Chapter 5

THE GENERAL SOCIOMETER SHAME: POSITIVE INTERPERSONAL CONSEQUENCES OF AN UGLY EMOTION

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ABSTRACT

For decades, shame has been understood as a negative, self-conscious feeling with mostly negative interpersonal consequences. As a result, shame is currently perceived as an ugly emotion that motivates social withdrawal, avoidance, and inhibition. The present chapter challenges this view of shame and suggests instead that shame has a positive interpersonal function with positive consequences. Shame is thought to function as a general sociometer, a monitor indicating the danger of being excluded from groups in general. It would motivate affiliated behaviors such as cooperation, prosocial behavior, and approach of others to address this possible exclusion. The chapter starts with a critical overview of existing research that supports the view of shame as an ugly emotion, demonstrating that empirical support for this view is debatable. It then continues with the view of shame as a general sociometer and presents empirical research that supports this view. Together, these findings reveal that shame may not be so ugly and may be more beneficial than originally thought.

Keywords: Emotions, Shame, Interpersonal Behavior, affiliative behavior, cooperation, guilt

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INTRODUCTION

Social emotions are vital to function well within society. They play a central role in interpersonal behaviors such as competition and cooperation, decision-making, taking advice, and gift giving (De Hooge, 2014; De Hooge, Verlegh, & Tzioti, 2014b; Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). As maybe the most prevalent social emotion, shame has been researched quite extensively (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007a). This stream of research has generated a clear picture of shame: shame is thought to be the "ugly emotion" with negative (interpersonal) consequences such as withdrawal, avoidance, inhibition of ongoing activities and of social interactions (Ferguson & Stegge, 1995; Haidt, 2003; Keltner & Harker, 1998; H. B. Lewis, 1971; M. Lewis, 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007b). In that sense, shame is considered to be the opposite of its brother guilt, the "good emotion" with positive interpersonal consequences such as empathy, making amends, and social approach. In other words, "guilt appears to be the more adaptive "moral emotion", whereas if anything, shame carries a heavy cost" (Tangney, Stuewig, Mashek, & Hastings, 2011, p. 727).

Yet, the current chapter challenges the view of shame as an ugly emotion with negative interpersonal consequences. A close look at empirical research concerning behaviors and intentions following shame and at emotion theories suggests that a different interpretation of shame is possible. Based on the numerous studies that I have run together with my colleagues Marcel Zeelenberg and Seger Breugelmans, I propose that shame can be seen as a general sociometer that indicates a threatened (social) self (Gruenewald, Dickerson, & Kemeny, 2007; H. B. Lewis, 1971), and that motivates affiliated behaviors such as cooperation, gift giving, and approach of others in order to deal with this damaged self. This account of shame provides new and essential insights into how this important social emotion functions and interesting suggestions for future research.

THE PREVAILING VIEW ON SHAME

Shame can be defined as a negative emotion that arises after a moral or social transgression or after an incompetence issue (Izard, 1977; Keltner & Buswell, 1996). For example, most people would experience feelings of shame when they fail an exam, when they lose their job, when they are caught lying to a friend, or when they lose a sports match. The experience can make people feel disgusted with themselves (Keltner & Harker, 1998), small, and worthless (Izard, 1991; H. B. Lewis, 1971; M. Lewis, 1992; Tangney, 1999; Tangney et al., 2007b). Oftentimes, shame also generates feelings of powerlessness and incompetence. The experience may give rise to intense pain and discomfort (Gilbert, 1997; M. Lewis, 1992).

Importantly, shame also contains a clear social aspect. During a shame experience, people compare themselves with others and come to the conclusion that they perform less well compared to others (Gilbert, 1997). For example, feelings of shame especially arise when people have failed an exam that others have passed or when people lose their jobs while their colleagues continue working. As a result, shame motivates a heightened awareness of oneself (Izard, 1991; Sabini & Silver, 1997) and a focus on how one would appear to others (Fessler, 2004; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Shame makes people more sensitive to the words

and opinions of other people (Izard, 1991), makes people worried about how they are evaluated by others (Leary, 2007), and makes people feel inferior to others (Keltner & Harker, 1998; Nathanson, 1992).

According to most shame theories, this social aspect of shame translates into negative interpersonal consequences. Because people experiencing shame perceive themselves to be inferior to others, they would not be able to interact in a normal fashion with others. For example, shame has been argued to motivate an inability to think and to act clearly, to disrupt ongoing activities, and to promote a passive self (Barrett, 1995; Gilbert, 1997; Gruenewald et al., 2007; M. Lewis, 1992). This is also reflected in the bodily display of shame: people experiencing shame often avert the gaze of others, have their heads tilted to the side or downward, and a slumped posture (Gilbert, 1997; Gruenewald et al., 2007; Keltner & Buswell, 1996; M. Lewis, 2003). Ultimately, shame would motivate people to reduce their social presence by withdrawing and hiding themselves from others, and by isolating themselves from other people (Dickerson & Gruenewald, 2004; Ferguson & Stegge, 1995; Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989; Haidt, 2003; Keltner & Harker, 1998; Leary, 2007; H. B. Lewis, 1971; M. Lewis, 1992; Nathanson, 1992; Probyn, 2004; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Schmader & Lickel, 2006; Tangney, 1991; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney et al., 2007a, 2007b; Wong & Tsai, 2007; Wurmser, 1987). Together, these shame theories agree that shame motivates behaviors that are socially (and psychologically) detrimental (Gausel & Leach, 2011).

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE INTERPERSONAL CONSEQUENCES OF SHAME

Although there seems to be general agreement on the theoretical view on shame, the question is to what degree this negative view of shame is supported with empirical research. During the last couple of decades, much empirical research has been conducted on self-conscious emotions such as shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride. Shame has thereby been studied with multiple different methods. For example, the emotion has been measured with shame-proneness scales and correlated with other personality measures (e.g., Allan, Gilbert, & Goss, 1994; Harder, Cutler, & Rockart, 1992; Tangney, 1991), the emotion has been experimentally induced and correlated with subsequent behavioral tendencies or behaviors (e.g., De Hooge, Breugelmans, & Zeelenberg, 2008; Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman et al., 1994; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996), and the emotion has been measured with self-reports and correlated with behavioral tendencies (e.g., Gausel & Leach, 2011; Gausel, Leach, Vignoles, & Brown, 2012; Smith, 2000). Surprisingly, these findings have not generated consistent support for the idea that shame has negative interpersonal consequences. There are multiple reasons for why the empirical studies on the interpersonal consequences of shame have generated mixed results.

First, some studies have used shame-proneness as a proxy for shame, while other studies have used situational experiences of shame as a proxy for shame. Shame-proneness is the general tendency of people to experience shame and can be considered a personality aspect (Harder et al., 1992; Tangney, 1990). High shame-prone people have the tendency to experience shame very often and in situations in which low shame-prone people would not

experience shame feelings. These chronic experiences of shame can be measured with personality measures such as the TOSCA (Test of Self-Conscious Affect) and the GASP (Guilt And Shame Proneness) scale (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Insko, 2011; Tangney, 1990). Research using these scales has linked shame-proneness to mostly negative interpersonal and psychological consequences such as self-derogation, fear of intimacy, negative interpersonal problem-solving, interpersonal distrust, reduced empathy, and depression (Gilbert, Pehl, & Allan, 1994; Harder et al., 1992; Lutwak, Panish, & Ferrari, 2003; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Vowell Covert, Tangney, Maddux, & Heleno, 2003). Yet, one may wonder to what degree such consequences or correlates of shame-proneness can be translated to consequences of situational experiences of shame. When people encounter a shame experience, it might be possible that they will actively approach the situation and try to deal with this shame experience. However, when people encounter shame feelings on a regular basis, as is the case with high shame-prone people, they may stop undertaking actions to deal with shame experiences after a while because they continue to experience the same feeling in many situations. Indeed, some empirical studies suggest that consequences of shame-proneness may not translate to consequences of situational experiences of shame (Allan et al., 1994; Rüsch et al., 2007). In those studies, both situational experiences of shame were induced and shame-proneness was measured. The findings demonstrated that while shame-proneness was positively related to psychopathology, depression, and social dysfunction and negatively related to self-efficacy and empowerment, situational experiences of shame were only positively related to feelings of inferiority, anger at oneself and at others, and personal state of anxiety.

Another potential problem with using shame-proneness as a proxy for situational experiences of shame is the measurement of shame-proneness. The most widely used measure for shame- and guilt-proneness, the TOSCA (Tangney & Dearing, 2002), measures shame-proneness with items concerning withdrawal tendencies. Participants are asked to indicate, for fifteen everyday guilt and shame situations (e.g., "You made a mistake at work and find out that a coworker is blamed for the error"), how likely it is that they would respond in such a way for each of four different reaction options. These four reaction options concern a typical guilt response (e.g., "You would feel unhappy and eager to correct the situation"), a typical externalization response (e.g., "You would think the company did not like the coworker"), a typical detachment response (e.g., "You would think "Life is not fair""), and a typical shame response (e.g., "You would keep quiet and avoid the coworker"). The answers across the fifteen situations are summed up to generate a total indication for every response type. For shame-proneness, this means that the score reflects the general tendency of people to respond with withdrawal tendencies to guilt and shame situations. Yet, such a measure may not completely tap into shame, as shame might not motivate withdrawal tendencies. For instance, the recently developed GASP scale includes two shame subscales: one withdrawal subscale measuring withdrawal tendencies following publicly exposed transgressions, and one negative self-evaluation subscale measuring the tendency to feel bad about oneself (Cohen et al., 2011). Studies with the GASP scale have found positive correlations between the shame-withdrawal subscale and unethical and antisocial behaviors, but negative correlations between the shame negative self-evaluation subscale and the same unethical and antisocial behaviors (Cohen et al., 2011). Together, these arguments suggest that we cannot simply translate interpersonal consequences that were found for shame-proneness (measured with, for example, the TOSCA) to interpersonal consequences of situational experiences of shame.

A second reason for why the empirical studies on the interpersonal consequences of shame have generated mixed results is that research on situational experiences of shame has used different measures for interpersonal withdrawal and has made different comparisons. Most often, research conducted on situational experiences of shame has used autobiographical recall procedures to induce emotions (e.g., Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman et al., 1994; Schmader & Lickel, 2006; Tangney et al., 1996). In such an autobiographical recall procedure, people are asked to remember a personal experience in which they felt shame (or any other emotion). After having described the situation, people are asked to indicate on multiple scales to what degree they experienced the tendency to behave in such a manner after the experience. For example, past research has asked participants to answer items such as "I wanted to sink into the ground", "I wanted not to be noticed by anyone", "I wanted to undo the situation", "I wanted to escape from the feeling", "I wanted to disappear from view", and "I lowered my gaze" (Frijda et al., 1989; Izard, 1991; Rodriguez Mosquera, Fischer, Manstead, & Zaalberg, 2008; Roseman et al., 1994; Schmader & Lickel, 2006). Shame has often been found to score higher on such items compared to other emotions such as guilt, regret, and embarrassment. These findings might indicate that situational experiences of shame motivate a tendency to withdraw from other people. Yet, a critical look at the items shows that these results can also be interpreted differently. Not wanting to be noticed by anyone, wanting to disappear from the view of others, and lowering one's gaze does not necessarily indicate that people experiencing shame want to be alone and avoid all contact with other people. Instead it might, for example, be possible that people experiencing shame do want to be together with other people, but simply want to keep low or to display not-noticeable behavior in order to be socially accepted.

There are some studies that have more directly measured withdrawal and interaction tendencies following shame. These studies have included items such as "I wanted to hide" versus "I wanted to make restitutions" (Wicker, Payne, & Morgan, 1983), "I want to make amends", "I want to be with others" (Tangney et al., 1996), "I want to apologize and make things better" (Miller & Tangney, 1994), and "moving towards people or things" (Scherer & Wallbott, 1994) after autobiographical recall procedures. In contrast with the well-defined theoretical view on shame as an ugly emotion with negative interpersonal consequences, these empirical studies have not found clear differences between shame and other self-conscious emotions such as guilt. For example, Scherer and Wallbott (1994) found that shame was characterized by stronger withdrawal tendencies compared to other emotions such as joy, anger, disgust, sadness, and fear, but Wicker et al. (1983) showed that shame experiences received neutral ratings on an item ranging from *wanting to hide* to *making restitutions.* Frijda et al. (1989) even found that shame activated *both* a stronger desire to disappear from view and a stronger desire to undo the situation compared to guilt and regret.

One of the problems with these studies is that, to interpret the results on such scales for shame, one needs to make a comparison. The results for shame have often been compared to guilt, regret, and embarrassment (Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman et al., 1994; Schmader & Lickel, 2006; Tangney et al., 1996; Wicker et al., 1983). Interestingly, to the best of my knowledge, no study has compared the results for shame to a neutral condition in which no strong emotions were experienced. The comparison that one makes can exert a strong influence on the interpretation of the results. For instance, when comparing the scores on separate items for shame, M. Lewis (1992) found that children experiencing shame showed both a tendency to withdraw and a tendency to repair the situation. However, M. Lewis

(1992) compared the results for shame with the results for guilt. Because the withdrawal tendency was higher for shame compared to guilt, and because the repair tendency was lower for shame compared to guilt, he concluded that shame feelings motivate a withdrawal tendency and not a repair tendency. Similarly, Tangney et al. (1996) asked participants to indicate how strongly they wanted to be with others (vs. hide) and how strongly they wanted to make amends after a shame, embarrassment, or guilt experience. Participants reported a higher tendency to make amends than to hide after a shame experience. Comparing the findings for the hiding tendency with participants remembering a guilt experience, however, lead the researchers to conclude that shame motivates more hiding tendencies than guilt.

In summary, emotion scholars have stated that shame is a negative, ugly, self-conscious emotion with negative interpersonal consequences. Shame is thought to motivate social inhibition, interpersonal withdrawal, and avoidance of other people. Yet, the empirical support for this view is debatable. Studies on the interpersonal consequences of shame-proneness cannot be presumed to reflect the interpersonal consequences of situational experiences of shame. Moreover, studies on situational experiences of shame have used ambiguous scales to measure withdrawal and avoidance, and we have made different comparisons to interpret the results for shame. This has resulted in mixed support for the assumption that shame motivates interpersonal withdrawal and avoidance. A final reason for the absence of empirical support for the ugly view of shame is that shame might not motivate interpersonal withdrawal and avoidance. Below I present a new approach to shame that suggests that shame can be seen as a general sociometer that motivates affiliation with and approach of other people. This view of shame as a general sociometer can explain the mixed empirical results that have been found for shame, and are supported by a new line of empirical research on shame.

A NEW APPROACH TO SHAME: THE GENERAL SOCIOMETER

To understand the approach of shame as a general sociometer, it might be useful to focus on the functional approach to emotions. According to the functional approach, emotions can be understood as motivational processes that become active as soon as events occur that are relevant to one's goals or concerns (Frijda, 1986; Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007). For example, being accepted or declined for a job interview when one wants to get a new job, becoming pregnant or being cheated on by one's partner when one wants to start a family, and avoiding the attack of a lion when one wants to survive are all events that relate to one's goals and thus events that can generate emotions. The ways in which these events are interpreted, so-called appraisals, determine the specific emotion that is felt, and the type of behavior that follows (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). These appraisals concern different elements of an event, such as whether the event makes the attainment of the goal easier or more difficult (valence: positive vs. negative), whether the event is caused by oneself or by another person (agency or causality: self-caused vs. other-caused), whether the event is expected or unexpected (expectancy), and whether the event makes the person feel powerful or powerless (Roseman, Antoniou, & Jose, 1996; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). Every combination of appraisal dimensions generates a specific emotion that motivates people to undertake actions to increase the chances that their goals are reached.

Thus, emotions can be perceived as instruments that help people reach the goals that they are striving for (Zeelenberg, Nelissen, & Pieters, 2007; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2006). When people experience a negative emotion, their personal concern is threatened and the emotion focuses all attention on motivating behavior that solves this problem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Different emotions are necessary to signal different problems, and to motivate different behaviors.

If we apply the functional approach to shame, this suggests that shame, just like any other emotion, should motivate behaviors that help people reach their goals. The specific concern is that shame signals a threatened or damaged (social) self (H. B. Lewis, 1971). In general, people have the desire to have a positive self-view. In fact, having a positive self-view or a high self-esteem is considered to be one of the most important fundamental human motives (e.g., Alexander & Knight, 1971; Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Taylor & Brown, 1988). This self-view or self-esteem can be seen as a sociometer that reflects the quality of people's actual and potential social relationships (Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). It functions as an internal or subjective monitor for the likelihood of being accepted or rejected by other people in the immediate situation. When people experience changes in their inclusionary status, their self-esteem changes accordingly, and they are thought to behave in ways that minimize the probability of rejection or exclusion and that improves or restores their status when threatened.

When taking the functional approach to emotions together with the sociometer theory, one can presume that the emotion shame motivates actions that address the concern of a threatened or damaged self. When experiencing shame, people receive the signal that their self is threatened or damaged (H. B. Lewis, 1971). In order to maintain the goal of having a positive self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), shame therefore motivates people to undertake actions that will protect their damaged or threatened self from further harm, and that will improve their threatened self. It is hard to believe that interpersonal withdrawal and avoidance of other people will improve people's threatened self. Indeed, if we apply the idea that a low self-esteem reflects people's threatened inclusionary status (Leary et al., 1995) to the case of shame, then shame will probably motivate actions that are focused on improving or restoring one's inclusionary status. Therefore, I suggest that shame motivates affiliative behaviors that are aimed at improving people's inclusion in social groups.

Interestingly, I am not the first to suggest that shame has an affiliative or appeasement aspect. In the past, some scholars have proposed that shame serves an appeasement function (Barrett, 1995; Fessler, 2007; Gilbert, 1997; Izard, 1977). Usually, shame arises when a group member has violated a group standard or societal norm. According to these scholars, the subsequent public display of shame (e.g., a slumped posture, lowered gaze, and head downwards) would be a sign for other group members that the defined group member is aware of his/her misdeeds and will conform to the group standards in the future. Yet, my proposition goes one step further. I suggest that people experiencing shame not only automatically appease to group norms due to their public display of shame, but also *actively engage* in affiliated behaviors that improve their inclusionary status among desired others or groups.

If shame indeed motivates affiliated behaviors that improve people's inclusionary status, how would it then differ from the social emotion guilt? Similar to shame, guilt is a negative emotion that arises after a moral transgression (Barrett, 1995; Izard, 1991). Yet, the experience of guilt is somewhat different from shame. The two most common causes for guilt

are neglecting partners in close relationships and failing to live up to commitments or obligations to others (Baumeister, Reis, & Delespaul, 1995). In both cases, the actor has hurt another person (the victim) intentionally or unintentionally (Fessler & Haley, 2003; Tangney, 1991). When people experience guilt, they feel remorse and regret for what they have done (H. B. Lewis, 1971; Tangney et al., 2007a). The emotion activates a focus on the victim and a tendency to make amends, apologize, and repair the caused damage (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; H. B. Lewis, 1971; M. Lewis, 1992; Tangney et al., 2007b). For example, recent research has demonstrated that guilt motivates prosocial behavior, cooperation, and gift giving especially towards the victim (Cryder, Springer, & Morewedge, 2012; De Hooge, 2014; De Hooge, Nelissen, Breugelmans, & Zeelenberg, 2011a). Thus, whereas shame is focused on receiving approval from and affiliate with multiple other people, guilt is focused on receiving approval from and affiliating with a single person: the victim. One might state that shame can be seen as a general sociometer, indicating people's general inclusion in social groups. Then guilt can be seen as a specific sociometer, indicating people's inclusion in one specific relationship (namely, the relationship with the victim).

Seeing shame as a general sociometer and guilt as a specific sociometer generates multiple predictions for their influences on behavior. If shame is aimed at improving people's general inclusionary status, then it would motivate general affiliated behavior. For example, if given the chance, people would try to affiliate with others in general, independent of whether these others know about the shame event or not. On the contrary, if guilt is aimed at improving people's relationship with the victim, then guilt would motivate affiliated behaviors that are aimed at the victim. For example, if given the chance, people experiencing guilt would want to affiliate with the victim, but not with people who have nothing to do with the guilt-causing event. Together with my colleagues Marcel Zeelenberg and Seger Breugelmans, I have empirically tested these and other predictions for shame and guilt.

EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR SHAME AS THE GENERAL SOCIOMETER

To what degree does shame indeed motivate affiliated behaviors to deal with a threatened self? According to the idea of shame as a general sociometer, shame would motivate behaviors that are aimed at protecting the threatened self from further damage and at restoring the threatened self if possible. In one of our first lines of research, we predicted that shame would first and foremost motivate behaviors aimed at restoring the threatened self (De Hooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2010). These behaviors would mostly approach behaviors such as entering performance-oriented situations, accepting new challenges, and undertaking reparative actions. We also predicted that if such reparative actions would be impossible or too risky, shame would instead activate a protection motive to protect the threatened self from further possible harm (De Hooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2011b). We tested these hypotheses in multiple different studies. In every study, shame or no emotion (a neutral condition) was induced, restore and protection motives were measured with self-report scales, and subsequent behavioral tendencies or behaviors were measured (De Hooge et al., 2010). The restore motive was measured with a scale consisting of items such as "I wanted to improve my self-image" and "I wanted to ensure myself that I am competent", whereas the protection motive was measured with a scale consisting of items such as "I wanted to protect

myself" and "I wanted to avoid more damage to my self-image". The findings revealed that, independent of whether shame was induced with a scenario story, with an autobiographical recall procedure, or with a lab induction, shame activated both restore and protect motives compared to the neutral condition. In at least half of the studies, the restore motive was significantly stronger than the protect motive for people experiencing shame. Importantly, these motives activated approach behaviors such as redoing a performance, entering new performance situations, learning new things, and trying out new challenging activities. Moreover, follow-up studies demonstrated that when these approach behaviors were too risky (i.e., when chances of failure were rather high), the restore motive following shame decreased. As a consequence, participants experiencing shame preferred to protect their threatened self by not entering the performance situation (De Hooge et al., 2011b). Thus, shame indeed activates both a restore and a protect motive that together motivates approach behaviors aimed at dealing with the threatened self.

We then set out to explore whether these approach behaviors would also apply to interpersonal situations. In our previous studies, we tested the effects of shame on approach behaviors that were focused on redoing a performance or entering new performance situations. Yet, these behaviors were not necessarily aimed at searching for contact with others or affiliating with others. According to my proposition of shame as the general sociometer, shame would also motivate people to affiliate with other people. I also proposed that shame would differ from guilt in the sense that shame as the general sociometer would motivate affiliation with other people in general, whereas guilt as the specific sociometer would only motivate affiliation with the victim. We examined this prediction by inducing shame, guilt, or no emotion (the neutral condition), and then giving participants the choice to be alone (withdrawal option) or to be together with other people (affiliation option) (De Hooge, Breugelmans, Wagemans, & Zeelenberg, 2014a). In the first set of studies, the emotions were induced with scenario studies or with an autobiographical recall procedure. In addition, the affiliation option was always together with another participant who knew nothing about the shame or guilt event. These studies revealed that the majority of the participants experiencing shame preferred the affiliation option, whereas the majority of the participants experiencing guilt preferred the withdrawal option (in the neutral condition there was no clear preference for the withdrawal or the affiliation option). These findings seem to suggest that shame motivates affiliation with people who know nothing about the shame-causing event, and guilt motivates withdrawal from people who are not the victim of the guilt-causing event.

The second set of studies addressed the question of whether shame would also motivate affiliation with people who knew about the shame event, and whether guilt would motivate affiliation with the victim (De Hooge et al., 2014a). In these studies, the emotions were induced with a lab-induction, and the affiliation option was together with the participant who had seen the shame event (in the shame condition) or who was the victim of the guilt event (in the guilt condition). Supporting the prediction that shame can be seen as a general sociometer, the majority of the participants experiencing shame again preferred the affiliation option. Moreover, the majority of the participants experiencing guilt preferred to affiliate with the victim. Thus, guilt can be understood as a specific sociometer that generates affiliation with the victim and avoidance of other people.

One may wonder whether choosing to be together with other people can really be seen as affiliated behavior and as an action that improves one's inclusionary status. Being together

with other people is one thing, but in order to be fully included in a social group people probably also have to engage in norm-abiding behavior. Therefore, our final line of research focused on the question of whether shame motivates norm-abiding behaviors when people are together with other people (De Hooge et al., 2008). One such norm-abiding behavior is prosocial behavior. Prosocial or moral behavior can be seen as behavior motivated out of concern for another person and is reflected in helping another person with at least some sacrifice to oneself (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). We presumed that targets of prosocial behavior would always evaluate the prosocial behavior positively, and therefore prosocial behavior would be considered as norm-abiding behavior in most situations. In a series of studies, shame or no emotion (the neutral condition) was induced with different inductions and participants were then put into a situation together with at least one other person (De Hooge et al., 2008). In most studies this social situation meant playing a one-shot social dilemma game with another person in the lab. In this game participants owned ten coins, each worth €0.50 for the participant but €1 for the interaction partner. The interaction partner was also given ten coins, each worth €0.50 for themselves but €1 for the participant. As the measure for prosocial behavior, participants decided how many coins to give to the interaction partner, without knowing how many coins the interaction partner would give. In a follow-up study we also used the Prosocial Tendencies Scale (De Hooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2007) as a measure for prosocial behavior. Independent of the emotion induction method or the measure for prosocial behavior, the results repeatedly revealed that shame motivates prosocial behavior, especially towards people who know about the shame event. The results were recently replicated for group-based shame (Gausel et al., 2012). Thus, it seems that when the image that others have of you might be damaged due to a failure or transgression, shame motivates you to affiliate with those others and to behave prosocially towards those others in order to restore your threatened self.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The view of shame as the general sociometer provides multiple suggestions for future research. First, it suggests that it might be time to take a critical look at existing shame-proneness (and guilt-proneness) measures. As mentioned previously, the most widely used measure for shame- and guilt proneness (the TOSCA; Tangney & Dearing, 2002) measures shame-proneness with items concerning withdrawal tendencies and guilt-proneness with items concerning interaction tendencies. Our findings demonstrate that such measures may not completely tap into guilt and shame, as shame does not always motivate withdrawal behavior and guilt does not always motivate interaction.

Second, there are many approach and affiliative behaviors that shame might motivate but that we have not researched yet. When applying the idea that shame is a general sociometer, one can make predictions about the type of behaviors that shame will motivate in specific situations. For example, if shame indeed motivates norm-abiding behaviors in order to improve people's inclusionary status in desired groups, shame feelings would motivate people to engage in pickpocketing when this is the norm to enter a violent (but desired) group, to pay for dinner when sitting with friends at a restaurant, and to actively participate in a discussion

when wanting to belong to a debating group. Future research is needed to see what range of behaviors shame can motivate.

Third, the conditions and the boundaries of the proposition of shame as a general sociometer are currently unknown. The studies that we have run to test the idea of shame as a general sociometer not only provide support for this idea, but also generate many new questions. One question concerns the type of affiliated behaviors following shame. We have demonstrated that shame can stimulate a preference for being together with other people above a preference for being alone, but we have not looked at whether shame stimulates a preference for being together with certain people compared to other people. For example, it might be possible that shame especially motivates a preference to be together with the audience of one's shame events to restore possible negative images that this audience might have of the actor. Another remaining question is whether the affiliative behaviors following shame depend on the situation. For example, our studies did not provide any information about the other people that our participants could interact with. It might be possible that expectations about how those others will respond to one's presence might influence one's preference for affiliation with those others. These are interesting lines for future research on shame.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, for many decades we have assumed shame to be an ugly emotion, a terrible negative feeling with negative, interpersonal consequences. Guilt would be the opposite brother, equal in many respects but with very positive, interpersonal consequences. Yet, a critical look at existing studies on shame demonstrated that the empirical support for this view of shame as an ugly emotion was weak and inconclusive. Following the suggestions of some scholars of emotion, that shame can serve an appeasement function, I proposed that shame could be seen as a general sociometer. It indicates a threatened self and motivates affiliative behaviors towards others in general in order to protect and restore this threatened self. Indeed, new lines of research demonstrate that shame motivates approach behavior of new performance situations, affiliation with others, and prosocial behavior to restore and protect the threatened self. In sum, shame appears to be not as ugly as originally thought, and it might be time to change our view on this prevalent emotion.

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