

Differences in Shame Across Ethnic Groups in the United States.

Different theories of shame have been proposed to define this self-conscious emotion. Some researchers differentiate shame and guilt while others utilize them both because they have similar outward expressions. The difference in the experience of shame within and across cultures in the United States has been scarcely researched. Shame is called a self-conscious emotion because it is inextricably linked to social appraisal. Many racial and ethnic groups reside in the United States and have their unique social customs and taboos. Being embedded in mainstream American culture, the cultures of racial/ethnic groups are complex and multifaceted. This poster will summarize the research on the experience of shame among the three racial minority groups Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latino/a Americans. This list is not exhaustive, but these groups have been vetted in the research more so than other groups.

Perhaps the most neglected population in the study of the experience of shame is Hispanic/Latino Americans. A review of the literature found only a handful of articles on shame as they relate to acculturative stress (Hoyos & Ramirez, 2007) and sexual abuse (Fontes, 2007), and community violence (Johnson & Lipsett-Rivera, 1999). Machismo and fatalism have emerged in the literature as possible factors affecting the experience of shame in Hispanic and Latino Americans. Much of the research on African Americans' experience of shame centers around historical social issues rather than the personal experience of shame. Due to recent increased rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the African American community, there is no shortage of research concerning shame and stigma associated with sexual health, reproductive trends and social attitudes (Radcliffe et al, 2010, Muturi et al, 2010, Foster et al, 2009, Cunningham, 2002, Buseh et al, 2006).

Research on the strict cultural norms of Chinese culture has been prevalent in the literature because of their well-known adherence to collectivistic culture (Bedford & Hwang,

2003). Due to differing levels of acculturation among Asian Americans, and the many ethnic groups that fall under the title Asian American, research on shame in Chinese culture has limited applicability to this population. Recent research on shame in Chinese Americans demonstrated that shame acted as a moderator between personality and social anxiety (Zhong et al, 2008). Little has been done to explore the expression of shame across cultures until now. The findings of this literature review has implications for social justice activities, multicultural competence and future research of social scientists.