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UNTYING THE GORDIAN KNOT OF GUILT AND SHAME
The Structure of Guilt and Shame Reactions Based on Situation and Person Variation in Belgium, Hungary, and Peru

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In this study, the structure of guilt and shame reactions are investigated in three cultural groups (Peru, Hungary, and Belgium) using two newly constructed scenario-based inventories. Results show that it is possible to distinguish between a structure of guilt and shame reactions based on person variation and a structure based on situation variation. Moreover, both the person-based and the situation-based structures of shame and guilt are very similar across the three cultural groups, whereas within cultural groups, the two structures are quite different. The dimensions *guilt versus shame* and *interpersonal versus intrapersonal orientation* spanned the situation-based structure, whereas the dimensions *control versus lack of control* and *appraisals versus subjective experiences and action tendencies* spanned the person-based structure.

Keywords: guilt; shame; self-conscious emotions

Ever since Benedict (1946) hypothesized that cultural groups differed systematically in the salience of guilt and shame, these two emotions have been at the focus of both anthropological (e.g., Creighton, 1990; Lebra, 1983; Mead, 1952) and cross-cultural (e.g., Bierbrauer, 1992; Eid & Diener, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1988) theorizing and research. Yet despite this long tradition, research in these two domains has yielded inconsistent and even contradictory hypotheses and results, of which the most surprising example is the change of the classical hypothesis that guilt is more salient in individualistic groups than in collectivistic cultural groups (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1988) into its opposite (e.g., Eid & Diener, 2001).

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These inconsistent and contradictory findings should not be surprising given the confusion that has surrounded definitions of shame and guilt in the psychological literature. At least four major approaches can be identified. According to the first approach, guilt is differentiated from shame in terms of an internal versus an external orientation (e.g., Ausubel, 1955; Mead, 1952; Triandis, 1988). Guilt would be characterized by the personal judgment that one has violated internalized standards of conduct followed by pangs of conscience, rumination, and intrapunitive reactions. Shame, on the contrary, would be characterized by the experience of being exposed to a real or imagined rejecting audience, followed by a tendency to hide or disappear. The second approach is based on the early psychodynamic and anthropological conceptions of Piers and Singer (1955), who argued that guilt can be defined in terms of a violation of moral norms and obligations (superego), whereas shame would be associated with the feeling of not having lived up to one's standards and aspirations (ego-ideal; also see Lazarus, 1991). According to the third approach, guilt is differentiated from shame in terms of a behavior versus a negative global self-focus (e.g., Tangney & Dearing, 2002). In guilt, the focus would be on concrete behavior, whereas shame would be characterized by a negative focus on the whole self. Moreover, guilt would also be associated with a sense of agency, a focus on the negative consequences of one's behavior, and a tendency to repair the wrong done. Shame, on the contrary, because its negative focus on the whole self, would be associated with feelings of powerlessness and incompetence, which can lead to a defensive aggressive reaction. The fourth approach, which focuses on guilt only, states that guilt should primarily be seen as a communal-oriented emotion, leading to a restoration of the balance in interpersonal relationships rather than an internal-oriented emotion (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994).

These four approaches lead to very different and sometimes even contradictory predictions with respect to the role of guilt and shame in psychopathology, and—more relevant for the present research—with respect to their cultural salience. For instance, the hypothesis that guilt should be more salient in individualistic cultural groups is based on the first approach that defines guilt in terms of an internal orientation, whereas the hypothesis that guilt should be more salient in collectivistic cultural groups is based on the fourth approach that defines guilt as a communal-oriented emotion. Moreover, to make things even more complicated, it has been argued that emotion processes, which are labeled as *guilt* and *shame*, vary across cultural groups. For instance, in some Eastern cultures (e.g., China), guilt would be much more linked to interpersonal relationships, whereas in most Western cultures (e.g., the United States), guilt would be much more related to the violation of moral and legal norms (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). If correct, this implies that it is not meaningful to investigate cultural differences in the salience of these emotions.

In summary, it is clear that current cross-cultural theorizing concerning the relationship between culture and guilt and shame finds itself in a Gordian knot. There is an urgent need to clarify the meaning of these emotions. Because each of the four approaches reviewed above has generated its own empirical evidence (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995; Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, & Mascalo, 1995; Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002; Tangney & Dearing, 2002), it appears that conflicting hypotheses and findings concerning shame and guilt are not likely to be simply solved by dismissing any of the existing approaches as incorrect. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to identify the conditions under which each of these four approaches are valid. To identify these conditions, we looked at four sources of variation, namely (a) variation in guilt and shame reactions (reaction variation), (b) variation in situations that can trigger guilt and shame (situation variation), (c) variation in the proneness to guilt and shame reactions (person variation), and (d) cultural variation.

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REACTION VARIATION

The majority of existing research on guilt and shame has focused on only one or a few guilt and shame reactions (e.g., Fontaine, Luyten, De Boeck, & Corveleyn, 2001). For instance, empirical research based on the internal–external distinction has mainly focused on the subjective experiences of guilt and shame (e.g., Bierbrauer, 1992), whereas instruments based on the behavior–self distinction, such as the Test-Of-Self-Conscious-Affect (TOSCA; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1989), focus primarily on negative self-esteem for shame and reparative behavior for guilt (e. g., Luyten, Fontaine, & Corveleyn, 2002). Hence, conflicting results concerning shame and guilt may at least in part stem from the fact that the different approaches have focused on different reactions associated with these emotions. Therefore, in this study, we have included a broad, representative sample of guilt and shame reactions.

The selection of such a representative sample of guilt and shame reactions was primarily based on a review of the relevant literature on shame and guilt. This allowed us to operationalize and compare the various existing conceptualizations of guilt and shame. Given the prominence of the four previously presented approaches with respect to guilt and shame, we concentrated on emotional reactions that are relevant for these four approaches. To facilitate this undertaking, we have relied on the componential emotion theory (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Mesquita, Frijda, & Scherer, 1997). This theory offers a comprehensive framework to study emotions. According to the componential theory of emotions, emotions are fairly synchronized processes consisting of relationships among various components, such as appraisals, psychophysiological changes, expressive behaviors, action–tendency, and subjective experiences that are elicited by specific and relevant situational antecedents. In this study, we restricted ourselves to three important emotion components that are accessible to self-report and that represent the emotion process from input to output—namely, the appraisal component, the subjective experience component, and the action–tendency component. In total, we selected a representative sample of 24 guilt and shame reactions, which we will now present in some detail (see Table 1 for an operationalization of these reactions).

APPRAISALS

In the literature, we identified five major appraisal types related to guilt, shame, or both—namely, a discrepancy with norms and expectations, perceived reaction of others, controllability, appraisal of the self, and perceived consequences of one's behavior.

Discrepancy with norms and expectations. There is a wide consensus that guilt and shame are elicited in situations in which there is a discrepancy between one's behavior and social and/or personal norms and expectations (e.g., Barrett, 1995). For the present research, we made a distinction between three types of perceived discrepancies. First, we looked at the perceived discrepancy with moral and social norms (Reaction 1)—that is, norms that are part of the larger society in which one is living. Second, we looked at the discrepancy with personal expectations (Reaction 2). According to Lazarus (1991), following Piers and Singer (1955), the former appraisal should be characteristic for guilt (superego function), whereas the latter would be characteristic for shame (ego–ideal function). However, following traditional anthropological theorizing on guilt (e.g., Mead, 1952), it is predicted that the latter reaction is also characteristic for guilt because traditional anthropological theories relate guilt to a violation of internalized standards. Third,

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TABLE 1
Twenty Four A Priori Selected Guilt and Shame Appraisals, Subjective Experiences, and Action Tendencies

Appraisals	Abbreviation
Discrepancy with norms and expectations	
1. I would think: With what I did, I have violated a moral or a social norm.	Norm violation
2. I would think: With what I did, I am falling short of my personal expectations.	Personal expectation
3. I would think: With what I did, I am falling short of the expectations of others.	Others expectation
Reaction of others: gazing or reproaching	
4. I would have the impression that others are looking at me, that I am the center of attention.	Gazed at
5. I would have the impression that others are reproaching me.	Other reproaches
Controllability	
6. I would think: This is because of me. I could have behaved differently and then it would not have happened.	Because of me
7. I would think: This is happening to me.	Happening to me
Appraisal of self	
8. I would think: I am a bad and reprehensible person.	Bad person
9. I would think: I am a weak and incompetent person.	Weak person
Consequences	
10. I would think about what I did to others, about the damage I have caused.	Damage
11. I would think: What I do, harms my reputation.	Reputation
Subjective experiences	
12. Shame	Shame
13. Guilt	Guilt
14. I would sincerely regret what I have done.	Regret
15. I would feel powerless and small in the situation.	Powerless
16. Embarrassment	Embarrassment
17. Anger	Anger
18. Sadness	Sadness
19. Fear	Fear
Action tendencies	
Positive action tendencies	
20. I would try to repair the damage I caused or do something else to put things right.	Repair
21. I would work on myself, improve myself as a result of the situation.	Improve self
Negative action tendencies	
22. I would reproach myself and think that I deserve a sanction.	Self-reproach
23. I would ruminate about what happened.	Rumination
24. I would want to get out of the situation (disappear, run away).	Disappear

we included the perceived discrepancy with the expectations of others (Reaction 3). If an external focus is central for shame, as traditional anthropological theories (e.g., Mead, 1952) suppose, then one would expect that shame is more related to a perceived discrepancy with the expectations of others.

Perceived reaction of others. According to the classical anthropological differentiation between guilt and shame in terms of the internal–external dimension, the perceived reactions of others should play a major role in shame but not in guilt. The appraisal that most

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clearly refers to this distinction is having the impression that others are staring at you or that you are in the center of attention. Baumeister (1998), however, has reported that the reactions of others are also relevant for guilt because others can induce guilt by means of explicit or implicit reproaches. Therefore, we included a reaction referring to others as audience (Reaction 4) and a reaction referring to others as reproaching (Reaction 5).

Controllability. According to attribution theory (e.g., Weiner, 1985), guilt and shame are differentiated in terms of controllability, with guilt being characterized by a sense of control over the situation and shame being characterized by a lack of perceived control. Both perceived control (Reaction 6) and lack of control (Reaction 7) were included in this study.

Appraisal of the self. According to Tangney (1998), shame, but not guilt, is characterized by a global negative self-focus. However, according to some (e.g., McWilliams, 1994; Vergote, 1992), guilt and shame do not differ in terms of a negative focus on the self but in terms of the content of the negative self-focus. In guilt, the self would be experienced as bad and morally reprehensible, whereas in shame the self would be experienced as weak and incompetent. Both types of negative self-appraisals (i.e., the self as weak [Reaction 8] and the self as bad [Reaction 9]) were included.

Perceived consequences of one's behavior. Empirical research has shown that there is an intrinsic link between guilt and empathy (Baumeister et al., 1994; Hoffman, 1998). In line with this research, it is believed that guilt is associated with a focus on the victim (i.e., a loved one that was hurt). Hence, in guilt, the focus on the consequences of one's behavior for others would be important (Reaction 10). However, a person can also focus on the consequences of his or her behavior for himself or herself. Because shame is believed to be associated with an external orientation, a focus on the consequences for one's own status or reputation within the group should be characteristic for shame (Reaction 11).

SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

Besides the terms *guilt* (Reaction 12) and *shame* (Reaction 13), we added *sincere regret* (Reaction 14) to capture the subjective experience of guilt, feeling of powerlessness (Reaction 15; Tangney & Dearing, 2002), and embarrassment (Reaction 16) to capture the subjective experience of shame (Mead, 1952). Moreover, we included anger (Reaction 17), sadness (Reaction 18), and fear (Reaction 19). These three emotion terms refer to the three basic clusters of negative emotions (Diener, Smith, & Fujita, 1995; Fontaine, Poortinga, Setiadi, & Suprapti, 2002) and thus offered the possibility to relate guilt and shame to the larger emotion domain. Depending on the theoretical framework, each of these three emotions is assumed to be directly related to guilt and/or to shame. For instance, according to Izard (1977), guilt is closely related to fear for punishment, and shame is related to fear for social exclusion. Depression and sadness have often been linked to both guilt (Harder, 1995) and shame (e.g., Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Finally, anger is often seen as an important cause of guilt and a frequent consequence of shame (e.g., Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

ACTION TENDENCIES

In the literature, we found both constructive and unconstructive action tendencies related to guilt and to shame. Guilt has been related to a reparative action tendency

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(Reaction 20) that restores interpersonal relationships (Baumeister et al., 1994; Tangney, 1998) and to intrapsychic reactions such as self-reproach, intrapunitive reactions (Reaction 22), and rumination (Reaction 23; Harder, 1995; Vergote, 1992). Shame, on the other hand, has been linked to a tendency to improve unwanted aspects of the self (Reaction 21) because shame involves a confrontation with unwanted aspects of the self (Lindsay-Hartz et al., 1995). However, it has also been linked to a tendency to disappear or to hide (Reaction 24; Barrett, 1995).

SITUATION VARIATION

Aside from variation in reactions, the different approaches toward shame and guilt may be adequate for different situational antecedents. In the present study, we therefore included a representative sample of situations from the guilt and shame domain (see Method section). This allowed us to investigate whether and to which extent the various theoretical approaches to shame and guilt are limited to a subset of guilt and shame antecedent situations.

PERSON VARIATION

Most existing empirical research on guilt and shame can be categorized into one of three research types that differ considerably in their sensitivity for situation and person variation, namely (a) experimental-like research focusing on the impact of situation variation (e.g., Smith et al., 2002), (b) interindividual-difference research focusing on the impact of person variation (e.g., the Test of Self-Conscious Affect; Tangney et al., 1989), and (c) research with narratives focusing on the joint impact of situation and person variation (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1995). Because there appears to be an association between the guilt and shame approaches and the preferred type of research—for instance, the behavior–self distinction is mainly based on individual-difference research (e.g., Tangney & Dearing, 2002)—it might be the case that the current confusion concerning shame and guilt is related to differences in designs and research perspectives. Therefore, in this study, we will try to systematically disentangle the impact of situation and person variation on guilt and shame reactions.

CULTURAL VARIATION

Finally, differences between studies on shame and guilt might also be related to cultural variation. Because some cross-cultural theories on guilt and shame propose that the meaning of these emotions varies across cultures (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991), the appropriateness of a particular theoretical approach of guilt and shame might in part depend on the cultural context. Therefore, we investigated guilt and shame in three culturally very different countries, namely Belgium, Peru, and Hungary. From a cultural perspective, it is interesting to compare Belgium and Peru because of their substantial difference on the individualism–collectivism dimension, which is the main cultural dimension that has been related to the salience of guilt and shame (e.g., Hofstede, 1980). Belgium is situated at the individualistic end, whereas Peru is situated at the collectivistic end of the dimension.

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Although Hungary can be assumed to be in between these two countries but more to the individualism pole, Hungary is particularly interesting from a linguistic perspective. According to a line of cultural theorizing, linguistic factors play an important role in the construction of emotional realities (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1999). The Hungarian language is unrelated to the Indo-European languages spoken in Europe.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For exploring the four sources of variation, we used a situations by reactions by persons nested within cultural groups design. Thus, we investigated in the three cultural groups how a sample of respondents is prone to display a representative sample of guilt and shame reactions within a representative sample of guilt and shame situations.

METHOD

INSTRUMENTS

Two situation-reaction instruments or scenario-based instruments were constructed, namely (a) the Leuven Guilt and Shame scale (LEGSS), which was applied in Belgium and Hungary; and (b) the Lima Guilt and Shame Scale (LIGSS), which was applied in Peru.

THE LEGSS

Guilt and shame situations. To include a representative sample of guilt and shame situations in the instrument, we first asked students in Belgium to describe personal guilt and shame experiences. Based on these data, a situation taxonomy was constructed by local judges, which was used for the selection of the scenarios in the LEGGS.

One hundred forty-four students (34% males) of the University of Leuven, which cooperated voluntarily to the research, were asked to describe in detail one situation in which they mainly experienced guilt, one situation in which they mainly experienced shame, one situation in which they experienced both guilt and shame, and one situation in which they experienced neither guilt nor shame but in which they could have experienced guilt or shame. The participants were invited to describe their emotional reactions in these situations and the objective features of these situations. In this way, 552 situations were generated: 142 guilt situations, 142 shame situations, 138 guilt and shame situations, and 130 no-guilt and no-shame situations (for a detailed account, see Verbruggen, 2002).

All these guilt and shame situations were sorted by 10 judges (5 males, 5 females), all having a master's degree in psychology, in piles[1] on the basis of similarity. The judges could make as many piles and could put as many situations in each pile as they wanted. Once the categorization was finished, the judges were asked to label each of the piles and to rate the similarity for each pair of piles on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not similar*) to 5 (*highly similar*). Per judge, a similarity matrix for all situations was computed on a 6-point scale as follows. A similarity of 6 was attributed if two situations were sorted into the same pile. For pairs that had been sorted into different piles, the similarity rating between the respective

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piles was attributed. The similarity matrices were then averaged across all judges per cultural group.

The average-linkage hierarchical cluster analysis from SAS (SAS/STAT User's Guide, 1994) was used for analysis of the similarity matrix. A solution with 42 clusters was selected based on pseudo t^2 and pseudo F, which accounted for 64.0% of the variance in the similarities. Because many of the clusters contained only a few situations, we focused on clusters containing at least 5% of the situations. Seven clusters met this criterion. These clusters could be interpreted as (a) embarrassing public situations (91 situations), (b) damage to others without intention (36 situations), (c) failure in achievement situations (35 situations), (d) stealing, lying, and having other explicit norm-violating behavior (33 situations), (e) not living up to expectations (87 situations), (f) conflict, quarreling, and hurting (74 situations), and (g) relationship problems (e.g., ending a relationship, infidelity; 49 situations).

From each of the seven major guilt and shame clusters, we selected two prototypical situations for the LEGSS. These prototypical situations were rewritten to improve the readability and comprehensibility.

Guilt and shame reactions. We operationalized the 24 theoretically identified guilt and shame reactions (see above) into items (see Table 1). Thus, the LEGSS consists of 14 scenarios and 24 emotional reactions.

Response scales. Participants were asked to imagine themselves in each of the scenarios as vivid as possible and indicate the probability of each of the emotional reactions (18 reactions) on a 6-point scale, ranging from 0 *(not probable)* to 5 *(very probable)*. Furthermore, participants were also asked to indicate the intensity, ranging from 0 *(not at all)* to 5 *(very intense)* of the subjective experiences worded in emotion terms (6 items).[2]

Hungarian version of the LEGSS. For the translation into Hungarian, first an English translation was constructed based on translation, back translation, and the committee approach (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Following the same approach, the Hungarian version was made on the basis of the English version of the instrument.[3]

THE LEGSS

If culture has an impact on the meaning of guilt and shame, as hypothesized by Markus and Kitayama (1991), using a single instrument constructed within a particular cultural group would not be capable to uncover such culture specificity (Poortinga, 1995). Therefore, we constructed two culture-representative scenario instruments on the basis of extensive qualitative research within the two most differing cultural groups—namely, in Belgium and in Peru. The LEGGS was assumed to be sufficiently adequate for the Hungarian sample because of the cultural overlap between the two groups (both countries share a common Western background).

Guilt and shame situations. For the selection of a representative sample of guilt and shame situations, we followed the same procedure as for the construction of the LEGSS. One hundred and four students from the Universidad de Lima and from the San Marcos University were asked to describe in detail four guilt and shame situations using the same instructions as in Belgium. In this way, 298 situations were generated: 80 guilt situations, 83 shame situations, 68 shame and guilt situations, and 67 no-guilt and no-shame situations (for a detailed account, see Fontaine, Estas, Corveleyn, Herrera, & Fernandez, 2001).

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All these guilt and shame situations were sorted by 21 (6 males, 15 females) judges, undergraduate psychology students of the Universidad de Lima, in piles on the basis of similarity. Because the Leuven judges indicated that this was a rather difficult task, the Lima judges were instructed to sort all situations into 15 piles. The number of situations in each pile, however, was free. Once the categorization was finished, the judges were asked to label each of the piles and to rate the similarity for each pair of piles on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not similar*) to 5 (*highly similar*). Per judge, a similarity matrix for all situations was computed. The dissimilarity matrices were then averaged across all judges per cultural group.

The average-linkage hierarchical cluster analysis from SAS (SAS/STAT User's Guide, 1994) was used for an analysis of the similarity matrix in each cultural group. A 15-cluster solution, which was selected based on pseudo t^2 and pseudo F, accounted for 52.2% of the variance in similarities. Six clusters contained at least 5% of the situations. They could be interpreted as (a) embarrassing public situations (79 situations), (b) conflicts and problems with peer relations (63 situations), (c) conflicts and problems with family relations (43 situations), (d) failure in achievement situations (33 situations), (e) stealing, lying, and having explicit norm-violating behavior (24 situations), and (f) excessive alcohol and drug use (16 situations).

Because of practical limitations (i.e., the available research time of respondents), we had to restrict the LIGSS to nine scenarios. First, from each of the six guilt and shame clusters identified in the qualitative research, a prototypical scenario was selected. Moreover, three additional situations stemming from different clusters that were assumed to tap a salient aspect of guilt and shame according to local psychologists were added. All scenarios were again rewritten to improve readability and comprehensibility.

Guilt and shame reactions. The 24 theoretically identified reactions associated with guilt and shame, which were included in the LEGSS, were carefully translated by means of translation and back translation. Because this list was mainly based on Western psychological literature and we wanted to avoid construct underrepresentation (Messick, 1989) in Lima, we screened the qualitative data for emotional reactions that were reported with some frequency. This screening indicated that the a priori selected 24 reactions covered the domain of guilt and shame reactions in Lima rather well. Nevertheless, based on a joint reading of the results with local psychologists, we added 5 reactions. These were (a) having the impression that others look down on you, (b) thinking that you are not the only one who is responsible for the situation, (c) shouting and cursing, (d) keeping quiet and trying to think about other things, and (e) humiliation. Thus, the LIGSS consists of nine scenarios and 29 (24 + 5) reactions.

Response scales. Respondents were asked to imagine themselves in each of the scenarios as vivid as possible and to indicate the probability of each of the emotional reactions (22 reactions) on a 6-point scale, ranging from 0 *(not probable)* to 5 *(very probable)*. Furthermore, participants were also asked to indicate the intensity, ranging from 0 *(not at all)* to 5 *(very intense)* of the subjective experiences worded in emotion terms (seven items).

PARTICIPANTS

In Leuven, 300 1st-year psychology students (17% males) responded to the LEGSS. All participants with more than 2.5% missing values (6 participants) were deleted from further

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analyses. For the other participants, a missing value was replaced by the (gender-specific) item mean. In Hungary, 351 students (49% males) responded to the LEGSS.[4] All participants with more than 2.5% missing values (11 participants) were deleted from further analyses. For the other participants, a missing value was replaced by the (gender-specific) item mean. In Lima, 278 students (51% males) from different faculties of the Universidad de Lima responded to the LIGSS. All participants with more than 2.5% missing values (18 participants) were deleted from further analyses. For the other participants, a missing value was replaced by the (gender-specific) item mean.

RESULTS

THE STRUCTURE OF GUILT AND SHAME REACTIONS BASED ON SITUATION VARIATION IN BELGIUM, HUNGARY, AND PERU

The impact of situation variation was investigated by examining how the guilt and shame reactions correlated across the representative set of guilt and shame situations. These analyses were based on reaction scores per situation averaged across persons in each of the three cultural groups. These average reaction scores were very reliable. The estimates of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .97 to 1.00 (with an average of .99) in Belgium, from .96 to 1.00 (with an average of .99) in Hungary, and from .81 to 1.00 (with an average of .97) in Peru. Moreover, the average reaction scores were substantially correlated. The correlations ranged from -.86 to .96 (with an average absolute correlation of .44) in Belgium, from -.56 to .98 (with an average absolute correlation of .48) in Hungary, and from -.72 to .97 (with an average absolute correlation of .44) in Peru.

To get a comprehensive overview of the major dimensions that underlie the situation variation of guilt and shame reactions, we applied a nonmetrical multidimensional scaling on the Euclidean distances between the standardized reactions (which are a monotone transformation of the Pearson correlations) per cultural group with the multidimensional scaling procedure (PROC MDS) of SAS (SAS Technical Report P-229, 1992).

With multidimensional scaling, psychological dissimilarities between stimuli are represented as distances between points in a geometrical space in such a way that the distances between the points represent the observed dissimilarities between the stimuli as well as possible (Borg & Groenen, 1997). For the configurations with 1 up to 5 dimensions, the Kruskal stress was 0.24, 0.14, 0.08, 0.03, and 0.01, respectively; and the proportion of variance accounted for was 0.86, 0.92, 0.96, 1.00, and 1.00, respectively, in the Belgian sample. In the Hungarian sample, the Kruskal stress was 0.32, 0.13, 0.06, 0.02, and 0.01, and the proportion of variance accounted for was 0.72, 0.92, 0.98, 1.00, and 1.00 for the configurations with 1 up to 5 dimensions. In Peru, the Kruskal stress was 0.35, 0.15, 0.08, 0.05, and 0.03, and the proportion of variance accounted for was 0.64, 0.90, 0.96, 0.98, and 1.00 for the configurations with 1 up to 5 dimensions. Thus, in each of the three cultural groups, the two-dimensional configuration provided a good fit to the data and was therefore selected for further analyses.

To investigate the congruence between the three culture-specific configurations, we applied Generalized Procrustes Analysis (GPA; Borg & Groenen, 1997; Commandeur, 1991). GPA is for multidimensional scaling what Procrustes rotation is for factor analysis. Rotation, reflection, translation, and dilatation of the coordinate system have no effect on the relative distances between the points and thus lead to equivalent results. GPA applies

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these transformations on the coordinate systems of different groups in such a way that they correspond as much as possible without affecting the relative distances in each group. After GPA, structures can be directly compared between groups. An important strength of the GPA for the present purpose is that it can even be applied if some of the stimuli are absent in some of the groups. Moreover, the program provides (Commandeur, 1991) an average or centroid configuration and congruence measures at configuration and item level. The congruence measures are computed as the proportion of the squared distances accounted for in each group and for each item.

The centroid configuration generated by GPA accounted for 84.6%, 86.4%, and 91.4% of the squared distances in Belgium, Hungary, and Lima, respectively.[5] Moreover, after GPA the coordinates of the centroid configuration were highly correlated with the coordinates of the culture-specific configurations, namely .92, .91, and .96 for the first dimension and .93, .98, and .96 for the second dimension of the Belgian, Hungarian, and Peruvian configurations, respectively. This indicated that the overall situation structure is highly similar between the three groups. Therefore, we could base our interpretations on the centroid configuration. Moreover, because the additional five reactions included in the LIGSS did not have any impact on the dimensionality and interpretation of the configuration, we only present the results for the 24 shared reactions (see Figure 1). The first dimension revealed a clear distinction between guilt and shame as subjective experiences. The constructive and unconstructive reactions attributed to guilt (e.g., repair and self-reproach) are opposed to being exposed to others (e.g., gazing at) and its paralyzing consequences (e.g., powerlessness) attributed to shame. On the second dimension, reactions implying an interpersonal, social focus (e.g., being gazed at and focus on damage) gradually shifted to internally focused reactions (e.g., powerlessness and improvement of self).

THE STRUCTURE OF GUILT AND SHAME REACTIONS BASED ON PERSON VARIATION IN BELGIUM, HUNGARY, AND PERU

The impact of person variation was investigated by examining the correlations between guilt and shame reactions across persons. These analyses were based on reaction scores per person averaged across situations in each of the three cultural groups. For the analyses of the data, we followed the same approach as for the situation variation.

The reaction scales were sufficiently reliable in the three cultural groups. The estim-correlations ates of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .81 to .93 (with an average of .87) in Belgium, from .80 to .91 (with an average of .86) in Hungary, and from .76 to .89 (with an average of .83) in Peru.[6] Moreover, the reactions were substantially correlated. The correlations ranged from .18 to .85 (with an average absolute correlation of .56) in Belgium, from .31 to .87 (with an average absolute correlation of .58) in Hungary, and from .27 to .84 (with an average absolute correlation of .53) in Peru.

To get a comprehensive overview of the major dimensions that underlie the relationships between guilt and shame reactions because of person variation, we applied a nonmetrical multidimensional scaling on the Euclidean distances between the standardized reactions per cultural group via PROC MDS of SAS. For the configurations with 1 up to 5 dimensions, the Kruskal stress was 0.28, 0.16, 0.08, 0.06, and 0.05, respectively; and the proportion of variance accounted for was 0.79, 0.88, 0.96, 0.98, and 0.98, respectively, in the Belgian sample. In the Hungarian sample, the Kruskal stress was 0.34, 0.16, 0.10, 0.08, and 0.06, and the proportion of variance accounted for was 0.76, 0.88, 0.94, 0.96, and 0.96 for configurations with 1 up to 5 dimensions. In Peru, the Kruskal stress was 0.45, 0.18,

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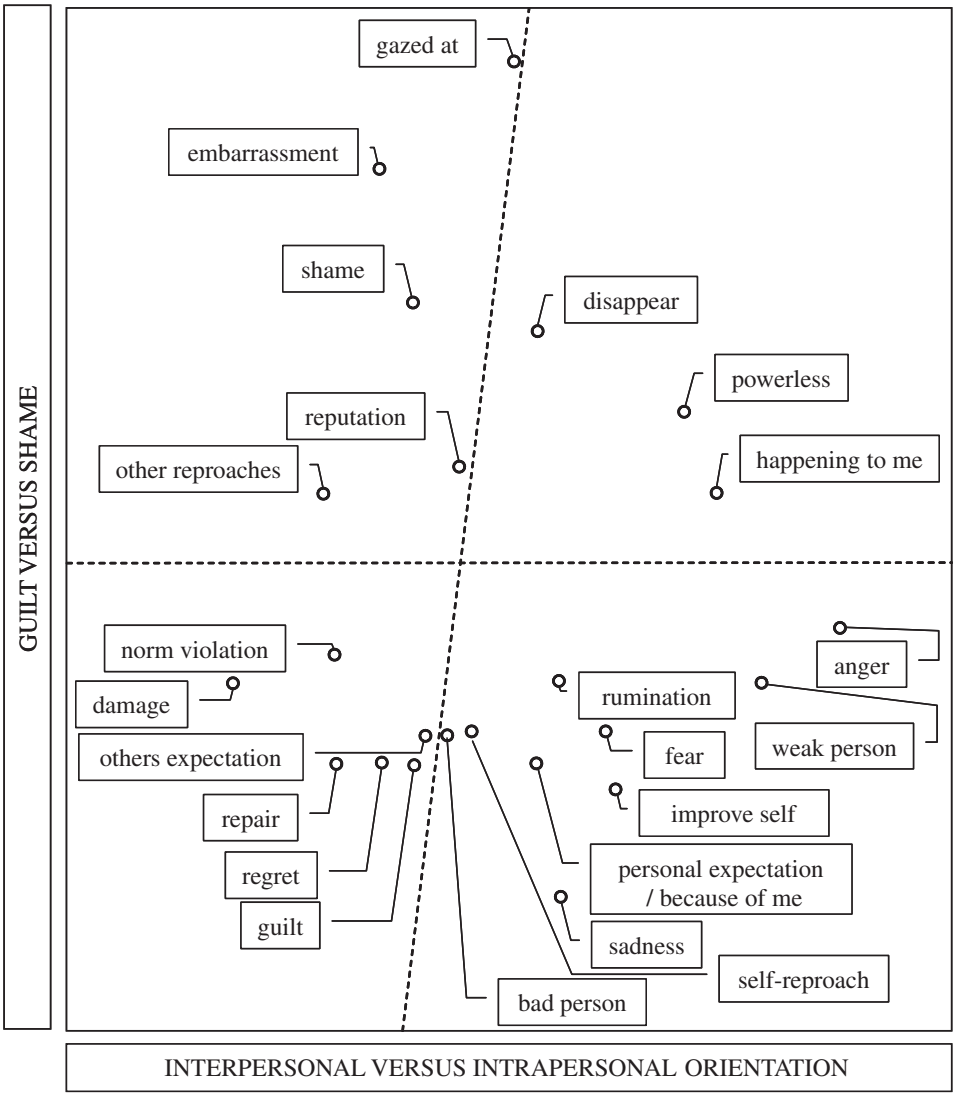


Figure 1: Centroid Structure of Guilt and Shame Reactions Based on Situation Variation

0.12, 0.08, and 0.06, and the proportion of variance accounted for was 0.38, 0.83, 0.90, 0.94, and 0.96 for configurations with 1 up to 5 dimensions. Thus, in each of the three cultural groups, the two-dimensional configuration provided a reasonable good fit to the data. Moreover, the additional items included in the LIGSS did not give rise to additional dimensions and did not alter the interpretation of the person structure in Lima. Therefore, the two-dimensional configurations were selected for further analyses.

As for the situation structures, GPA was applied on the three culture-specific person structures. The centroid configuration generated by GPA on the two-dimensional configurations accounted for 75.2%, 71.1%, and 84.5% of the squared distances in Belgium,

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Hungary, and Lima, respectively. Two reactions had a substantial negative impact on the total fit—namely "it is happening to me" and "anger." An inspection of the culture-specific configurations revealed that in the Belgian structure, the item *it is happening to me* is an outlier, whereas in the Hungarian configuration, the item *anger* is an outlier. Without these two outliers, the centroid configuration accounted for 80.0% of the squared distances in Belgium, 90.4% in Hungary, and 89.7% in Peru. Moreover, without these two outliers, the coordinates of the centroid configuration were substantially correlated with the coordinates of the culture-specific configurations, namely .93, .95, and .95 for the coordinates on the first dimension, and .83, .98, and .79 for the coordinates on the second dimension of the Belgian, Hungarian, and Peruvian configurations, respectively. Thus, for the person structure, the first dimension is highly similar across the three groups, whereas the second dimension is somewhat less stable. An inspection of the culture-specific coordinates on the second dimension, however, did not reveal interpretable shifts. Furthermore, although the person-reaction scales have sufficient reliability, their reliability is considerably lower than the situation-reaction scales. This difference in reliability could partially account for the shifts on the second, least important, dimension. Therefore, we based our interpretations on the centroid configuration.

In the centroid configuration (see Figure 2), the first dimension can be interpreted as a control dimension. Emotional reactions that refer to a lack of control (e.g., powerlessness and weak person) are situated at the one end of this dimension, whereas at the other end, reactions that imply control (e.g., personal fault, improvement of self, repair) cluster together. The centroid configuration also shows that guilt and shame are situated near one another in the person structure (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, guilt is situated more at the control side, whereas shame is situated more near the middle of this dimension.

The second dimension of the centroid person structure consists of reactions referring to appraisals (e.g., happening to me, norm violation) that gradually shift to reactions that refer to subjective experiences and action tendencies (e.g., disappearance, shame). On this dimension, guilt is situated near the middle, whereas shame is situated somewhat more on the side of subjective experiences and action tendencies. It has to be noted, however, that because this dimension is less stable, these interpretations should be met with some caution.

THE SALIENCE OF GUILT AND SHAME REACTIONS IN BELGIUM, HUNGARY, AND PERU

The third and final set of analyses focus on the variability in the salience of the selected guilt and shame reactions across situations and persons in each of the three cultural groups. Twenty-one of the 24 reactions included in the LEGSS were selected because they were identified in the literature as defining parts of guilt and or shame. However, we found substantial variation in the averages of the guilt and shame reactions. In Belgium, the average scores ranged from 1.20 to 3.59, in Hungary from 1.46 to 3.18, and in Lima from 1.01 to 3.22 on a scale from 0 to 5 (see Table 2). Moreover, despite the fact that the LIGSS was constructed with culture-specific scenarios, each of the three cultural groups converged on the salience of the reactions: average reaction ratings correlated .87 between Belgium and Hungary, .84 between Belgium and Peru, and .84 between Hungary and Peru. However, perhaps the most striking result is that the reactions of *weak person* and *bad person*, which are considered to be central to the definition of shame according to the behavior–self approach (e.g., Tangney, 1998), were among the least salient reactions in the guilt and shame domain in the three cultural groups.

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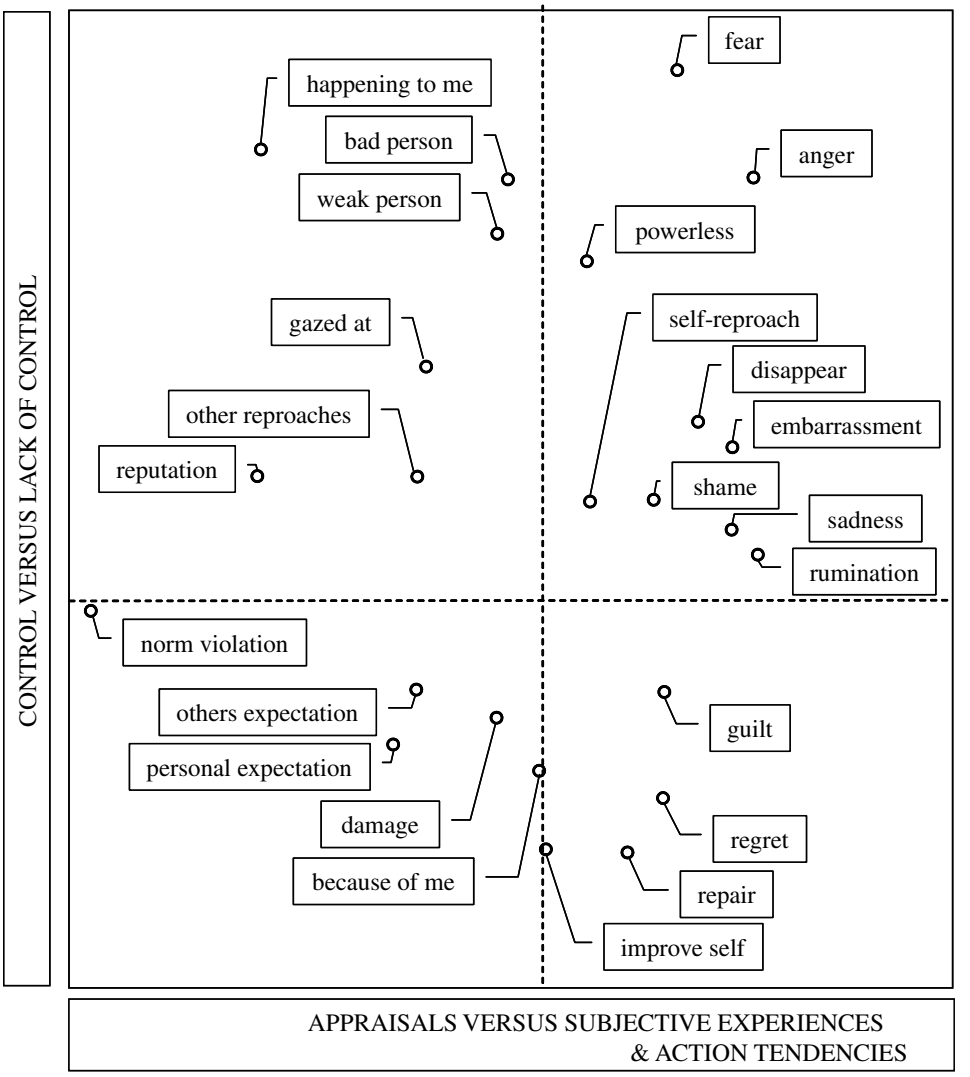


Figure 2: Centroid Structure of Guilt and Shame Reactions Based on Person Variation

Four of the five reactions that were only included in the LIGSS received on average a very low score, namely 1.01 (*having the impression others look down on you*), 1.18 (*keeping quiet and trying to think about other things*), 1.27 (*humiliation*), and 1.46 (*shouting and cursing*) on a scale from 0 to 5. For the fifth reaction, *thinking that you are not the only one that is responsible for the situation* (2.17), the average score was somewhat higher but still below the average of 2.50. This further supported the representativeness of the 24 a priori selected reactions for the Peruvian group.

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TABLE 2
Average Score Per Emotion Scale in Belgium, Hungary, and Peru

Emotion Scale	*General Average*	*Belgium Average*	*Hungary Average*	*Peru Average*
Weak person	1.26	1.59	1.51	1.00
Bad person	1.35	1.20	1.66	1.04
Powerless	1.43	2.20	1.46	1.41
Fear	1.44	1.71	.	1.16
Norm violation	1.78	1.79	1.95	1.60
Happening to me	1.81	1.98	1.89	1.72
Other reproaches	1.93	3.10	2.00	1.85
Anger	1.93	2.34	1.53	2.33
Self reproaches	2.02	2.28	1.88	2.17
Gazed at	2.16	2.04	1.82	2.50
Reputation	2.16	2.43	2.21	2.11
Sadness	2.25	2.26	2.19	2.31
Damage	2.34	3.05	2.47	2.22
Personal expectation	2.63	2.92	2.74	2.53
Embarrassment	2.64	2.89	2.38	2.90
Shame	2.67	3.01	2.63	2.72
Disappear	2.68	3.01	2.59	2.76
Rumination	2.68	3.34	2.56	2.80
Others expectations	2.71	3.49	2.89	2.54
Improve self	2.85	2.69	2.68	3.02
Regret	3.09	3.46	3.19	2.99
Guilt	3.13	3.56	3.16	3.11
Because of me	3.16	3.38	3.10	3.22
Repair	3.16	3.59	3.17	3.16

DISCUSSION

THE STRUCTURE OF GUILT AND SHAME REACTIONS BASED ON SITUATION VARIATION

Because the situation structure represents the impact of situation variation on average across persons, it reveals how appraisals, subjective experiences, and action tendencies relate to one other prototypically. This implies that the general defining and differentiating characteristics of the guilt and shame emotion processes can be derived from the situation structure.

Two of the four existing approaches of guilt and shame receive support in the situation structure. The classical distinction between guilt and shame in terms of the internal–external dimension (first approach) fits very well with the opposition between the interpersonal quadrant of shame (with reactions such as *being gazed at*, *reputation*, and *embarrassment*) and the intrapersonal quadrant of guilt (with reactions such as *personal expectations*, *rumination*, *self-reproaches*, and *sadness*). However, because of the intrapersonal quadrant for shame and the interpersonal quadrant for guilt in the situation structure, the internal–external dimension cannot be considered as the only differentiating dimension between guilt and shame.

The description of guilt as a communal-oriented emotion (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1995; fourth approach) was confirmed by the interpersonal quadrant of guilt (with reactions such

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as *others expectation*, *damage*, and *repair*). However, because of the intrapersonal quadrant, guilt cannot be exclusively defined in terms of a communal-oriented focus in the situation structure.

Superego-related processes versus ego–ideal-related processes (Lazarus, 1991; Piers & Singer, 1955) do not distinguish guilt from shame. The second approach is thus not supported by the situation structure. Yet the situation structure nevertheless reveals that the distinction between superego-related processes versus ego–ideal-related processes has at least some validity. It distinguishes two types of guilt, which are represented by the interpersonal quadrant of guilt (with reactions such as *norm violation* and *repair*) and the intrapersonal quadrant of guilt (with reactions such as *personal expectation* and *improve self*).

The differentiation between a behavior self-focus versus a global negative self-focus (e.g., Tangney & Dearing, 2002; third approach) is not supported by the situation structure. Both reactions referring to a behavior focus (e.g. *repair* and *because of me*) and to a global negative self-focus (*bad person* and *weak person*) are situated at the guilt pole of the guilt–shame dimension. In addition, there is no support that feelings of powerlessness generalize to the global self in shame, which also contradicts the third approach (e.g., Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Finally, it should be noted that although guilt and shame reactions were selected in a balanced way, it turned out that much more emotional reactions were situated at the guilt pole. A close inspection of the reactions suggests that guilt is a more complex emotion than shame. All reactions that focus on the immediate situational context are situated at the shame pole, whereas all reactions implying deeper cognitive processing (such as appraising the expectations of others) are situated at the guilt pole.

THE STRUCTURE OF GUILT AND SHAME REACTIONS BASED ON PERSON VARIATION

Because the person structure was constructed on the basis of person variation in guilt and shame reactions averaged across situations, it refers to the proneness of individuals to deviate systematically from the prototypical guilt and shame emotion processes.

Only the distinction between a behavior self-focus versus a negative self-focus (third approach) received support in the person structure. On the first dimension, reactions referring both to powerlessness (*happening to me*, *powerless*, and *fear*) and to global negative self-evaluation (*weak person* and *bad person*) are opposed to reactions implying control (*because of me*) and a behavioral focus (*damage*, *repair*, and *improve self*). The three other approaches to shame and guilt were not supported. Reactions referring to the internal–external dimension (first approach) are situated adjacent to one another (such as *weak person* versus *gazed at* and *personal expectation* versus *others expectation*). Both reactions that refer to the super-ego aspect (such as *damage* and *repair*) are situated adjacent to reactions that refer to the ego-ideal aspect (such as *personal expectation* and *improve self*; second approach). Moreover, both internal-oriented (*personal expectation* and *improve self*) and communal-oriented reactions (*damage* and *others expectations*; fourth approach) are not clearly separated in the person structure.

Finally, it should be noted that the second dimension, on which appraisals are differentiated from subjective experiences and action tendencies, does not relate to any of the four approaches. This could point to the fact that some people cope in a more cognitive way with guilt and shame situations, whereas others have a more affective–reactive type of coping. Yet another interpretation is that this dimension reveals causality, in that interindividual differences in behavioral versus negative self-appraisals lead to interindividual differences in subjective experiences and action tendencies. Although this latter interpretation is in line

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with appraisal theory (e.g., Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001), further research is needed to investigate these various interpretations.

THE SALIENCE OF GUILT AND SHAME REACTIONS

The reaction scores averaged across situations and persons shed some interesting light on the confusion in the literature with respect of the global negative self-focus in the guilt and shame domain. The negative self-focus reactions were rated very low and thus cannot be considered as salient reactions in the guilt and shame domain. Still, they are meaningfully related to the other guilt and shame reactions. However, these relationships are very different from a situation than from a person perspective: Although situations that elicit more guilt also tend to elicit more negative self-focus, proneness to negative self-focus is opposed to the proneness to agency-oriented guilt reactions.

CULTURAL VARIATION

One of the most important findings of this study was the remarkable similarity between the three cultural groups in both the person and the situation structure. Moreover, there was a high convergence between these groups in the relative salience of the guilt and shame reactions. It has to be underlined that these findings were also observed in Peru, with different situations (locally constructed) and that the five reactions added in Peru received low ratings and did not alter the structure. Hence, results from this study strongly suggest that the same guilt and shame emotion processes are operating in each of the three cultural groups.

Nevertheless, from a cross-cultural perspective, the current study has some limitations. First, the Belgian instrument was used in Hungary without a preceding qualitative research. However, because the qualitative study led to highly similar results in Belgium and Peru, in a cultural group which is much more dissimilar from the Belgian sample than from the Hungarian sample, it can be expected that a Hungarian instrument would have led to the same conclusions. Another limitation is the reliance on student samples. Although such samples do show substantial differences in value orientation between cultures (Schwartz, 1994), it can be argued that students in Peru are more influenced by Western culture than other Peruvians are. A third limitation is the reliance on only three cultural groups. It must be clear that these groups are not representative for all possible cultural variations. Thus, further replication in other cultural groups and with other samples is needed. A recent study on the impact of situation variation among adult Rarámuri Indians in Mexico and Javanese peasants in Indonesia (Breugelmans, 2004), which found similar results as in the present study, is an important step in the right direction.

If the findings of the present study are further confirmed in other cultural groups and with other samples, they could form the basis for further research on the relationship between culture and the emotion processes of guilt and shame. Although this study suggests high cross-cultural similarity in the emotion processes implied in shame and guilt, important cultural differences in shame and guilt may still exist. For example, differences in the salience of guilt and shame reactions within or across situations that do not affect the correlations between the reactions based on situation or person variation are compatible with the present findings.

The multidimensional nature of the guilt and shame domain (a situation and a person structure; each consisting of two subdimensions) offers a broad theoretical framework for formulating hypotheses concerning the relationship between culture, guilt, and shame. On the basis

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of the present findings, the impact of culture can be conceptualized in at least four different ways. First, culture can determine which specific situations are relevant for the guilt and shame domain. For instance, eating pork will be appraised as a moral violation by Muslims but not by Christians. Second, culture can have an impact on the salience or the threshold of a single emotional reaction. For instance, in a cultural group with explicit cultural rules and rituals about how to offer one's apologies, the threshold for apologizing might be lower than in a culture not having such rules and rituals. Third, culture might have an impact on the level of the situation dimensions. For instance, based on the present findings, it is meaningful to hypothesize that the interpersonal orientation is more salient in interdependent cultural groups and that the intrapersonal orientation is more salient in independent cultural groups. Fourth, culture might have an impact at the level of the person dimensions. For instance, it can be hypothesized that a sense of personal control is more favored in cultural groups with an independent construction of the self. These four different ways in which culture can have an impact on the guilt and shame domain can be organized according to two underlying principles, namely (a) whether the impact of culture is at a situational (1 and 3) or at a personal (2 and 4) level, and (b) whether the impact of culture is specific (1 and 2) or generalized (3 and 4). Finally, it should be noted that these four ways to conceptualize the impact of culture are not mutually exclusive.

CONCLUSIONS

Russell and Feldman Barrett (1999) have compared emotion research with dissecting an elephant. The various existing emotion theories seem to be each looking at the same elephant but from different perspectives. Moreover, each theoretical perspective runs the danger of taking the part for the whole. This metaphor seems to be particularly apt to describe the results of the present project on shame and guilt. The four existing major approaches on guilt and shame each received empirical support, but none of these approaches could explain all findings, and thus none of these approaches offers a complete, comprehensive picture of shame and guilt. The internal–external distinction, the moral-aspiration distinction, and the guilt as communally oriented emotion are important dimensions defining the situation variation of guilt and shame reactions. They are adequate to describe prototypical guilt and shame emotion processes. The behavior focus versus global negative self-focus distinction defined in part person variation in guilt and shame reactions and is thus adequate to describe individual differences in guilt and shame emotion processes. The present study thus demonstrates that each of these four approaches is compatible, and moreover indicates under which conditions each of these approaches are valid. Furthermore, this study also clearly suggests that the same emotional processes are implied in shame and guilt in each of the three cultural groups studied. If further confirmed by future research, the theoretical and methodological framework proposed in this study could offer a comprehensive framework for future research on cultural differences in the guilt and shame domain.

NOTES

1. Judges were instructed to only take the characteristics of the situation into account and not the emotional responses reported by the participants.

2. Because the a priori probability of guilt and shame was assumed to be very high for the 14 carefully selected situations, we decided to ask for emotion intensity instead of probability. For sake of consistency, intensity was asked for with the other subjective experiences probed by a single emotion term.

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3. Some situations were adapted to the Hungarian context to preserve the meaning of the scenario (decentering). For instance, one scenario was about a weekend excursion to Amsterdam with friends. In the Hungarian version, another city was selected.

4. Unfortunately, the fear reaction was not included in the Hungarian sample because of an accidental omission in the final makeup of the English translation. Thus, the Hungarian LEGSS-version consisted of 14 situations and 23 reactions.

5. The fact that the Limanian configuration fits better is an artifact of the presence of five reactions specific for Lima. In Lima, 5 of the 29 reactions fit perfectly in the centroid configuration.

6. The somewhat lower reliabilities in Peru can be explained by the fact that the average reaction scores were only computed on the basis of 9 situations in Peru instead of 14 situations in Belgium and Hungary.

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