

## Clinical Sociology Review

---

Volume 14 | Issue 1

Article 22

---

1-1-1996

# Self-Conscious Emotions: The Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment, and Pride

Elizabeth Dermody Leonard  
*University of California, Riverside*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr>

---

### Recommended Citation

Leonard, Elizabeth Dermody (1996) "Self-Conscious Emotions: The Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment, and Pride," *Clinical Sociology Review*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, Article 22.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr/vol14/iss1/22>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Clinical Sociology Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState.

historical in nature. Agreeing with Goffman, the author is a situational determinist when it comes to explaining how people interpret their experiences and she asserts that the definition of the situation is largely a function of how things are framed. Shared frames of reference help explain behavior. Lacking a similar frame makes it difficult to understand or appreciate why people behave the way they do. Understanding the frame explains such things as why the Serbs and Croats are killing each other.

Part III is a provocative section that deals with what has been left out of our memory either from forgetfulness or by deliberate omission to control interpretation. Here we see the reverse of the "Big Lie": "That which is not publicly known and spoken about will be socially forgotten." The role of women, blacks, and others in history are examples of forgotten events which determined groups are now attempting to rectify through memory projects of different kinds.

As multiculturalism gains public favor more and more subcultural groups will press for greater recognition of their place in history. Using Canada as an example, she raises the specter of greater divisiveness in society which this ethnic "meism" may engender. These moves to highlight the accomplishments and self-worth of one's subculture may militate against the melting pot concept of an integrated community.

Ms. Irwin-Zarecka has made another significant contribution to what is becoming a major field of social science inquiry. Her plea for cross-disciplinary work is well taken. However, characterizing herself as a cultural sociologist is less boundary lessening than if she said that she is simply a social scientist. Perhaps her frame of reference wouldn't allow this!

**Self-Conscious Emotions: The Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment, and Pride**, edited by June Price Tangney and Kurt W. Fischer. New York: The Guilford Press, 1995. 542 pp., \$45.00 cloth. ISBN 0-89862-264-6  
*Elizabeth Dermody Leonard*  
*University of California, Riverside*

Social scientists with an interest in emotions and behavior will find much to offer in this volume of current research and theory on self-conscious emotions. Drawing from developmental and clinical psychology, psychiatry, and sociology, this collection emphasizes the social basis of self-conscious emotions and describes their general characteristics. Several chapters provide useful reviews of theoretical and empirical literature on self-conscious emotions. However, except for

Scheff's chapter, and a nod or two to Goffman, the authors overlook the many contributions of sociological theory to the understanding of "the social grounding of emotions" (e.g., Cooley, Mead, Collins, etc.).

Divided into six sections by theme, Part I opens with an introductory chapter that provides an overview of the book's functionalist approach. The substance of the book begins with Part II—Frames for The Study of Self-Conscious Emotions—featuring conceptualization and research on these particular emotions. Barrett's chapter, "A Functional-ist Approach to Shame and Guilt," proposes a model of shame and guilt development that focuses on the significance of these affects to the individual and to society. In Chapter Three, "Developmental Transformations in Appraisals for Pride, Shame, and Guilt," Mascolo and Fischer look at appraisal patterns as they examine changes in self-evaluative emotions from infancy, to adolescence and adulthood. This part concludes with "Shame and Guilt in Interpersonal Relationships," as Tangney provides an overview of the differences between shame and guilt in motivational and interpersonal functionings, suggesting that they are not equally effective or "moral" emotions. Guilt for example, is associated with reparative strategies that are likely to strengthen and enhance interpersonal relationships; the self-focused experience of shame is linked to avoidance, withdrawal, and other-blaming, behaviors that impede constructive actions in interpersonal contexts.

Development of Self-Conscious Emotions—Part III—provides insights on the nature and etiology of these emotions among children from late infancy to middle childhood. First, Zahn-Wexler and Robinson, "Empathy and Guilt: Early Origins of Feelings of Responsibility" explore the development and the commonalities and differences of guilt and empathy in young children. In Chapter Six, "Emotional States and Traits in Children: The Case of Guilt and Shame," Ferguson and Stegge focus on 5-12 year olds and report preliminary results from an empirical study on parental correlates of children's guilt and shame reactions. Lewis, "Embarrassment: The Emotion of Self-Exposure and Evaluation," examines the origins of embarrassment and how it manifests in children. In Chapter Eight, "A Cognitive-Developmental Analysis of Pride, Shame, and Embarrassment," Griffin offers a theoretical framework for a central conceptual structure that underlies children's experience and understanding of these emotions. Part III concludes with "The Development of Pride and Shame in Toddlers," in which Stipek emphasizes self-evaluation in "achievement contexts" and the emotional reactions of young children.

The social foundations and consequences of self-conscious emotions provide the theme for Part IV—Self-Conscious Emotions and Social Behavior. Starting off this section, Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton, "Interpersonal Aspects of Guilt: Evidence from Narrative Studies," propose that guilt, occurring between and within individuals, functions as protection and support for interpersonal relationships. Using a phenomenological methodology, Lindsay-Hartz, DeRivera, and Mascolo report on the development and testing of structural descriptions of shame and guilt in "Differentiating Guilt and Shame and Their Effects on Motivation." Chapter Twelve, "You Always Hurt The One You Love: Guilt and Transgressions against Relationship Partners" by Jones, Kugler, and Adams, makes the link between personal relationships and guilt its central issue. This part's final chapter, Miller's "Embarrassment and Social Behavior" emphasizes the personal and interactive sources and consequences of embarrassment.

The links between self-conscious emotions and various psychopathologies constitute Part V—Self-Conscious Emotions and Psychology. This portion begins with Tangney, Burggraf, and Wagner, "Shame-Proneness, Guilt-Proneness, and Psychological Symptoms," who contend that shame rather than guilt is associated with maladjustment. However, in "Shame and Guilt Assessment, and Relationships of Shame and Guilt-Proneness to Pathology," Harder argues that guilt is more important to symptomology than the current emphasis on shame would suggest. This is followed by Chapter Sixteen, "Conflict in Family Systems: The Role of Shame," in which Scheff explores the problem of interminable conflict in families as he develops a theory of conflict systems. The section ends with "Shame, Guilt, and The Oedipal Drama: Developmental Considerations," as Emda and Oppenheim bring a fresh look at the Oedipal Complex by integrating broader social and cultural factors and considering their regulatory importance.

The final section, Part VI—Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Self-Conscious Emotions—examines continuities and discontinuities in these emotions across cultures. First, in Chapter Eighteen, "Culture, Self, and Emotion: A Cultural Perspective on "Self-Conscious Emotions," Kitayama, Markus, and Matsumoto examine the variation in affect as it relates to a view of the self as either independent or interdependent. Wallbott and Scherer follow with "Cultural Determinants in Experiencing Shame and Guilt," an analysis of the influence of certain cultural values (e.g., collectivism and individualism) on shame and guilt experiences. The concluding chapter "Self-Conscious Emotions, Child Rear-

ing and Child Psychopathology” by Miyake and Yamazaki discusses the problems in Japan of school refusal, violent children in the home, and *taijin-kyohfu*, a delusional social phobia. Symptoms of *taijin-kyohfu* appear during the teenage years as sufferers are crushed by doubt and anxiety, sense that they are repugnant to others, and live in fear of the actions of others which the youths interpret as reflections of disgust.

The volume ends with a useful appendix, “Self-Conscious Emotions: Measures and Methods,” a partial list (20) of the measurement methods and techniques used by the authors: Measures of Shame and Guilt, Socialization of Shame and Guilt, Measures of Embarrassment, and Measures of Pride. A brief description is given of each measure, along with its authors, source, and availability.