tendency) and, furthermore is not meticulous

enough in reconstructing the emotional experience. In my opinion, the transgressor's action tendency after the transgression is to mend the relationship, regardless of other factors. However, it is due to other factors that the coping mechanisms take over and get the transgressor to focus their behavioural tendency at repair (guilt) or avoidance (shame). Hence, I argue that the main difference is not in the initial but subsequent motivation after other factors are taken into account.

Behavioural explanation

Differentiating emotions based on behaviour that follows. There is a wide acceptance (Berkowitz, 1989; Frijda, 1986; Izard & Ackerman, 2000; Loewenstein et al., 2001) of an idea that one of the main purposes of emotion is to cause behaviour. For this reason, much of the research on differences between emotions is based on their involvement with the subsequent, resulting behaviour. Guilt has been found to lead to repair behaviours, such as apologizing, amending, and undoing; whereas shame appears to favour withdrawal and escape behaviours, as well as hostile and self-defensive reactions (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Drawing on this body of evidence, shame is frequently conceptualized as a maladaptive and socially disruptive emotion, whereas guilt is typically viewed as morally constructive and conducive to prosocial behaviour (Tangney et al., 2007). Findings of empirical research indicate that recollections of guilt-inducing events motivate individuals to engage in reparative behaviour directed toward those they have harmed (Regan, 1971; Wallace & Sadalla, 1966). For example, individuals experiencing guilt are more likely to offer compensation or restore equity, even at personal cost (Cryder et al., 2012; Penner et al., 2005), and tend to exhibit increased cooperation in repeated social exchange scenarios (Ketelaar & Au, 2003). Moreover, when guilt and shame are directly compared, findings consistently show that they evoke distinct behavioural responses.

Guilt tends to elicit reparative actions such as apologizing, confessing, and demonstrating kindness, particularly toward close relationship partners (Baumeister et al., 1994). In contrast, shame more often provokes avoidance behaviours, including withdrawal, denial, and escape from the shame-related context (Hoffman, 1982; Lewis, 1971; Lindsay-Hartz, 1984; McGraw, 1987; Niedenthal et al., 1994; Tangney, 1991, 1993; Tangney et al., 1996; Tangney et al., 1992; Wicker et al., 1983; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney et al., 2007). Supporting this differentiation, de Hooge et al. (2007) found that guilt, but not shame, significantly enhanced cooperation in a social dilemma task.

Criticism of differentiating emotions based on behaviour that follows. The position that emotions cause behaviour was criticised on the basis that there is not enough of emotions out there to cause all behaviours (Baumeister et al., 2007; Schwarz & Clore, 1996). This indicates that the identified emotions could lead to different behaviours, depending on the other, contextual (situational) factors. Furthermore, some behaviours could result from multiple different emotions. For instance, risk taking could be the outcome of both happiness and sadness. This indicates that behaviours caused by the emotions are not a firm ground for distinguishing emotions. Another position denying differentiation according to the behaviour is that the emotions are not elicited fast enough to direct the behavioural reactions in situations when reaction needs to be quick. Even when basic emotions are taken into account, it would take a long time for the person to fully experience the physiological arousal, to understand it as fear (emotion) and then to get to the understanding that something ought to be done (behaviour). I argue that behaviours that follow an incongruent event are better represented as a knee jerk reaction of a specific brain pathway, with no or minimal support of emotion.

Differentiating emotions based on behaviour that precedes. Number of authors provide an opposing perspective, arguing that the behaviour that precedes elicits a specific type of emotion (Dewey, 1894). This claim is based on the assumption that in most situations people are limited with time and must react immediately, before experiencing the emotion, especially when found in a specific social context. Emotion would then follow, based on the behaviour that was carried out.

Criticism of differentiating emotions based on behaviour that precedes. While it is true that in praxis we sometime react before feeling or thinking about it, this does not indicate that the behaviour we carried out will elicit a specific emotion. For example, in situations when someone else causes a damage, we might react positively and proactively by trying to minimize the caused damage (reaction), and it is only after that we might express a specific negative emotion, for instance anger. This example shows that there might be a discrepancy between the emotion which blames another person (anger), and a behaviour which is proactive (minimising the damage). For these reasons, we cannot argue that the behaviour elicits the emotion, moreover that behaviour can distinguish guilt from shame.

Overall criticism. With shame and guilt, it is hard to distinguish the two emotions based on behaviour that precedes or succeeds. After the transgression, one could automatically carry out a behaviour without feeling an emotion. Furthermore, one could feel one of the two emotions without initiating any emotional experience. Emotion nor behaviour necessarily follow immediately after the transgression. Still, as I previously established, with shame and guilt, there is a link between a desire to carry out a specific behaviour and emotion. In shame withdrawal, in guilt behaviours that repair the damage. This means that, when transgressor carries out one or the other

behaviour linked to shame or guilt, one might say that they felt shame or guilt. This indicates that we could potentially use the behavioural outcomes to retrospectively distinguish what emotion a transgressor was feeling before they carried out a certain behaviour. This, however, does not provide any information on what has caused the emotion and why in a similar situation we might feel guilt on one, and shame on another day.

Clinical differentiation

Helen Block Lewis is among the few psychologists who have proposed a comprehensive theoretical framework to differentiate the roles of shame and guilt in psychopathology (1971). According to her model, individuals who are predisposed to shame are more susceptible to emotional disorders, particularly depression, while those inclined toward guilt are more vulnerable to cognitive disorders such as paranoia and obsessive-compulsive tendencies. Guilt has been linked to more adaptive stress-coping strategies, whereas shame is associated with less effective, often maladaptive, coping mechanisms (Tangney, 1993). Lewis's suggests that cognitive style, *field dependence* versus *field independence*, shapes the functioning of the superego and consequently influences whether an individual is more prone to shame or guilt. Field-dependent individuals, characterized by a more global and undifferentiated sense of self, are especially susceptible to the equally global and undifferentiated nature of shame, predisposing them to depression. Conversely, field-independent individuals, who possess a more clearly defined self-concept, are more likely to experience guilt, an emotion that distinguishes between self and behaviour, and are thus at increased risk for symptoms related to obsessive-compulsive and paranoid ideation. Lewis's conceptualization parallels more contemporary attributional theories of depression, such as those proposed by Abramson and

colleagues (1978), and Beck (1983), which emphasize the role of cognitive attributions in emotional disorders. Broadly speaking, distinguishing between shame and guilt holds significant value for both emotion research and clinical applications. Understanding the differential psychological outcomes associated with these emotions can shed light on their connection to phenomena such as empathy, narcissism, self-destructive behaviours, and moral decision-making. A robust body of research links shame-proneness to a variety of psychological problems, including low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse (Crossley & Rockett, 2005; Feiring et al., 2002; Ferguson et al., 1999; Henderson & Zimbardo, 2001; Leskela et al., 2002; Sanftner et al., 1995). These associations appear consistent across various methodologies, age groups, and populations. In contrast, guilt shows little to no correlation with psychological dysfunction (Bybee et al., 1996; Gramzow & Tangney, 1992; Leskela et al., 2002; Quiles & Bybee, 1997; Tangney, 1999). Furthermore, it was found that psychological issues related to guilt tend to emerge when individuals develop an inflated or distorted sense of personal responsibility (Tangney & Dearing, 2002b; Zahn-Waxler & Robinson, 1995).

Criticism of the clinical explanation. There remains a lack of consensus in the empirical literature regarding the specific symptoms, underlying causes, and theoretical explanations of shame and guilt within clinical contexts. These two emotional constructs are often not clearly distinguished in diagnostic frameworks and are frequently reported together as overlapping features in certain psychological disorders (DSM-V). One contributing factor to this ambiguity is the limited availability of empirical studies, which is partially due to challenges in accurately measuring these emotions. As a consequence, early assessment scales for guilt, such

as those developed by Buss and Durkee (1957) and Mosher (1966), did not differentiate between shame and guilt.

Other differences

There are other factors that might detect a difference between shame and guilt, mainly stemming from these emotions being treated differently and used for different purposes. One that stands out is the fact that apart from being considered an emotion, guilt is also used as a legal concept with linked to specific consequences (punishments), whereas shame is linked to situations where specific type of punishment is not determined. Maybe guilt for this reason has been linked with a situation where we know that we have to do something about the transgression (to repair the damage, for instance), and shame relates more to the situation which does not need to be resolved. Usage of shame in upbringing, while contingent on specific culture, has been predominantly used in employment of societal norms in inhibition of reckless behaviours. It is rarely that we would hear parents scolding us about guilt, whereas hearing “Shame on you” is one of the sentences that most of the children heard during their upbringing at least once.

Conclusion – Chapter 1

Guilt and shame are both emotions that are elicited from situations in which the transgressor faces the consequences of their actions. Both emotions differ from basic emotions which are associated with distinct facial and physiological features (movements).

In this chapter, I outlined similarities of shame and guilt based on psychological research. Both emotions are considered self-conscious since they both require the capacity from the transgressor to form stable self-representations as well as to consciously self-reflect. Both emotions are negative since they elicit experience of

negative valence which leads to desire to stop this experience. Connection to morality is more complex due to the complexity of the concept of morality but also due to the different interpretations of the two emotions. However, it is clear that both emotions have an effect on moral decisions of the transgressor and hence the emotions are both considered an important element of the cohesion of social groups. Knowing that presence of other people (social context) affects the process of elicitation and expression of both, both shame and guilt are considered Social emotions. Finally, there is a similarity that hinders the psychological research, and it is in relation to definition, measure and application of the two emotions. This indicates that, unfortunately, operationalisation of shame and guilt is very similar and thus further justifies the current research that leads to clear differentiation of these two emotions.

I outlined the differentiation of the two emotions in relation to the dispositional characteristics such as personality and culture. Whether a person is *shame-* or *guilt-prone* and whether the person comes from the individualist or collectivist culture, respectively. However, this only indicates the increase/decrease of experiencing one or the other emotion in the same setting but does not explain the reason why and how they get elicited assuming that both emotions are experienced by all people regardless of their personality or cultural background.

Explanation based on self-reflection states that shame is a negative reflection on the self, whereas guilt is a negative reflection the object of the transgression. However, it is questionable whether there is a distinct separate sense of the focus on the object and self when experiencing shame or guilt. When having a thought resembling of the sentence “I did a bad thing”, one takes into account both the self and the object of the transgression, and both the transgression needs to exist (did) and

the responsibility has to be assigned to us (I) need to be present for both shame and guilt to be elicited.

Differentiation according to the type of transgression: Public vs Private is problematic since empirical research has indeed shown that both emotions can be experienced either publicly or privately. Also, this differentiation takes the focus of the most important element and that is the person (the victim) that is transgressed against. Instead, it can be argued that the focus is on perception and reaction of the victim. There is a lack of evidence for a clear delineation of the two emotions based on prescriptive (guilt) vs proscriptive (shame) violation of moral standards as well. This explanation does not explain common real life situations such as lying (proscriptive) eliciting guilt, and not reciprocating a favour (prescriptive) eliciting shame.

The basic explanation of Cognitive explanation (Appraisal Theory) does not offer a clear distinction between shame and guilt. My criticism is based on the missed opportunity to explain the difference between the two emotions using the secondary appraisal components. Another, more specific cognitive explanation require the core-relational theme of self-blame to be present in order for the emotion of guilt to be elicited. However, it does not explain how this differs from emotion of shame. Furthermore, the ego-involvement explanation lacks clarity related to the construct validity, that is ego-ideal and superego are very similar concepts. The last differentiation described, based on Attribution theory, in my opinion does not clearly focus on the most important element of the resolution - forgiveness.

Attempts to distinguish between shame and guilt based on preceding or subsequent behaviours have proven to be of limited practical utility. First, not all behaviours are driven by discrete emotional states, and there are insufficient types of

emotions to account for the full range of human behaviours. Second, a single behaviour may emerge from multiple emotional experiences, making attribution problematic. Third, individuals may engage in certain behaviours reflexively or automatically, without the involvement of conscious emotional processing. Collectively, these observations indicate that behavioural cues alone are inadequate for identifying the underlying emotional experience or its cause.

Finally, research on psychopathological consequences of shame and guilt is still in its infancy. Some separate links between one of the two emotions with disorders exist, however, they are usually of limited impact and/or considered as a moderating factor.

Chapter 2: Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (PPF)

For most of the time, in psychological literature guilt and shame terms were used interchangeably. After Lewis' publication (1971), psychologists started adopting the idea of these being separate emotions where guilt focused on the act that resulted in transgression and shame focused on oneself that caused the transgression². This idea was increasingly criticised ever since for being vague, especially since it heavily relies on cognition which lacks empirical evidence and is rather contingent on one's ability to report cognitive and emotional experience. Instead, multiple new attempts were made to differentiate the two emotions based on different dispositional and situational factors. In chapter 1, I have outlined the most frequently used attempts to delineate these two emotions. None of these explanations have been established as widely accepted and, furthermore, none of the explanations has been able to withstand the scientific rigour when tested for validity and/or reliability. Overall, there is a high level of disagreement and opposing research findings that prevent us from defining universal principles of differentiation between shame and guilt. My idea is that one factor that has been omitted so far can be used to explain why in certain situations one emotion gets elicited, and the other does not. This is the factor of forgiveness.

² Lewis, H. B. (1971). Shame and guilt in neurosis. *Psychoanalytic review*, 58(3), 419.

Below I outline the directions of the solution I think need to be followed in order to reach the explanation of the difference in the elicitation process of shame and guilt.

Suggested theoretical framework

Other-conscious emotions

The first change I would like to bring forward relates to the cognitive perspective of the differentiation between shame and guilt. Most, if not all explanations focus on the transgressor's thoughts self-reflection, stating that the transgressors must be aware of themselves, thus these emotions are considered as self-conscious emotions (Tangney & Tracy, 2012). Furthermore, if we consider the most commonly accepted explanation stating that the main transgressor's focus is either on the object of damage (for guilt) or on one's self (for shame), it is clear that one of the most important elements of such situation is not included: the victim. One would expect that since these two emotions are elicited because of people transgressing against someone, that another person will be included in some way in the analysis of the resolution of the situation, that is the alleviation of the negative emotion. I feel that current focus of the analysis is not objective and that it misses the purpose of the emotion, its elicitation and alleviation. Moreover, I find that the current explanations are too egocentric. In a slightly less mentioned explanation that focuses on moral principles, do's and don'ts (Sheikh & Janoff-Bulman, 2010), again there is no mention of victim. Instead, the focus is on understanding whether the person feels like they broke ideals (shame) they were striving towards or some moral principles they were raised by (guilt). This explanation posits that, again, the transgressor is focused on some kind of external element but not on the victim's suffering, which is the negative result of their own making. Such perspective suggests that we feel guilty or

ashamed about transgressing against our principles. This is not in line with my reasoning as in my opinion, the transgressor's main focus is the dyadic relationship with the victim, rather than transgression against what we understand as our own (moral) principles. As far as current literature suggests, no research so far has explored the role of the victim, specifically in the time interval between the transgression and when the transgressor starts seeking for forgiveness. I assume that one reason why the victim is being left out of the research is the simplification of the procedure that comes from the victim being considered a constant unchanged variable (idle) rather than another independent variable which would potentially yield infinite specific conditions that might require testing. However, victim's personality traits, physical and behavioural characteristics could play a huge role in resolution of situations after a transgression. If we transgress against someone, that will have an effect on our relationship with this person and this indicates that the event is of social nature. It does not make sense to pretend that this happened in a social vacuum where we focus only on how we feel about what we have done, or on our moral principles. This means that we have to take into account a number of new variables such as transgressor's previous experience with the victim (especially if related to transgression), behavioural similarities transgressor and victim share, victim's expression of emotions, and characteristics of the relationship with the victim, to name a few. Some authors do give some importance to the existence of the victim; however, this always comes after the explanation that guilt or shame has been elicited and is mostly observed from the perspective of comparing the effectiveness of different ways to alleviate the emotion. I feel that the presence of the idea of the victim cannot be excluded from the transgressor's post-transgression cognitive processing. The avoidance of the role of victim in research on shame and guilt might

be encouraged by some aspects of everyday life. For instance, there are social structures that try to serve as mediators and take the victim's role in offering various types of reconciliation, such as in Christianity where priests offer blessings for the confessions that transgressor might reveal.

Despite the overwhelming opinion that shame and guilt are self-conscious emotions, one could posit that guilt and shame are other-conscious emotions. Without an attempt to distinguish the two emotions at this point, in most situations when we feel ashamed or guilt, we experience them as a result of the transgression we committed against a certain person. Furthermore, when we feel guilty for someone's misfortune without committing any transgression against them (survivor's guilt), we still have them (the victim) in our mind and our guilt or shame is directly related to them. This indicates that these two emotions are more directed towards others rather than towards us. The fact is that it is us who process these emotions, it is us or our misdeeds we reflect on when experiencing these emotions, however, compared to basic emotions (sadness, happiness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust) which do not have to include another person, guilt and shame are focused on another person, the victim.

Anticipated and constructed emotions

Anticipation of emotion shapes behaviour. While full-blown emotions (for instance happiness) involve current appraisal processes about immediate responses, one either experiences it or not. Emotions that require more cognitive processing, such as guilt and shame, are based more on predicting future rather than controlling and regulating current response. Guilt and shame are usually elicited in a dynamic which allows the transgressor to think and reflect, which increases the complexity in determining the response. In this process the transgressor mostly has more time to

predict the outcome of the situation which will then affect the emotional response. For instance, following a transgression, one can avoid any response which might lead to shame; plan and execute some kind of repair which would lead to guilt; and finally, one can carry out a combination of the two in various dynamics; or do something else.

Manucia, Baumann & Cialdini (1984) have suspected that people who help others do so because it cheers them up. In a well-designed mood-freezing pill experiment to test this. They gave participants pills (placebos) that were supposed to freeze their mood no matter what they would do about it. This means that the sad people who believed that they have taken the mood-freezing pill would not help others with an aim to cheer themselves up since they would believe that it would make no changes to their current mood. On the other hand, if they did help others, that would mean that they did it because they genuinely wanted to help others for other reasons than to make themselves feel better. The results showed that those who believed that their mood is frozen, no matter what they do, helped significantly less than those who did not take this pill, showing that sad people do help others for the reasons of cheering themselves up. This indicates that the anticipation of future emotional states does affect our current behaviour. Series of studies showed similar results, sad people eat less sweets when their moods are frozen and upset people prefer immediate rather than delayed gratification but only when their moods are not frozen (Tice et al., 2001), and anger is not turned into aggression when moods are frozen (Bushman et al., 2001). All of these studies show that behaviour is guided by prospection: “Deciding what to do is commonly informed by expectations about the future and the emotions associated with this or that anticipated outcome” (Seligman, 2016, p. 219). This is why correct emotional prospects are crucial for humans to carry out an adaptive rather than the maladaptive behaviour.

More in relation to my thesis, specifically in relation to negative emotions, a meta-analysis (DeWall et al., 2016) focused on investigating the desire to avoid negative emotions, found that 90 % of studies reported a significant mediational effect of anticipated emotion on subsequent behaviour. However, when the currently experienced emotion is taken as a potential mediator, the results are significant only 20% of the time. This indicates that anticipated rather than the experienced emotion is a better predictor of our behaviour. When put in context of shame and guilt, one might argue that our anticipation and preference of experiencing one of these two emotions drive our decision to carry out one or the other behaviour.

Emotions are constructed based on our previous experiences. Based on the most recent findings and extensive decades long research done by Lisa Feldman Barret, our emotions are constructed based on our expectations. The author states that just like any other human faculty, our ability to feel emotions depend on our expectations and to what extent this expectation has been met. Furthermore, she states that we devise simulations based on our experiences and knowledge to predict expected outcomes and react accordingly if they fail to be correct. We do not do these simulations consciously and emotion should help us to adapt when our simulation is not correct. The author draws a parallel between creating mental and visual simulations. For instance, the process of constructing an image of triangle when portrayed with one side missing, the image of the completed triangle simply emerges based on our previous experiences with similar images. Similarly, we expect to experience a certain outcome of a situation based on our experience in similar situation, our culture and so on. The author explains this process in her book through simple examples (Barret, 2017, p. 29):

“If you feel an ache in your stomach while sitting at the dinner table, you might experience it as hunger. If flu season is just around the corner, you might experience that same ache as nausea. If you are a judge in a courtroom, you might experience the ache as a gut feeling that the defendant cannot be trusted. In a given moment, in a given context, your brain uses concepts to give meaning to internal sensations as well as to external sensations from the world, all simultaneously. From an aching stomach, your brain constructs an instance of hunger, nausea, or mistrust. Now consider that same stomach-ache if you’re sniffing a diaper heavy with pureed lamb, as my daughter’s friends did at her gross foods birthday party. You might experience the ache as disgust. Or if your lover has just walked into the room, you might experience the ache as a pang of longing. If you’re in a doctor’s office waiting for the results of a medical test, you might experience that same ache as an anxious feeling. In these cases of disgust, longing, and anxiety, the concept active in your brain is an emotion concept. As before, your brain makes meaning from your aching stomach, together with the sensations from the world around you, by constructing an Instance of that concept.”

While most of the previous psychological theories of emotions leaned heavily on the presumption that emotions are universal, Barrett explains that just like we all hold different experiences, we also hold different understandings, expectations and expressions for specific emotions. While there is an inherent desire to experience certain affects, some emotions are not experienced or not clearly defined in certain cultures. For this reason, we can argue that emotions are specific to the person who experiences it, and to their understanding based on previous emotion eliciting events. This knowledge comes with potential increase to our responsibility since it implies a higher level of agency for our emotional states. This might mean that the

understanding of emotions as uncontrolled passion is to be changed in the future for more controlled experiences of emotions.

Focus on forgiveness

The most prominent confusions about forgiveness relate to its misunderstanding regarding its meaning. For instance, people who receive it, mostly think that the transgression will be forgotten; those who grant it mostly consider it as giving a second chance. To forgive, mostly is understood to "cease to feel resentment against (an offender)"³. It stresses out the importance of the attitude change towards the victim that leads them to be less motivated to act vengefully and harm the transgressor but demonstrating the desire to benefit the transgressor and their relationship. In psychology, forgiveness is often understood as a response that indicates a positive change in victim's attitude towards the transgressor (McCullough & Worthington, 1994; Scobie & Scobie, 1998; McCullough et al., 2000). Overall, the psychological understanding of forgiveness is along the lines of changes in the affective, cognitive, and behavioural systems (Enright et al., 1991). I would go further into summarizing forgiveness as subtraction of negative and addition of positive elements to each of these systems.

Numerous scholars investigating the concept of forgiveness have approached it from various theoretical perspectives. There is a general consensus that forgiveness is a multifaceted and intricate phenomenon (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). It involves cognitive (Flanigan, 1992), affective (Malcolm and Greenberg, 2000), behavioural

³ forgive. 2025. In Merriam-Webster.com.

Retrieved April 7, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/forgive>

(Gordon et al., 2000), motivational (McCullough et al., 1997), decisional (DiBlasio, 1998), and interpersonal (Baumeister et al., 1998) aspects.

Taking a more philosophical perspective, Holmgren (1993) defined forgiveness as the act of overcoming one's negative feelings toward the transgressors and furthermore, accepting them as a person. In the similar vein North (1987) described the process of forgiveness further: "If we are to forgive, our resentment is to be overcome not by denying ourselves the right to that resentment, but by endeavouring to view the wrongdoers with compassion, benevolence, and love while recognizing that he has wilfully abandoned his right to them" (p. 50).

Benefits of forgiveness for the society. Process of forgiveness goes beyond the victim-transgressor relationship. There are multiple positive effects that demonstration of forgiveness can have on the social community. By forgiving, the victim sets a positive context for positive behaviour. This further encourages the transgressor to work more eagerly in the restoration of the relationship with the victim. Furthermore, this might motivate the transgressor to start creating more positive attitudes towards themselves, and the world as well. Forgivers also tend to endorse socially desirable attitudes and behaviour (Mauger et al., 1992). Finally, forgiveness has a positive, prosocial role because when people forgive, the negative motivations (such as revenge) are amended, aiming towards more constructive outcome to restore the interpersonal relations with the transgressors (McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 1997).

Benefits of forgiveness for the transgressor. The important element of the process of forgiving is the transgressors wellbeing and restoration of the relationship with them (Holmgren, 1993). While the majority of forgiveness research has concentrated on the act of granting forgiveness, a notable study explored the

psychological impact on individuals who are the recipients of forgiveness (Witvliet et al., 2002). Authors found that the imagery of victims' merciful responses prompted less furrowing of the brow muscle associated with negative emotion and more smiling activity. In addition to common-sense expectations of benefits of forgiveness, this study shows empirical evidence of physiological and emotional benefits of being forgiven.

Benefits of forgiveness for the victim. Although forgiving does reduce negative emotions, the motivation behind forgiving another is not solely for victims to feel better and rid oneself of strong negative emotions (Richards, 1988). Forgiveness, health, and well-being empirical research on the links between forgiveness and mental health had a humble beginning in the 1960s. In the first known study of forgiveness and well-being, Emerson (1964) found link between emotional adjustment and forgiveness. Other studies have found that forgiving people differ from less-forgiving people on many personality attributes. For example, forgiving people report less negative affect such as anxiety, depression, and hostility (Mauger et al., 1996). Forgiving people are also less ruminative (Metts & Cupach, 1994), less narcissistic (Davidson, 1993), less exploitative, and more empathic (Tangney, 1999) than their less-forgiving counterparts. Moreover, self-ratings of the disposition to forgive have been found to correlate negatively with scores on hostility and anger (Tangney, 1999), as well as with clinicians' ratings of hostility, passive-aggressive behaviour, and neuroticism (Mauger et al., 1996). Empirical studies have also demonstrated an inverse relationship between forgiveness and levels of neuroticism (Ashton et al., 1998; McCullough & Hoyt, 1999). Thus, the forgiving person appears to be someone who is relatively high in agreeableness and relatively low in neuroticism/negative emotionality.

Prospects of forgiveness

Based on everything I outlined in the previous section, there should be no more desired outcome after feeling guilty or ashamed, than being granted forgiveness. Accordingly, the research on distinguishing between these two emotions should gravitate around the question of how we perceive the importance of forgiveness and what motivates us to seek forgiveness. In my thesis I aim to contribute to this psychological inquiry by suggesting inclusion of this factor that has been previously omitted.

In the attempt to reach forgiveness, the first step should be to have the transgressor to try to make amends for the harm caused. The process of seeking forgiveness can vary depending on various factors, including cultural background, personality traits, and the social and relational context, which has been elaborated about in Lazare's book "On Apology" (2005). In my research I turn more to the factors that impact the probability of forgiveness being granted (prospect of forgiveness). It is important to note that these factors are difficult to categorize as either dispositional or situational, as their interpretation is subjective and dependent on the victim's perspective. Emotional, cognitive and behavioural response in these situations may be seen as a reflection of transgressor's personality, but it could also be caused by situational factors. Additionally, it is challenging to determine which party holds more importance in relation to these factors, as both the transgressor and the victim play significant roles in their behaviours and interpretations. Below I list in arbitrary order some exemplary factors I handpicked that might lead to or inhibit the forgiveness process.

The dynamics of interpersonal relationships between the offender and the victim play a crucial role in the likelihood of forgiveness. Research by Rackley (1993),

Roloff & Janiszewski (1989), and Woodman (1992) suggests that individuals in relationships characterized by satisfaction, commitment, and closeness are more inclined to forgive transgressions. This complexity in the forgiveness process highlights the multitude of variables that must be considered. The intricacies of relationships span from general relationship types to specific dyadic interactions. For example, distinguishing between romantic and familial relationships necessitates a detailed examination of factors such as closeness, commitment, and satisfaction levels. Each of these elements must be carefully analysed and defined to fully understand the forgiveness dynamics within the relationship. Responsibility has been identified as another reliable indicator of forgiveness. For instance, individuals who assign less responsibility to their partners tend to be more forgiving compared to those who assign more responsibility to their partners (Fincham, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the degree of responsibility assigned is often influenced by the nature and details of the wrongdoing. The level of responsibility attributed to the transgressor may vary, contingent upon the victim's knowledge and understanding of the transgression. Research has also demonstrated that severity and intentionality of transgression play a crucial role in the forgiveness process (Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Girard & Mullet, 1997). Severity is subjective and varies from person to person, while intentionality is influenced by the level of communication and information exchange between the victim and the transgressor. Moreover, honesty has been identified as a significant predictor of forgiveness (Shapiro, 1991). However, the perception of honesty can be complex, as it may be interpreted as manipulation depending on the victim's perspective, expectations, and understanding of the transgressor's honesty. Similarly, in a meta-study, Fehr et al. (2010) found that intent, but also factors such as state empathy, apology, and state anger significantly impact forgiveness.

Interestingly, situational factors were found to have a greater influence on forgiveness compared to victim dispositions. Finally, it is important to note that some aspects of forgiveness are beyond the transgressor's control, such as the victim's rumination on the transgression. Research indicates that increased rumination leads to a decreased likelihood of forgiveness and a greater inclination towards seeking revenge (McCullough et al., 1998, 2001).

Subjective perception of prospects of forgiveness

There is a more and a less detrimental response to hurting others. Neither of them guarantees success in either solving the issue, making victim or the transgressor feel better. However, the two emotions do seem to elicit a different phenomenological experience. One that makes us feel detached from the issue – shame; and guilt - makes us feel that we resolve the situation. This leads to the conclusion that doing something about it leads to one or the other emotion. However, before doing, first comes cognizing about the repair we plan to do and this is where the Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (PPF) is applied as a factor of subsequent emotion elicitation. PPF entails both the actors (transgressor and victim) and their understanding of all possible contributing factors. At this point, what transgressor thinks they should or should not do will determine how they will feel about it. If for instance, transgressor perceives high chances to gain forgiveness, they will consider a plan for repairing the damage, and hence start feeling guilt, which will produce a specific phenomenological experience.

Transgressor's perception of the prospect of being forgiven depends on factors that are not uniform. Unlike the aforementioned factors, transgressor's predictions are subjective. They are based on their previous experiences and knowledge acquired through indirect learning. This means that in their prediction whether they will be

forgiven or not, they might resort to information from similar situations they experienced before, but also to information they have learned from other people's stories and experience, most probably within their culture. Namely, there could even happen a clash between these two sources of information: learned through experience and learned as a common knowledge, for instance when our experience does not meet the opinion of the culture we are immersed in.

Similar to the objective one, subjective prediction after the transgression is influenced by both the dispositional and situational characteristics. Personality traits such as anxiousness, perfectionism and maturity will have a strong impact, but also will the situational variables such as social context and the nature of our relationship with the victim. For this reason, it can be argued that transgressor's understanding whether the situation is likely to evoke forgiveness is what makes the emotional experience go in one or other direction (shame or guilt).

Conclusion – Chapter 2

In this chapter I bring to light the important elements that were overseen by other researchers and authors, that I use as building blocks of my explanation. First, I indicate the absence of the victim in most if not all research related to guilt and shame. I find this to be important since both emotions are arguably elicited in situations by where one person makes a mistake towards another. I highlight the importance of the anticipation of emotion since anticipation of feeling shame or guilt will impact our behaviour that will lead to elicitation of one of the two emotions. I introduce the concept of forgiveness and outline its benefits for the victim, transgressor and the society. Finally I extend this to introduce the importance of our perception of the likelihood to achieve the goal of both shame and guilt, to be granted forgiveness.

Chapter 3: Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (PPF)

Cognitive model of Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (PPF)

In this chapter, I outline the Cognitive Model of Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (PPF) that explains the process of elicitation of shame and guilt. Compared to other definitions and theories, PPF encompasses characteristics of both transgressor and victim, on top of the other related factors that might mediate between them. The outlined sequential model of Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (see figure 2) focuses mainly on the transgressor's point of perception, emotion, cognition and behaviour, while incorporating the victim's role as well. The evaluative process leading to specific emotion, employs the Appraisal theory, however, in the future a more specific and detached model might be considered as a better explanation. It is important noting that when it comes to the application of the model to real-life situations, it does not necessarily need to include all the prescribed steps, nor to follow the outlined order. The reason for this is that the presence and the order of the evaluative steps are contingent on the specificities of the situational factors that might elicit one appraisal component before another. Finally, it is important to note that I did not address all the potential factors that elicit shame and guilt in this thesis but, however, I hope for this to be researched in the future in more detail.

Step 1 – emotion elicitation (relevance & incongruence)

First step concerns the elicitation of emotional experience. After seeing that someone they care about has been transgressed against, one feels that the resulting situation is relevant (motivational relevance) and that it is the opposite from what they would like it to be (motivational in-congruence). According to the Appraisal theory this is a requirement for emotion to be elicited and this is considered as a primary appraisal of a negative emotion due to its incongruence with the person's

expectations. More importantly, since the experience is unfavourable, it can be argued that primary appraisal consisting of these two components, gives rise to a goal: to create a more favourable (congruent) situation.

Step 2 – self accountability: action tendency

Once the negative emotion has been elicited, and the transgressor finds themselves having a negative emotional experience, next comes the assessment on whether they are accountable for the situation (accountability). If the transgressor assesses that they are to be responsible, the emotional experience will be directed towards self.⁴ Awareness of one's own agency in causing pain to someone who is relevant to them (negative emotional experience) should initiate a natural/logical desire to do something about it, that is to have a tendency towards an action that will likely change this situation. This motivation is reflected in a more targeted inclination to engage in behaviours aimed at restoring congruence in the situation, namely, alleviating the negative emotional state. When the perceived source of incongruence is the harm caused to a valued individual and given that the event has already occurred and cannot be undone, efforts to restore congruence must involve interpersonal engagement with the affected party, that is, the victim. The extent to which such efforts are effective depends on a range of contextual factors, including both the victim's and the transgressor's interpretations of the incident, as well as the perceived severity, nature, and impact of the harm inflicted. Nevertheless, offering an

⁴ This not to be mistaken for the core-relational theme self-blame required for elicitation of guilt (Smith & Lazarus, 1993), elaborated in more detail in chapter 1, under Cognitive explanation.

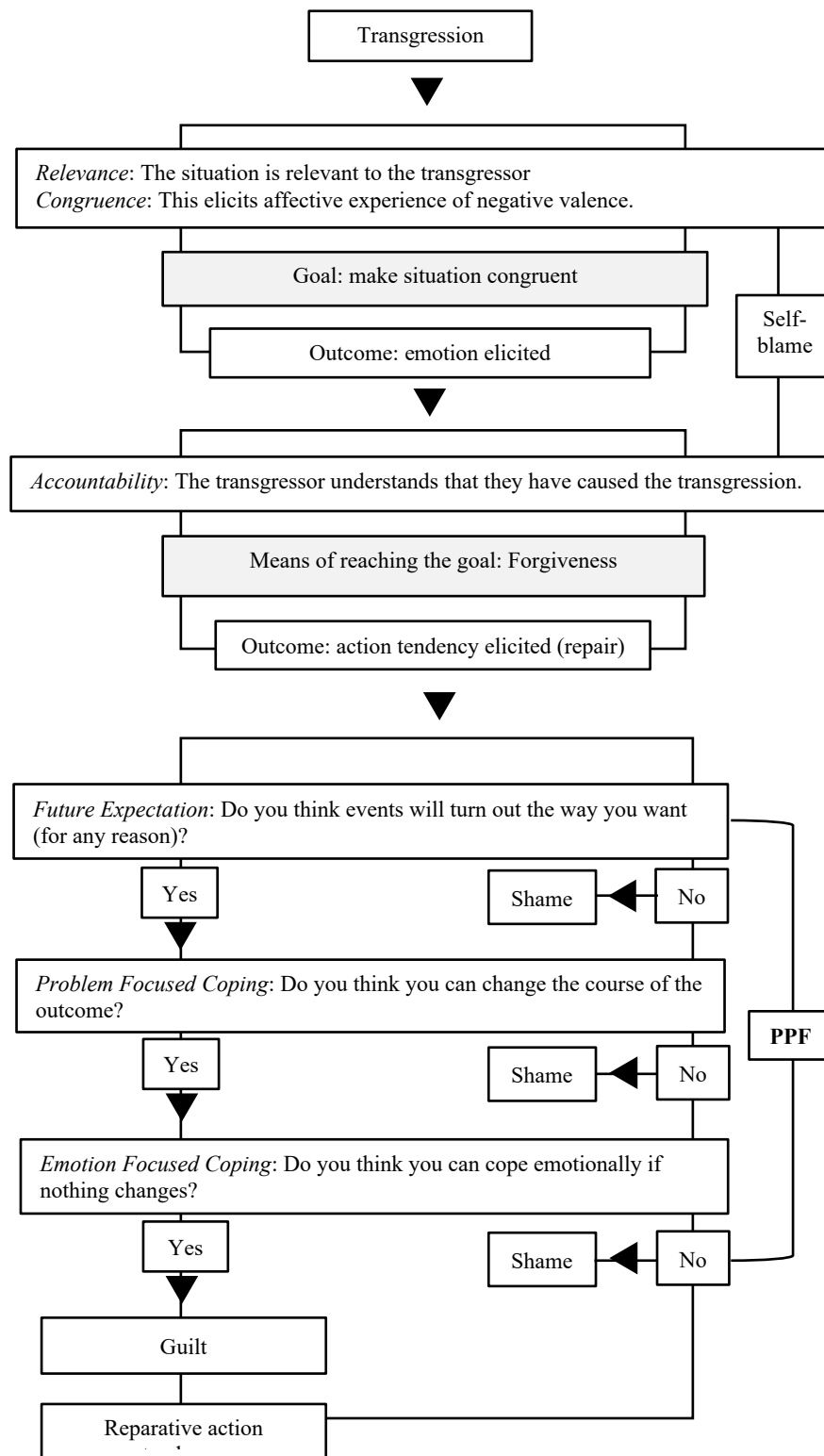


Figure 2: Graphic illustration of the Predicted Prospect of Forgiveness model.

apology (forgiveness seeking) typically remains a viable option across most contexts.

In situations where the victim is the sole affected party

Step 3 – future expectancy: emotion differentiation

In a situation when transgressor is aware that they have caused (accountability) a harm to someone who they care about (relevance) which then has created a negative emotional experience (incongruence), a natural, intuitive response by the transgressor will be focused on changing this to a more congruent situation. The mean to achieve this is to tend to repair the damage caused to the victim, and the relationship with the victim. I understand that this is achieved only when the victim forgives them for their misdeeds. Therefore, an intuitive response would be the transgressors to stop assessing the situation and to carry out the reparative behaviour. However, the transgressor might not follow the natural intuition to try to reach forgiveness from the victim by repairing the damage, instead they might start weighing the possibility of being forgiven. In the proposed PPF model, this starts with the appraisal of Future expectancy component, which has to do with whether for any reason things are likely to change psychologically for the better or worse (that is, becoming goal congruent). Keeping at mind that the goal to achieve in the future is to stop the emotional experience of negative valence by being granted forgiveness, the question is to what degree the transgressor predicts that there is a chance for this to happen in the future. With potential exclusion of some of the severe transgressions that have caused irreparable, permanent physical or psychological damage, there should be no reason for the transgressor to predict that forgiveness is unachievable. This should motivate the transgressor to have a proactive, repair focused thoughts and intentions aimed at reaching forgiveness. However, transgressor might feel that there is no chance (or there is a low chance) for them to be granted forgiveness, for several

reasons. For instance, transgressors could project what they would do as a victim in a similar situation. They could also over catastrophise the effect that the transgression might have had on the victim. They could also assume something about the victim's personality that would prevent them to be granted forgiveness. This then might lead the transgressor to be demotivated to even imagine that there is a chance to reach the goal of being granted forgiveness by the victim and stopping the negative emotional experience. This indicates the potential first level of Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness, more specifically the potential negative outcome, which would shift the focus from repairing the relationship with the victim as a result of not believing that forgiveness is a viable outcome.

Step 4 – coping mechanism: emotion differentiation

Once the assessment of the future expectancy is conducted and if the outcome is positive, the transgressor starts making an appraisal of coping mechanisms, and this is where the two emotions might continue to diverge further. Going forward, the coping mechanisms take over the main role of dictating the direction to or from the main goal, being granted forgiveness. Here, I need to reflect upon the Lazarus differentiation of action tendencies and coping mechanisms. According to his analysis (Lazarus, 1991), action tendency is the readiness that one would like to carry out immediately when at the moment of the event that is about to elicit an emotion. This indicates that there is a response that should be considered intuitive and natural. However, coping mechanism is a response more focused on cognitive processing that might lead to a different response than of the natural one. Furthermore, Lazarus suggests that in addition to overlap between action tendencies and coping responses, there are some discrepancies between the two, within some emotions. Furthermore, according to him, the coping mechanisms mostly serve as an inhibitor of the impulse

that is engrained in the action tendencies, whereas in some situations it can increase the effect of the action tendency. For instance, when feeling anger, instead of acting aggressive we can apply a coping mechanism such as distraction, or rumination. For this reason, Lazarus distinguishes the action tendencies from coping which relies a lot on the appraisal process and the context in which the event plays out.

As established before, once transgressor is in a negative emotional state because they are aware that they caused harm to someone else who is important to them (incongruence, relevance, responsibility), and they know that they have a chance to be forgiven (positive future expectancy), the natural response should be to try to change the emotional situation to a more congruent one. With the natural and intuitive action tendency to repair the damage and seek forgiveness, and under an assumption that the resolution and forgiveness is achievable, the coping mechanism can either inhibit (Lazarus, 1990) or strengthen this intention. In an arbitrary sequence of appraisals, I take that the *Problem Focused Coping* (PFC) is being assessed first. At this point, knowing that forgiveness is a viable option, the transgressor more closely assesses to what extent their action should play a role in reparation of the damaged relationship with the victim. Specifically, what are their chances to change the situation if they did what is required. At this point the transgressor could remain idle if they fall under the impression that the situation will “sort itself out” without them being required to do anything about it. Other justifications for remaining idle might be the expectation that the matter will be forgotten. However, what in these situations is not considered by the transgressor is that the granted forgiveness is sine qua non for the resolution of the situation. Leaving the matter unresolved will leave the relationship between the victim and transgressor damaged, despite the potential short-term relief transgressor resulting from not confronting the consequences and not having to seek for

forgiveness. Most likely this will lead to, later rather than earlier, elicitation of shame for the transgressor due to their inability to forget the situation, and/or due to the potential victim's bitterness and mistrust. The peculiarity of the shame/guilt elicitation is that the transgressor should not be focusing in trying to weigh whether they can do something about it but instead understand that they *have to do* something about it. It is my opinion that no medium (religious or other kind) can take the role of the transgressor and succeed to ameliorate the effect of the damage caused to the victim. Not understanding this, might be the reason why some transgressor might feel that they do not have to do anything about it to resolve the situation.

Subsequently, the *Emotion Focused Coping* (EFC) takes place. At this point transgressor is aware that they have done harm to someone they care about and that this hurts them. That there is high likelihood of being forgiven and that this requires them to carry out an action or do something to fix the damage. Considering that the transgressor is in a situation that is incongruent with their expectations, they should want to change the situation. At this stage the transgressor is asking themselves whether they will be able to survive emotionally this situation if nothing changes. In some situations, the transgressors might not be motivated to seek forgiveness because of having extreme optimism bias, which would get the transgressor to think that the emotional effect of the awareness of hurting someone and memory of the event will reduce over time. In this case transgressor might again choose to remain idle and, at least for some time, remain optimistic that the negative emotional experience will decline and vanish, for some reason. However, this could be only a prolongation of the elicitation of shame that will most probably elicit at some point, and then it might be too late to repair the damage. The perception of the damage might increase in the eyes of the victim due to transgressor's inaction, and forgiveness might become

unattainable. In this case, most of the times, these situations will end without any closure for the victim, transgressor and their relationship due to the transgressor's desire to withdraw from the situation. This further can lead to psychopathological issues through extreme self-blame and reduction of self-esteem.

Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness – core relational theme

I consider that the latter three appraisal components should be observed and analysed as one core-relational theme - Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (PPF). PPF should consist of positive future expectancy towards forgiveness (understanding that forgiveness is reachable); of PFC with agency (that transgressor understands that they are required to respond in order to be granted forgiveness); of objective EFC (understanding the limits of emotional coping and the extents of consequences of potential failure). My assumption is that these components should be combined into a reliable scale, with higher values more likely to elicit the emotional experience of guilt and maintain the tendency for behaviours directed at repairing the damage caused to be granted forgiveness; whereas the lower values indicating higher likelihood that shame will be elicited, and transgressor will lean more towards withdrawing from the situation. I claim that the tendency to stop the negative emotional experience by repairing the damage caused to the victim and related relationship is an intuitive/natural and rational response to harming someone we care about. By this observation, I suggest that emotion of guilt is elicited out of rational understanding of the situation and thus leads to constructive action. However, it seems that this rational process gets interrupted most of the time by what it turns out to be the wrong predictions affected by different biases, that leads to elicitation of shame. According to the PPF model, when the resolution relies on transgressor's intention to repair the damage, the factors leading to lack of understanding of agency

and overexaggerated optimism can prevent this from happening. Subsequently, this creates fertile ground for development of the desire to avoid the victim, which are associated with the experience of shame.

Comparison to self-blame

Self-blame core-relational theme of guilt consists of motivational relevance, incongruence and accountability, which arguably can explain the emotion of shame as well since experiencing shame also means feeling bad because of hurting someone who we care about and knowing that we are the ones who have caused it. PPF goes a step further in Cognitive theory of appraisal and identifies the components of appraisal that differ in understanding transgressor's involvement and predictions, which then direct transgressor's intentions and actions. The difference between the PPF and self-blame as core-relational theme is that the PPF is to be used to detect both emotions. Furthermore, the focus of the PPF is forgiveness, which is requiring agency of the victim, whereas self-blame focuses only on agency of the transgressor.

Potential factors affecting prediction

According to most authors in the psychological research of emotions, the main purpose of emotions is to help us to adapt to the novel situation. This implies that both shame and guilt should provide a positive input to help us navigate our mental wellbeing and social position after we commit a transgression. Guilt has been found to have an overwhelmingly more positive effect for the individual and the society. Hence, knowing that there is an emotion of guilt which phenomenologically and practically is a better alternative to shame, one begs the question why we would ever have to experience shame. In this process, there are several factors a person can consider when trying to predict the probability of being forgiven. These variables differ across individuals and are influenced by the specific context of each situation.

For instance, if we recognize certain personality traits in the victim similar to someone who has not granted us forgiveness in a similar situation, we might be reluctant to try to repair the damage. Others might focus on the social context of the situation and be impacted by the number and relation of the people who are informed of the situation. This means that with shame and guilt, what we are predicting is not only the pleasantness of our experience but also whether important resources such as time, energy and reputation will be wasted for nothing if our attempt to repair (to apologize, for instance) does not bear fruits. Below I outline some of the factors I consider important in the process of eliciting guilt or shame.

Twinge. Just as there is a twinge (Seligman et al., 2016) about the situation when emotion is about to be elicited, I argue that there is a twinge about the probability of being forgiven. Seligman and colleagues (2016) suggested that there is a difference between the full-blown emotion including conscious feeling physiological changes, and automatic effect as a *twinge* of something being good or bad. Twinges are an abstract (miniature version) of the full-blown emotion. They inform us on whether we feel good or bad about something. Twinge which informs us of a certain threat will have us react with avoidance while also eliciting fear. This means that for basic emotions, twinges likely inform us first about the valence and then about the suggested action which is executed before or at the time of the emotional experience. In these situations, we are likely not to make conscious decisions to guide our behaviour, instead, we make a heuristic judgement on accessible information which further informs us on which action we should take. A potential reason for allowing a twinge to affect our judgement, instead of the complete cognitive evaluation of the situation is the usage of costly cognitive capacities. First, full cognitive evaluation takes more of our (brain) computational

power, that does not satisfy the trade-off as it does not guarantee the best choice will be made and that all the variables will be considered. Twinges get updated through experienced emotional experiences, which then affect the elicitation of emotions in future. Hence, one of the purposes of the full-blown conscious emotions is to inform the future automatic twinges that lead to emotional experiences. The importance of such learning process is seen in people who lack it, for instance, people who do show expected emotional reactions in specific situations, end up being misunderstood and misinterpreted.

With both guilt and shame, twinge can be informative but is not crucial for differentiation of emotion. In situations where the immediate response is necessary, twinge can have an important role in guiding behaviour and corresponding emotion. One could posit that in these cases, PFF is an important part of the guidance towards subsequent events and experiences.

Level of conscious processing. There is no clear understanding of the level of the awareness of the appraisal processes involved. Magda Arnold, recognized as a pioneer of contemporary appraisal theory, originally emphasized that appraisal constitutes an “intuitive” judgment of immediate situational elements rather than a deliberate or rational analysis (Arnold, 1960, p. 189). Later theorists in the field (Lazarus, 1991; Leventhal & Scherer, 1987; Smith et al., 1996; Smith & Kirby, 2000; van Reekum & Scherer, 1997) have argued that while appraisal processes can involve sophisticated, conscious cognitive operations, such as when an individual experiences upon hearing that a lion has escaped nearby; they can also engage more automatic, unconscious cognitive mechanisms. The existence of both conscious and unconscious appraisal processes implies that conflicting evaluations may arise between these two levels of processing.

This directs towards a question, is there is any clear conscious, high-level processing before any of these two emotions and if yes, do they differ? Is the behaviour of avoiding the victim (associated with shame) or repairing the damage (associated with guilt) the result of an aware and intentional thought processing? Due to the boundaries of research into cognitive processes, to this day it is impossible to gather empirical evidence for this question. Nevertheless, one could posit that guilt is more of an instinctive human reaction to transgression (to repair the damage). This would make shame a result of a more evaluative process which is counter intuitive since the higher-level of processing should lead towards more rational response (repair the damage - guilt) rather than towards less rational one (withdraw from the situation - shame)? One potential explanation could be that the more we tend to evaluate the situation, the more our prediction of the future outcome gets clouded by cognitive biases. However, this is something that should be researched further in future.

Ego protection. Mistakes are an important part of our lives, and they represent an opportunity to be used to form or strengthen relationships after the proper demonstration of care and repair of the damage done to the relationship. However, in some situations, we tend to oversee this opportunity and opt to protect an exaggerated perspective of our flawlessness in our decisions and behaviours. Most likely, this means that committing a transgression could have a strong detrimental impact on our ego and that for this reason, we might avoid seeking forgiveness, even when our prediction of being granted forgiveness is high. In these cases, even a miniscule probability of refused forgiveness might deter us from taking a chance with seeking forgiveness, as the unfavourable outcome might be perceived as a huge blow to our self-esteem. More likely, we will rather apply a defence mechanism which, for

instance, will have us avoid the situations that could remind us of this transgression. Most likely, this will lead to further avoidance and elicitation of shame.

Instant relief - Inertia effect. There is a preference with humans to do nothing rather than do anything after they make a mistake. This comes as a result of a number of potential factors such one of which is the transgressor's lack of understanding of the positive consequences their forgiveness seeking might cause. However, the Inertia effect goes a step further, stating that people like to maintain the status quo even when they are aware of the likely beneficial option their action may entail. This could well explain the absence of the transgressor's intention to repair the damage they have caused to the victim, even if they know that this might lead to improvement of their emotional and mental state. This would then lead to withdrawing approach to the matter, making the transgressor feel shame instead of guilt. My assumption is that this comes as a result of the transgressor weighing the risk of not being forgiven (more or less consciously) and falling under the biased impression that the trade-off is not in favour of forgiveness seeking. On one side, repairing the damage involves risk, and even in most certain situations it requires action. This could lead to a long-term effect of resolution and forgiveness – outcome that is not guaranteed, while on the other side doing nothing and withdrawing from the situation gives instant relief from the negative experience – outcome that is guaranteed. It can be argued that in these situations, the transgressor might assign higher importance to the immediate positive effect and thus will end up doing the latter rather the former. This way the transgressor ends up doing something that is less rational when it comes to their well-being and the outcome of the situation.

Incorrect prediction. One reason for having a less rational response after transgression might be due to our inability to make correct predictions. The

transgressor should be able to recall from memory that repairing the damage has always led to better outcome than from hiding from the consequences. The rational response then should be to try to communicate the attempt to repair the damage, rather than prolonging or deciding not to. However, empirical studies have shown that often people's prediction of the emotional states that are to follow is faulty. For instance, in their explanation on affective forecasting, Dan Gilbert and Tim Wilson have shown that we are inaccurate when it comes to predicting our own future emotional reactions. Furthermore, the most common mistake we make is that we overestimate the expected length of an emotional experience. For instance, young professors who predicted that they would be extremely depressed for long time if they were denied tenure were in fact sad for a short time (Gilbert et al., 1998). Similarly, students who predicted that they will be much happier for a long time if they were given a room in the dorm they chose, showed to be happier for a shorter period of time (Dunn et al., 2003). One explanation is that it is adaptive to make this inaccuracy. In a study with young professors, exaggerating the potential negative effects motivates them to work harder towards the tenure. The opposite error would be maladaptive and hurt them more as it would reduce their chances to reach their goal. Hence, we do manipulate our anticipations of future emotional states to impact the current levels of motivation and performance. When applied to shame and guilt, this explains how one's irrational response after a transgression might seem rational to the transgressor at the given moment.

Perceived personality and relationship with the victim. Another factor that might affect the perceived prospect of forgiveness could be the perceived personality of the victim. If in some case the victim reminds the transgressor of someone, the transgressor might project their expectations of the person in question onto the victim.

This means that if the person in question is known to transgressor as not being forgiving, transgressor might project this characteristic on to the victim. A similar situation might happen if similarly, but more directly, the transgressor projects their own characteristics on the victim. Both situations could get the transgressor not to try to repair the damage because they think the victim will not grant it because they are similar to someone who would do the same, or because the transgressor would not grant forgiveness in such a situation.

Another factor that might affect the prediction of perceived forgiveness could be the strength and the nature of the relationship between the transgressor and the victim. Some of the main questions should concern what the nature of the relationship is: communal, family, romantic; or what is the strength of the relationship at the time when the transgression happens. Finally, there should be a closer analysis of the position of the transgressor and of the victim in the relationship, and of their attitude towards the relationship, for example whether they are in a process of leaving or strengthening the relationship.

Supported theories

Below, I outline how the PPF model supports the assumptions of the theories outlined in Chapter 2.

Other-conscious emotions

The model is focused on the most important factor of cognitive processes and behaviour following the transgression – transgressor's perception of the victim. Here, the transgressor focuses on specific characteristics of the victim's personality that might relate directly to their disposition to forgive. It is important to note that no matter how much we try to classify our interactions to other people into specific types, we also take into account specific communicatory, mental, physical traits of the

victim. These characteristics are at least partially if not exclusively considered by the transgressor as important factors of whether to act to seek forgiveness. Meaning that we cannot exclude the specific victim out of situation if we aim for forgiveness as the only way of repairing the situation.

Emotions build intentions, not behaviour

Emotions do not lead to behaviour. In my understanding, the emotion is not necessarily a precursor to behaviour. Most of the time we feel emotion without necessarily feeling like or planning any execution of behaviour. Furthermore, we might feel that we would do something but end up doing nothing. However, the way we manage our tendency to do something, that is how we cope with what we want to do, is something that elicits one or another emotion. In words of Baumeister, this would be the Twinge that is based on our anticipation of our mood in the future and gives us direction which will the situation go. For shame and guilt, it is more about the intention and how we decide to cope with the desire to repair the relationship with the victim. Following a natural/intuitive desire to do something about the transgression we committed is different from planning not to do anything about it, and respectively it will elicit a specific emotion.

Anticipation shapes behaviour

In anticipation of the emotion, we do not start from scratch (tabula rasa) but we use the information we have at hand. Anticipated emotion or mood is what shapes our behaviour after the transgression. This means that in our prediction we use knowledge acquired in the past, as we anticipate how our immediate and future behaviour will affect our mood that follows. Transgressor's goal is to stop or to prevent the negative emotional effect caused by the transgression, to elevate the mood and change the valence of the emotional affect to a more positive one. This means that we will

evaluate and compare the situation to ones we experienced before, including the analysis of the victim, and other elements of the situation. Hence, similar to the mood freezing pill experiment findings (Manucia, Baumann & Cialdini, 1984), if we predict that we are unlikely to be forgiven, which indicates no change in the negative emotional affect in the future, we are less likely to try to do anything that might lead to being granted forgiveness. This sides also with the Barrett's theory of constructed emotions (2017) saying that emotions are elicited based on our expectations informed by our previous experience. Meaning that if we experienced before, a situation similar to the one we experience following the transgression, we will use our conclusions from that earlier situation to predict how likely we are to be forgiven. If in our experience it was favourable to act proactively to restore the relationship with the victim, we are probably more likely to do so again.

Conclusion – Chapter 3

In chapter 3 I introduced the model that builds upon the assumptions of importance of our perception of the likelihood of being forgiven. I use the appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991) to structure the sensation and cognitive processing of both emotions. The graphic explanation of the model explains each of the 4 steps that are crucial to eliciting shame or guilt. The main points relate to the future expectancy and coping mechanism as the main points where the negative valenced emotion turns into shame or guilt after the transgression. In step 1 the emotion is elicited due to the relevance and (in)congruence. In Step 2 there is an elicitation of action tendency due to the awareness of self-accountability. Step 3 represents the point of the differentiation of the two emotions due to different future expectancy, which is extended into step 4 where the coping mechanism serves as a differentiating force. I propose the concept of Perceived Prospect of Forgiveness (PPF) core-relational theme

as a diverging point of these two emotions and compare it to the existing correlational theme of self-blame. I outlined the factors that might affect it such as level of conscious awareness, idleness and defence mechanisms. Finally, I reflect on the theories that are supported by the PPF model such as Theory of Constructed Emotion.

Chapter 4: Conclusions and implications

Main points

In this thesis I outlined an attempt to create a way of distinguishing shame from guilt. By researching this topic for close to a decade, I came across a number of explanations that according to my opinion fail to explain or fulfil the basic claims about these two emotions. I outline and criticise these explanations before offering an explanation.

Explanation based on whether we perceive ourselves (shame) or what we have done (guilt) as bad did not make sense to me since in most of situations one cannot be separated from the other. The dispositional explanation, which gives explanation divorced from the context, failed to provide an explanation applicable to different contexts that include a rich interaction of various factors. Shame and guilt being differentiated based on whether they are elicited publicly or privately, did not explain the differentiation as in many cases we feel what is considered shame without anyone knowing about it, and guilt when others were aware of our transgression. While I do consider cognitive process an important factor for elicitation of both emotions (be it conscious or unconscious), the explanatory void I came across surprised me. The only explanations linked to cognition are the ones focusing on the concept of “ego” (more of a psychodynamic concept) or morality, which adds a level of vagueness to already intangible cognitive approach to the topic. Attributional theory, in my opinion came closest to an explanation of the differentiation of shame and guilt as it provides a fair framework, however, the theory was never applied to what I consider the main matter concerning shame and guilt – forgiveness. Motivational explanation outlines different action tendencies which do not explain the reason but only the outcome of the two emotions. Furthermore, I think that both emotions lead to the same tendency – to

repair the relationship, but it is the coping mechanism that leads to different levels of expression of this tendency. When focusing on the behaviour as an outcome or precedent, the issue is that in many cases the same behaviour is linked with multiple emotions or there is more than one behaviour linked to one emotion, creating an overlap which questions the validity of both emotions. More importantly, the dynamics between emotion and behaviour are not clear and there is a number of processes that (could) happen in between these two. Finally, clinically there is no clear differentiation of shame and guilt, and they are considered together as elements of a construct representing a negative mood.

Contributions

One might ask why it is important to distinguish shame from guilt. They are both negative emotions, they both involve another person and at the end, we will feel them at some point whether we like it or not. Regardless of the used terminology (shame and guilt, or any another classification) all humans experience these negative emotional states out of which one has been found to be more detrimental for us, and for our relationships. For this reason, the first contribution of this thesis is that it aims at building the body of knowledge which will help us identify the emotional state and thus direct the coping mechanisms more adaptively. Knowing how cognitive biases affect our perception and response in situations when we transgressed might help us decrease the detrimental effect of negative affects. The second contribution concerns putting forgiveness in the prime spot when it comes to the differentiation of the emotional states and resolution of the transgression elicited situation. This supports a more realistic and holistic view of the situations following transgressions which means that the resolution of the situation should be more encompassing and in line with real human interactions. The third and final contribution relates to inclusion of

the role of the victim in the process of resolution instead of the transgressor's self-perception. This shifts the attention to where it belongs in the first place, because the resolution of the transgression should be about the victim not about the transgressor or any other third-party. Below I elaborate on all three of these contributions both from every-day and research perspective.

Everyday application

One important contribution of this thesis is considering the tendency to repair the damage caused to the victim and their relationship to be intuitive/natural. Furthermore, this thesis supports and elaborates on the idea that this tendency is inhibited by the activation of coping mechanisms leading to a specific emotional experience. Arguably, according to some cultures, there are some benefits of experiencing shame as a part of a learning instrument, during specific developmental stages. However, shame has been found overall to be more detrimental for psychological but also for physical health, for instance extreme and chronic shame rather than guilt is more likely to lead to psychopathological issues. Hence, by learning more about the navigation of emotional experiences, one could prevent shame that could potentially lead to depression and steer the emotional state towards experiencing guilt. This further supports the research into understanding what cognitive biases lead to activation of specific coping mechanisms and how they can be tackled.

Understanding that forgiveness is the most important act of relationship mending helps people focus on the right direction when they decide to resolve the situation. Material compensation and practical solutions that recover the damage can lead towards the solution, but the main goal is to have the victim voluntarily offer their forgiveness for the transgression. By focusing on forgiveness, this thesis

supports the idea that transgressor's primary goal should be to strive for forgiveness from the victim, while everything else should be considered secondary. In relation to forgiveness, it is important to stress out that this thesis brings back the role of the victim to the process of resolution. This way transgressors' attention is steered towards the victim rather than towards their own experience. As a result, the transgressor does not consider the resolution to be in navigating their moral reasoning for instance, but will have them try to understand how the victim feels. Furthermore, this should also downplay the role of any type of mediators (such as religious) when the presence of the victim is clear and visible. Finally, this victim's presence should also make it harder to fabricate any justification that could lead to the avoidance of the victim and the consequences of the transgression.

Methodological application

The first methodological contribution of this thesis is the development of the PPF cognitive model which can be used as a basic framework to further our understanding of the two emotions. This can help future researchers to investigate what causes emotional states of shame and guilt, and what are the possible means of controlling/navigating these emotional states. For instance, research can be done to identify the cognitive biases that lead to eliciting the more intensive and detrimental emotional experience instead of the one that is more beneficial. Knowing that the model is based on Appraisal theory, further research could expand the investigation on the effect of the secondary appraisal dimensions and the potential amendment of concepts such as core-relational themes.

Turning to the contribution relating to the methodological procedure. Most of the studies researching shame and guilt, do not consider the victim's role important for the investigation on how these emotions are processed (experienced), instead, the

focus is only on the transgressor's inner processes. In rare studies that do include the role of the victim, detailed description of victim's personality and other relevant characteristics are mostly absent. Knowing that in most real-life situations we transgress against complex human beings rather than generic 'placeholder' representation of a victim, most of the research can be considered mainly as reductionist and lacking mundane realism. Also, this usually leads to the participant imagining a victim they committed the imaginary transgression against, which most likely will very likely be subjective and affected by their specific, previous experience. This is likely to confound the results rather than creating a controlled procedure with strong internal validity. In other types of studies, participants are asked to recall a similar transgressive situation making them to rely on their memories which can easily be affected by the self and/or social desirability, or confabulation. Instead, since the characteristics of the victim are essential for cognitive, behavioural and emotional processes after transgression, inclusion of the detailed role of the victim is *sine qua non*. Finally, by the inclusion of the role of the victim, this thesis suggests naming shame and guilt as the *other-conscious emotions*. This classification puts the existence of victim in the centre of the experience of the emotional state, making the consideration of the victim a requirement to elicitation of both shame and guilt, and should inform the future researchers of the importance of inclusion of this factor.

Interdisciplinarity

Due to the complexity of the two emotions in question, in exploration of this thesis I followed the principle of interdisciplinarity. In my research on the provided distinctions of these two emotions, I had to refer to the philosophical perspective. More specifically, I had to examine and evaluate the differentiation of shame and

guilt according to the moral philosophy. Furthermore, I concluded that PPF model supports the free-will side of the debate as I claim that the most contributing factor to elicitation of these two emotions is our control of our coping mechanisms.

PPF is focused on emotional processing from the psychological perspective. In this, I used several approaches with the main being the Cognitive. I applied the Appraisal theory to explain the process of evaluation of the events leading to shame and guilt, and moreover, I suggest a cognitive model as the main outcome of the thesis. In my reflections on the link between emotions and behaviour, where I analysed how we mostly fail to take into account the negative consequences of shame, I have taken a critical evaluation of the Behavioural approach. I rereferred briefly to clinical psychology when I analysed studies and made conclusions on how guilt and shame differently affect the development of psychological problems.

From the perspective of linguistics, I referred to an issue that different languages (in relation to culture) provide different concepts (terms) that encapsulate what shame and guilt should stand for. I however, claim that nevertheless there exist two distinctive emotional states that are differentiated on their level of maladaptiveness to health and relationships. In relation to linguistics, I have also outlined the socio-anthropological perspective on these two emotions. I described the effects of different cultures, and how shame and guilt cultures affect and inform the individuals of different types of emotional experiences they can have. Furthermore, I included the historical perspective and one of the most prominent views of the guilt's recency, and how over time these two emotions interacted and created what we have today.

Future research

By shifting the attention of research into shame and guilt towards forgiveness, this thesis aims to motivate the new research towards the ability to resolve these emotional experiences. This way, instead of focus being on the regulation of these emotions, research can become more invested into deeper understanding of the elicitation of these emotions. It would be interesting to have the seminal studies in this field replicated, but this time to have the factors of victim's role and forgiveness included. In future, I expect growing research into the dynamics of processes and factors of PPF that could potentially bring us closer to a more accurate explanation of these two emotions. The factors could be classified, for instance, into those relating to the victim, transgressor, and their relationship.

Further research in the cultural effects would be beneficial. For instance, does culture have a strong effect on eliciting one or the other emotion; or at our perception of a role of victim? It could be that the cultural norms prevent us from aiming towards forgiveness in some cases, or culture could be found to have a miniscule role in this.

Limitations

One limitation relates to the potential positive outcomes of future research. If research shows that our application of coping mechanisms to the novel situation after transgression is the deciding factor leading to one or the other emotion, this could increase the responsibility of the transgressor and could diminish the importance of the victim's and societal role.

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Footnotes

- ¹ Despite the decline of military aristocracies, both pride and shame continued to be linked with honour in fourth-century Athens.
- ² Lewis, H. B. (1971). Shame and guilt in neurosis. *Psychoanalytic review*, 58(3), 419.
- ³ forgive. 2025. In Merriam-Webster.com.
Retrieved April 7, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/forgive>¹ forgive.
- ⁴ This not to be mistaken for the core-relational theme self-blame required for elicitation of guilt (Smith & Lazarus, 1993), elaborated in more detail in chapter 1, under Cognitive explanation.