

# THE EFFECT OF SHAME AND GUILT TYPES ON HELPING BEHAVIORS

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Shame and guilt are often considered to be the same emotion; this is partially because the nuanced differences are overlooked in favor of a focus on fixing the negative outcome of these emotions. Shame and guilt also have several positive outcomes such as a desire to help others. The purpose of the current study was to determine the relationship between shame (Negative Self Evaluation and shame-withdraw) and guilt (Negative Behavior Evaluation and guilt-repair) proneness as they relate to helping behaviors in an imagined workplace setting as displayed through vignettes. Additional measures were used to explore whether the relationship between shame and guilt differs between sexes. Results indicate that NBE, guilt-repair, and NSE all have a significant positive relationship with helping across sexes, and these characteristics differ by sex.

THE EFFECT OF SHAME AND GUILT TYPES ON HELPING BEHAVIORS

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The conceptualization of shame and guilt in both the historical and current literature leads to confusion surrounding the terms (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, Insko, 2011; Lewis, 1971), which leads to debates about the underlying nature of the two emotions (Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1989). Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, & Gramzow (2000) believe that one reason for the debate is due to shame and guilt proneness being neglected in research, causing the field to be slow moving and dependent on the research of a select few. Moreover, they believe that this is due partially to shame and guilt's widely misconceived relationship with negative affect and/or maladaptive behavioral outcomes. It is important to realize that the misconception of the similarity between shame and guilt in the literature could be based on the failure to recognize the differences between guilt, shame and how they are experienced internally (Lewis, 1971; Tangney et al. 1989; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992). For example: guilt is experienced as a negative reflection on one's own behaviors and is not long lasting (Cohen et al., 2011). In contrast, shame is experienced as a negative reflection on one's self and tends to cause longstanding rumination (Tangney et al., 1989; Lewis, 1971).

More recent research by both Cohen et al. (2011) and Lindsey (2005) suggests that both guilt and shame are elaborate yet independent emotions, that are experienced after an individual has caused harm to another. Though guilt and shame are complex and can be harmful to those experiencing either emotion, these emotions also have adaptive behavioral outcomes. Light is shed on why they are mistaken for each other by looking at the causes and outcomes of shame and guilt such as depression, anger, resentment, and rumination (Lewis, 1971). The positive behavioral outcomes are displayed in the form of apologies and attempts to repair damage from a harmful action taken against another person (Smith, Chen, & Harris, 2010).

Shame is often mistaken for guilt because many people are unable to recognize the mental processes leading to the emotional result, instead focusing on the shared negative behavioral outcomes of the two emotions (Lewis, 1971). In addition, there is a public misconception that guilt and shame have the same outcomes, such as rumination or sadness (Tangney, et al., 1989). The mental processing of shame and guilt begins with a negative event or behavior, then internalization, and the resulting shame or guilt emotion (Cohen et al., 2011). Once a transgression is internalized, shame and guilt take the form of: negative behavior evaluation (NBE), guilt-repair, negative self-evaluation (NSE), or shame-withdraw depending on personal dispositions as well as personal value judgments (Cohen et al., 2011). These four dimensions of guilt and shame are factors that were utilized by Cohen and colleagues (2011) to detect shame and guilt proneness in individuals, derived from speculated shame and guilt facets. For guilt these concepts measure the degree to which someone evaluates their behavior as bad (NBE), and the degree to which they attempt to correct a bad behavior (repair). For shame these concepts measure the degree to which someone thinks he is a bad person because of a transgression (NSE), and the degree to which someone avoids a situation or person because of a transgression (withdraw) (Cohen et al., 2011). When these four dimensions are measured, they are measured as shame and guilt proneness instead of actual shame and guilt felt. This is because shame and guilt proneness measures and individual's susceptibility to shame and guilt which is easier to accurately detect (Tangney, 1992).

Tangney (1992) and others (Cohen et al., 2011; Lewis, 1971; Nathanson, 1992) are prominent researchers on shame and guilt in a clinical environment who distinguish shame and guilt as two different emotions based on the underlying components. These underlying components contribute to the behavioral outcomes of shame and guilt, and can produce desirable

outcomes in some circumstances (Tangney, Miller, Flicker, Barlow, 1996). The shame and guilt proneness dimensions of NSE, guilt-repair, and NBE are all related to prosocial behaviors by Cohen et al., 2011. The same research also implies that shame-withdraw has different, and undesirable behavioral outcomes which displays a key difference between shame and guilt as they relate towards moral actions towards others.

### **Shame and Guilt as Moral Emotions**

Early research by Ausubel (1955) suggests that *moral emotions* such as shame and guilt have been linked to beneficial behaviors including: helping others, truthfulness, pride, gratitude, and inhibition of personal violence. Moral emotions are emotions that lead humans to behave in a way that is in line with a moral code or guideline that is normatively established by society as the proper way to act (Ausubel, 1955). Tangney et al. (1996) further specify that shame and guilt may serve as *self-conscious emotions* that require self-reflection and lead to a change in behavioral outcomes based on introspection. Tangney and Dearing (2002) have labeled shame and guilt as the quintessential self-conscious emotions since they require self-reflection, assessments of the self, and consideration of others. Additionally, they believe self-conscious emotions may be highly related to self-mediated punishment following real or imagined transgressions, which inhibit the expression of socially and morally unacceptable impulses and increase helping behavior. Furthermore, the link between shame, guilt, and helping is strengthened when higher levels of self-awareness and introspection are related to increased helping behavior when people are allowed to reflect on their emotions and sense of self (Abbate, Isgro, Wicklund, Boca, 2006). Moreover, other studies have found that moral emotion and awareness of emotions has an effect on emotional states (Stuewig, Tangney, Heigle, Harty, &

McCloskey, 2010). This awareness of emotions can further lead to other self-conscious thoughts or self-conscious emotions.

Self-conscious emotions are also strongly tied to affective states and the regulation of affective states that influence behaviors (Ausubel, 1955; Tangney et al., 1992). Previous literature by Lewis (1971) suggests that shame and guilt can moderate affective qualities through cognitive distress and self-reflection, altering behaviors and potentially resulting in pro-social behaviors. Though positive affective states are often more desirable, there are negative impacts of moral emotions such as tendencies towards depression (Jorgensen, Kim, Thibadeau 2011) which are more common on the shame dimensions put forth by Cohen and colleagues (2011).

### **Shame Types and Effects**

Conceptually, shame is different from guilt because shame is experienced as a persistent feeling of distress or humiliation caused by the consciousness of wrongdoings or aversive thoughts. Shame is closely related to the thought of “I am a bad person” (Lewis, 1971) in response to real or imagined transgressions. For example,

John accidentally drops his friend Jane’s mug of coffee onto an important paper. This is the second time that this has happened this week. John is so embarrassed that he is afraid to be around Jane for several weeks. He is unable to stop thinking about his mistake and constantly feels stupid and clumsy. He is unable to forgive himself for being the type of person who makes big mistakes.

Shame internalizations can change behavior and moods from good to bad. These changes depend on how the feelings of shame are internalized by the individual and the type of shame that is felt (Wicker, Payne, & Morgan, 1983).

Shame is related to negative moods and maladjustment. This is due to shame prone people putting blame for transgressions on “being a bad person” instead of behaviors that cause harm (Tangney et al., 1992). Tangney, et al. (1989) discovered a tendency to experience shame across a range of situations and a found a strong link to psychological maladjustment. The most maladaptive form of shame is *guilt-free shame*, which is shame that is experienced without any behavioral evaluations of an event (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Guilt-free shame is more irrational than other types of guilt and shame. For example,

John and Jane have been working on a project. John has made mistakes in the past and thinks that he will make a mistake on the current project. John constantly feels like he is making mistakes when in fact he is not and as a result avoids trying to do his work.

Stuewig et al. (2010) suggest that those experiencing guilt-free shame tend to self-ruminate instead of self-reflect which increases their focus on potential negative outcomes instead of possible resolutions. Self-rumination is a negative form of self-reflection in which an individual thinks about her past negative actions and focuses on the feeling of distress experienced by these actions. Shame tends to put the blame on the self; those individuals displaying high levels of shame are likely to ruminate when sad (Jorgensen et al., 2011). This rumination can lead to increased depressive symptoms, decreases in self-esteem, and a decrease in compassionate thoughts and behavior (Jorgensen et al., 2011). Lickel, Steel, and Schmader (2011) also note that it is possible for a collective group to feel a shared sense of shame and ruminate collectively causing a shared negative affect. Research on shame and guilt differences by Tangney et al. (1996) on guilt-free shame led to more recent research by Cohen et al. (2011) that further breaks down the concept of shame without guilt into negative self-evaluation (NSE) and shame-withdraw.

## **Negative Self Evaluation**

The shame proneness dimension of NSE is similar to Cohen's parallel concept of NBE in the sense that it has to do with introspection and appraisals (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). However, the difference is that NSE places the weight of the transgression on the individual's concept of self (Tracy & Robbins, 2006). NSE refers to the concept that shame is associated with the recognition of having committed an offense that leads the individual to believe that a component of their personality or self is flawed, or damaging to themselves or others (Cohen et al., 2011). Like NBE, the NSE dimension arises from negative appraisals of one's self, and is then used to determine the degree to which an action has transgressed against another (Tangney et al., 2000). Cohen et al. (2011) note that NSE is also correlated to moral behavior like NBE, but to a lesser degree because it is less likely to spawn moral actions. This link between NSE and NBE has previously been suggested to be due to the inhibition of immoral acts instead of desire to help others, although there is research that supports a correlation between helping and NSE as well as helping and NBE (Stuewig et al., 2010).

Due to the negative reflections on an individual's sense of self during NSE, there are potentially damaging side effects such as experiencing sadness, anger, as well as lower levels of self-esteem (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Tracy and Robbins (2006) suggest that one way NSE damages the individual is by evoking painful emotions as well as painful emotional responses to situations. This is most likely due to the cognitive distress caused by internalizing the blame on the self (Tangney et al., 1996). Similar to other avoidance behaviors, the aversion to situations that can cause NSE leads to what Cohen et al. (2011) refers to as Shame Withdraw because people do not tend to seek out stimuli that harm them (Tangney et al., 1989). Due to the

aversiveness caused by introspection and negative evaluation. NSE serves as a precursor to shame-withdraw.

### **Shame-Withdraw**

The shame-withdraw dimension of shame proneness refers to the withdrawal of an individual from public, and often involves hiding or escaping a situation (Cohen et al., 2011). Using the example of John and Jane “John is embarrassed because his house is messy when Jane and her friends arrive unexpectedly. Because of this John locks himself in his room in order to avoid them.” Shame-withdraw behavioral outcomes are also decidedly different than NSE, since shame-withdraw is such an intense reaction that an individual is unable to interact instead of just evoking bad feelings (Tangney et al., 2000). These divergent outcomes are due to a realization that the behaviors were the fault of the transgressor in NSE whereas responsibility tends to be avoided in favor of hiding from shameful or embarrassing events in shame-withdraw (Cohen et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2011) notes that shame-withdraw, unlike NSE, has no relation with the inhibition of immoral or unethical decision making. This is not surprising considering that other research has found that shame leads to increased delinquency as well as tendencies to react aggressively (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney et al., 1996). Additionally, there are also correlations found with shame-withdraw and hostility which is a possible “pre-emptive strike” strategy to dealing with shame proneness (Cohen et al., 2011). The reasoning for this is that if someone thinks she is a bad person and then does bad things, her self-image will not change by committing further transgressions (Tangney et al., 1992). Thus, cognitive distress as a control for moral behavior is removed and the individual can feel free to act badly.

## **Guilt Types and Effects**

Guilt is a characteristic that is not persistent and is a common emotion experienced by most people (Lewis, 1971). Guilt is related to committing a wrongdoing or having an aversive thought, but is potentially able to be alleviated. The subtypes of guilt can be categorized as either guilt-NSE or guilt-repair (Cohen et al., 2011; Tangney et al., 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Guilt is normally experienced after an aversive situation that results in an evaluation of a behavior as unfavorable, when the behavior has not been publicly exposed (Smith, Chen, and Harris, 2010). When individuals transgress and feel guilt, it causes bad feelings about their behaviors (Tangney et al., 1996). In order to lessen these bad feelings individuals often perform pro-social deeds, including helping behaviors (Estrada & Heatherton, 1998). This includes behaviors such as apologies or attempts to correct a negative act they committed.

After a negative behavior has been committed, feelings of guilt trigger thoughts of “I have done a bad thing” (Lewis, 1971) and causes individuals to feel distress due to their previous negative behaviors. Using the example of John and Jane,

John accidentally drops his friend Jane’s mug of coffee onto an important paper. John feels bad that he ruined the paper and is embarrassed that it was his fault. He recognizes it was an accident and apologizes to Jane. Because John feels bad he offers to pay for a new copy and Jane agrees and forgives him. John feels better when the new copy is printed.

Guilt proneness is a more adaptive quality than shame proneness (Cohen et al., 2011) due partially to the belief that guilt is easy to relieve while shame is often difficult to relieve.

In an attempt to relieve guilt, those displaying high levels of guilt are more likely to try to repair the aversive cognitive thoughts or behaviors than to alleviate distress caused by events that



actually brought on the guilt (Tangney et al., 1992). Jorgensen et al. (2011) also note that the repair tends to be in response to the aversive thoughts or behaviors interrupting their other activity or affective dispositions. While both negative self-evaluation and guilt are associated with each other (Cohen et al. 2011), only guilt is associated with pro-social behaviors which are used to relieve feelings of guilt (Jorgensen et al., 2011).

This relief strategy is probably adaptive (Tangney & Dearing, 2002) and guilt may be universal since all people experience the negative impact of cognitive distress, and the relief strategies are similar (Tangney et al., 1992). In terms of adaptive emotions specifically, *shame-free guilt* is a normal emotional state that moderates behavior through self-reflection when internalized and due to guilt's fleeting nature would support findings that guilt proneness decreases undesirable behaviors (Tangney and Dearing, 2002). Shame-free guilt refers to the feeling of guilt without withdrawing from a situation or placing the blame on one's self instead of behaviors. For example, "John forgot the cover page to the report he and Jane were working on. Although John got in trouble for his mistake he knew it was his fault and only felt bad for a brief period of time and brushed it off as a mere mistake. He later rectified his mistake by apologizing to Jane and creating a cover page." This type of guilt is desirable in many situations and can be beneficial since it is natural and results in self-reflection and helping.

Stuewig et al. (2010) suggest that the self-reflection associated with shame-free guilt may cause empathy, which would allow for those feeling guilty to understand the emotions of those they have offended, and help them to place the blame on a negative act. Tangney et al. (1996) suggest that shame-free guilt is also positively correlated with attempting to correct a wrongdoing in order to alleviate negative feelings. Conversely, guilt-free shame is correlated with feelings of helplessness and inaction which can result in learned helplessness behaviors.

Research on shame and guilt differences by Tangney et al. (1996) on shame-free guilt lead more recent research (Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, Gramzow, 2000; Cohen et al., 2011) to break down the concept of guilt without shame into negative behavior evaluation and guilt-repair.

### **Negative Behavior Evaluation**

The guilt proneness dimension of negative behavior evaluation (NBE) serves as the gateway to feeling guilt which has several outcomes including perspective taking and empathetic concern (Wolf, Cohen, Panter, Insko, 2010). NBE refers to the concept that guilt is a recognition of having committed a behavior that is perceived by the transgressor as having caused damage, but is attributed to a behavior and not an integral part of the transgressor's self (Cohen et al., 2011). Negative behavior evaluations occur when a behavior has not been overtly or publicly exposed, but the guilty party feels that he has committed a behavior that leads to a violation of one's conscience (Smith et al., 2010). NBE has several outcomes; one of these is perspective taking which has been shown to manifest in children as young as five years old (Vaish, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2011). Perspective taking is displayed by the guilty party by recognizing that she would be upset if transgressed upon and think it was unfair. Vaish et al. (2011) also note that empathetic concern is related to perspective taking because those guilty of transgressions were judged as more likeable when they showed remorse and guilt for their behaviors. The action of an offender showing remorse leads the victim to realize that the behavior may have been bad, but the guilty individual realized he had made a mistake when he did a bad thing.

Furthermore, NBE is only intended to act as a measurement of moral emotional disposition since recognizing that an undesirable action has occurred, and taking the perspective of another are the first steps to moral behaviors (Cohen et al., 2011). Moreover, Tangney et al.

(2002) suggest that NBEs are affective tendencies that are pervasive across situations instead of action orientations. Meaning that once the negative behavior has been felt, even if only for a short time, the need to improve a negative affective state is manifested in a reparation behavior (Tangney, Stuewig, Mashek, 2007). For this reason negative behavior evaluations are often seen as the precursor to guilt repair as behavioral evaluations as well as self-reflection usually come before a transgression can be fixed (Wolf et al., 2010). In addition, NBE is associated with a decreased level of depressive symptoms (Cohen et al., 2011). This suggests that the emotional component of guilt is adaptive since the weight is put on the behavior and not the self, which allows the bad feeling to be fleeting (Cohen et al., 2011). However, not all guilt is adaptive. This only occurs when guilt is experienced in situations where guilt is not justifiable (Jorgensen et al., 2011).

### **Guilt-Repair**

The guilt proneness dimension of guilt-repair serves as a reparation system of moral emotions once there is a need to repair a situation. Greitmeyer (2010) suggests that emotional and situational priming are two of the biggest causes of moral behavior. Emotional and situation priming mean that an individual must be in a good mood, and be in a situation that presents her with a moral choice as opposed to a routine decision in order for the individual to make a moral choice. This is in line with Tangney and colleagues (1989) who suggest that components of guilt cause moral behavior. As discussed by Jorgensen et al. (2011) NBE brings about aversive cognitive thoughts of “I have done a bad thing” which must be relieved, triggering guilt-repair which behaviorally attempts to correct the transgression and cognitively ameliorates distress. Though cognitive distress is relieved; the main component of guilt-repair is the visible behavioral repair since it is the most noticeable aspect (Tangney et al., 2000).

Guilt-repair is tied strongly to visible moral actions taken in order to restore balance after a transgression which makes it the most visibly prominent component of moral emotion (Tangney et al., 2002). Cohen et al. (2011) note that those high on guilt-repair are much more likely to attempt to fix an aversive situation or assist others with their own issues than those high on NBE, NSE, or shame-withdrawal. This is most likely due to the perception that a negative perception of an individual's self cannot always be fixed, however a negative behavior committed by an individual can be repaired (Wolf et al., 2010). These repair behaviors often occur in the form of prosocial behaviors such as an apology or attempting to correct the transgression (Vaish et al., 2011).

### **Pro-Social Behavior**

Pro-social behavior is a complex interaction of personality and situation, which is made up of three components (Fiske, 2010). The first component is the intent to help others which also includes attempts that fail. The second component is the actual benefits of the action which is socially defined and can change depending on time or place. This means pro-social acts can differ culturally and contextually. Finally, the main component of pro-social behavior is that behavior (Fiske 2010) is intended to benefit a person or society, but is not meant to benefit the self. The behaviors enacted are positive and social in nature with no selfish intent.

Estrada and Heatherton (1998) state that the only important aspect of pro-social behavior is that it actually benefits others. Pro-social behavior includes behaviors like: doing something for others, resisting the temptation to insult, complimenting, offering assistance, or even compromising for the benefit of others around you. These actions are commonly aimed at increasing interpersonal relationships or generating good feelings (Cialdini et al., 1987). According to Estrada and Heatherton (1998) a distinction needs to be made between altruistic

behaviors and pro-social behaviors. While true altruism does not involve any potential self-benefit, the same cannot be said of pro-social behavior, during which an individual can have selfish outcomes in mind (Cialdini et al., 1987).

Other research has attempted to associate pro-social behavior with the core social need of belonging. From this model pro-social behavior does not only help others in addition to the helper, but also assists the group in strengthening their bonds and the sense of community (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Estrada and Heatherton (1998) also note that there are several behaviors that can be considered pro-social benefits to the community which increase one's sense of belonging including: repairing damaged relationships and enhancing relationships by promoting positive acts between people. Strengthening bonds between individuals create a shared sense of the value of pro-social acts and help to create social norms.

Affirmation of values and upholding social values and norms has been found to increase pro-social behaviors over a long period of time (Bushman, Orobio de Castro, Reijntjes, & Thomaes, 2011). Results have consistently shown that value affirmations allow people to confirm their self-concepts and become more attuned to the needs of others (Estrada & Heatherton, 1998; Cialdini et al., 1987). Bushman et al. (2011) also shows that value affirmations have longstanding and large impact on pro-social feelings that generalize to pro-social helping actions. Pro-social helping behaviors and attitudes are found to be more longstanding when associated with value affirmation in teenagers and children because it allows them to satisfy self needs during a critical period. Cialdini and colleagues (1987) also suggest that value affirmations are self-reinforcing and can lead to an increased feeling of closeness to others, caring behaviors, and to some degree willingness to form new relationships. However, it is important to note that pro-social behaviors must be primed and do not happen sporadically.

Research done by Greitemeyer (2010) shows that pro-social priming is related to pro-social tendencies by preparing the participant to react pro-socially. Pro-social priming is the process of exposing another to pro-social actions or thoughts in an attempt to get them in a mindset to prompt them to perform pro-social behaviors. These pro-social behaviors appear in pro-social video games which tend to moderate the player's internal state in cognitive and affective ways that encourage pro-social behaviors (Greitemeyer, 2010). Conversely antisocial priming through violent video games or television is related to higher levels of antisocial behavior. Both pro-social and antisocial tendencies are moderated by identification and level of addictiveness and level of learning involved with gameplay and reinforcement (Anderson et al., 2007). Though pro-social priming is generally thought of as positive, there are some negative outcomes of too much reward or praise.

One of the problematic outcomes of consistent pro-social priming is the disinhibition of helping behaviors. This occurs when an individual believes they are being overcompensated for their work which leads to less pleasure when the work is completed (Anderson et al. 2007; Van den Bos, Lange, Lind, Allan, Leonie, Dagmar, Florian, Linda, & Van der Laan, 2011). This poses a problem in regard to moral behaviors because those who receive too much compensation may be less likely to want to help others, but receiving an appropriate amount of priming and compensation will be likely to continue to perform pro-social behaviors (Anderson et al., 2007). Van den Bos and colleagues (2011) showed that those who have recently been the recipient of help from another, or are primed by being reminded of socially acceptable values are more likely to respond to advantageous unfair outcomes in a way that seeks to correct injustice. Van den Bos et al. (2011) discovered the "pro-self" condition participants were encouraged to think in terms of their own self benefit resulting in decreased weakening of pleasure and higher

likelihood to accept advantageous unfair outcomes. Cultural variables were also discovered such as the increase in pro-social feelings based on whether or not the participant lived in a high pro-social culture.

### **Shame and Guilt Related to Helping**

Helping behavior is an act that is done explicitly to benefit others (Estrada and Heatherton, 1998). Helping behaviors are impacted by several environmental factors such as priming through exposure to helpful behaviors and thoughts (Greitemeyer, 2010) as well as personality factors including openness and self-awareness. Previous research by Organ (1997) has shown that pro-social tendencies extend beyond personal interaction and into organizational settings. Pro-social behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) tend to be correlated with personality factors (Jorgensen, Kim, Thibadeau, 2011) which may include shame or guilt. Organizational citizenship behaviors are actions that are taken, beyond the scope of normal work, that assist others within the company or the company itself.

The idea that helping behavior is linked to personality is not recent, but more recent research has shown that separate components of personality impact helping differently (Estrada and Heatherton, 1998; Jorgensen, Kim, Thibadeau, 2011). For example, the personality factors moderated by shame and guilt vary, but one of the personality factors most heavily impacted by shame and guilt is the desire to help others (Stuewig, Tangney, Heigle, Harty, & McCloskey, 2010). More recent research shows that one of the strongest personality correlates of pro-social behavior is the presence of shame and guilt proneness in an individual (Chiaburu et al., 2011). Therefore, some hypothesize that proneness to guilt and shame can have positive benefits to the individual as well as those around them (Tangney et al., 1992).

The positive benefits of shame and guilt are often overlooked because of the relationship between shame and guilt and negative affect (Tangney et al., 2000). For this reason there is a controversy about the benefits of shame and guilt (Tangney et al., 1989). While shame and guilt are not the only predictors of helping behavior, both have a moderate correlation with helping behaviors. However, emotional states seem to moderate the propensity to perform pro-social deeds since an individual's emotional state is shown to decline when those who are being helped are in a good or neutral mood, and increase when those being helped are in a bad mood (Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Research compiled by Fiske (2010) shows that people are more likely to feel shameful or guilty and help those who are in a bad mood or comparatively bad mood. This is related to objective self-awareness in which a person would compare themselves and their actions to the actions of paradigm individuals and try to correct their behaviors to be more like the ideal person or behavior (Fiske, 2010). Shame and guilt are also shown to relate to empathy and pro-social behavior that is caused by shame and guilt due to an awareness of the needs of others (Tangney et al., 2000). Other models based on empathy suggest that when an individual sees a condition that is unjust, they internalize bad feelings and seek to relieve them by helping (Tangney et al., 1992).

Shame and guilt do not always arise solely from feeling responsible for causing an aversive situation. This occurs when an individual feels shameful or guilty because they are part of a group that is responsible for an aversive situation, even when they did not cause it directly (Estrada & Heatherton, 1998). An example would be a secretary at a meat packaging plant who feels shame or guilt because she is associated with others who harm animals (Estrada & Heatherton, 1998). This differentiation suggests that shame and guilt can be felt as a group as



well as on an individual basis and is controlled by individuals' perceived ties to the shortcomings of a social group that they are a part of.

Earlier studies on both shame and guilt found that when studying negative or shame and guilt producing behavior there was no evidence to support the inhibition of pro-social behavior (Keating & Brock, 1976). However, Cohen and colleagues (2011) suggest that the shame-withdraw dimension does in fact reduce the likelihood of committing a pro-social behavior. Despite this conflicting view, Keating and Brock's (1976) pre-reward and reward studies uncovered a correlation between helping behavior, and a desire to restore equity in a relationship. This study showed that restoring equity reduces the amount of guilt that participants feel. The study also shows that it is easier to formulate, maintain, and justify patterns of negative behaviors when there is a lack of pro-social or shame or guilt cues.

In contrast to maintaining negative behavior patterns, Smith et al. (2011) believe that the desire to restore equality between two people prompts the pro-social behavior of apology. The act of apologizing then reinforces the desire to apologize when the apology is accepted. Apology is correlated with feelings of remorse and embarrassment similarly to shame and guilt (Smith et al., 2011). Smith and colleagues (2011) also suggests that pro-social behaviors such as apologies are recognized as socially correct and are beneficial quite early in a human's life span, in addition to being able to be inferred without verbal expression. Since shame and guilt can be inferred nonverbally, the reflexive nature of apology and reward in the form of forgiveness help to make the case that shame and guilt are natural and strong reinforcers of pro-social behaviors (Vaish et al., 2011).

One factor in pro-social behavior is the antecedent of anticipated shame and guilt or proneness to shame and guilt. Anticipated shame or guilt is when a person subconsciously or

actively thinks that a behavior will cause them to feel shameful or guilty in the future (Tangney et al., 1996). Anticipated shame and guilt moderate pro-social behaviors by creating shame and guilt avoidance which makes people choose to avoid a risky situation based on how shameful or guilty they would feel if they perform an action (Birkimer, Johnston, & Berry, 1993). Examples of shame and guilt avoidance behaviors include anything from not watching television to avoiding violent or undesirable themes to helping at a food kitchen to avoid feelings of selfishness. Research found that individuals who are anticipating feelings of shame or guilt are more likely to be complaint (Lindsey, 2005). This avoidance supports theories that shame and guilt are avoided in order to avoid negative consequences (Lindsey, 2005). Evidence from Lindsey (2005) suggests a negative-state model which means that the strategies to remove shame and guilt involve the repair or avoidance of a negative stimulus. The negative-state model is based on anticipated shame and guilt, and is controlled by negative consequences and the reasoning that our actions or inactions may harm others. The other base of the negative-state model is the tendency to try to avoid shame and guilt. Therefore, anticipatory shame and guilt related to empathy leads to shame and guilt aversion and pro-social behaviors (Pelligra, 2011).

Chapman, Zahn, Cooperman, and Iannotti (1987) indicate that pro-social helping behaviors are related to both personal attributions about the severity of the situation and the personality of the individual. This means that the more distressing a situation is the more likely it is to evoke a reaction from an onlooker, for example either helping the victim or fleeing the situation. Chapman and colleagues (1987) concluded that mere emotional arousal from witnessing the distress of others is not a factor in helping, but the sense of responsibility felt towards those in need. This lends support to models that show that differing levels of guilt change depending on the setting, person, and necessity to help.

## **Helping in the Workplace**

One setting that has a potential for frequent, immediate, and varying levels of necessity to help others is the workplace. The relationship between guilt and organizational behavior is still up for debate and current research is emerging based on past studies on pro-social behavior and guilt, as well as the current literature on associated affective qualities such as depression or aggression (Flynn & Schaumberg, 2011; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). In a study by Flynn and Schaumberg (2011) a higher level of guilt proneness was found to be associated with a higher level of emotional organizational commitment. Emotional organizational commitment refers to a worker's sense of emotional attachment to an organization whether it is in the form of pride, happiness due to a job, or sense of belonging within an organization. Workers with a high predisposition to guilt are motivated by guilt to exert greater effort on work related tasks and strengthen their affinity for the organization (Flynn & Schaumberg, 2011). Previous measures have also (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) confirmed that members of organizations who report higher levels of guilt also report higher levels of organizational attachment. A distinction is made that higher levels of shame made no difference in work performance or amount of hours worked, however guilt had a significant relationship with both.

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) are a subset of helping behaviors. Organizational citizenship behaviors according to Organ (1997) are defined as behaviors that are discretionary in nature and are not explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and help to improve the way the organization is run. These behaviors however are often recognized, so it is incorrect to call them altruistic since truly altruistic behaviors are not predictably rewarded if rewarded at all. This means that OCBs are not truly altruistic behaviors since the individual performing the OCB is usually aware that he will receive something in return, often in a non-

tangible form (Organ, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, 2006). Organ (1997) suggests the results of organizational citizenship behaviors are not always immediately noticeable and may manifest in forms like favors, recognition, or positive thoughts about the performer by peers although they are not the only manifestations.

Furthermore, citizenship behaviors have several key components including: behaviors not explicitly stated in the job description, contributing to the organization, and assisting others in the workplace. According to Organ (1997) the most important aspect of OCB is that the behaviors are discretionary. This means that the helpful behaviors performed by the employee are not explicitly stated in the job description, and are a product of the employee's choosing. These activities also contribute to the overall wellness of the company and increase effectiveness through increases in employee morale (Organ et al. 2006). Also the behaviors typically go above and beyond what is expected within the limits of the job description, meaning that the employee takes on additional responsibilities beyond what they are expected (Choi, 2009). OCBs are characterized (Organ, 1997) by a persistence of enthusiasm applied to procedures even when it is inconvenient, assisting others, following rules and procedures even when it is inconvenient, as well as defending organizational objectives. These sorts of behaviors manifest in ways like tolerating inconveniences at work, keeping up with company issues, and taking on additional responsibilities (Organ, 1997).

Though guilt and shame are related to OCBs, there are other measures of organizational citizenship related to the Five Factor Model dimensions of openness, emotional stability, and agreeableness that all have a relationship to guilt and pro-social behavior (Chiaburu et al., 2011). Although guilt and shame are both related to helping, the relationship between these factors and OCBs are diminished when controlling for other factors such as agreeableness, emotional

stability, and openness (Chiaburu et al., 2011). Individuals high on agreeableness, emotional stability, openness, and guilt dimensions tend to report higher values for socialization at work, solidarity, and sharing with others. In the study by Chiaburu and colleagues (2011), high levels of emotional stability when correlated with high openness and high agreeableness predicted higher amounts of organizational citizenship. Those individuals scoring high on measures that predict pro-social behaviors were correctly predicted to exhibit higher levels of organizational citizenship (Organ, 1997). These OCBs also factor in to the evaluations of those around them and those that benefit from the OCBs.

Many studies indicate that organizational citizenship behaviors are positively related to supervisor ratings of employee performance, but few studies have looked into the motives that underlie citizenship behaviors and influence supervisor ratings (Choi, 2009; Organ et al., 2006; Chiaburu et al., 2011). Attributions that are credited to employee's motives for engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors are related to the emotional reaction of a supervisor in regard to the behaviors which in turn are related to employee's evaluations (Halbesleben, Bowler, Bolino, Turnley, 2010). The same study found that if managers believe that employees are engaging in citizenship behaviors in order to manage appearance then scores were found to be lower. Therefore, performing citizenship behaviors resulted in a negative impact on the performer, though citizenship behaviors are normally thought of as positive. Though there are many benefits of employees with a healthy display of shame or guilt due to pro-social behaviors there are also negative consequences.

### **Present Study**

This study sought to determine the impact of shame and guilt proneness on desire to help after reading a short vignette in which the participant is presented with several choices

representing an opportunity to help. This study attempted to utilize reported feelings of shame and guilt to find a correlation between reported levels of desire to help based on a questionnaire about guilt and shame proneness. In part, this is to determine whether shame and guilt proneness are one of the underlying causes of helping behavior which has been supported by previous research (Cohen et al., 2011; Tangney et al., 1992). This research attempts to use research vignettes of differing situations involving helping in order to reveal a consistency of helping based on guilt and shame proneness. Previous researchers have investigated shame and guilt states, and “desire to help” behaviors (Cohen et al., 2011; Lewis, 1971; Tangney et al., 1992). More specifically Cohen and colleagues (2011) asserted that shame and guilt are underlying factors of helping behavior. In this study, the helping behavior component attempts to determine the predictability of guilt and shame proneness on the reported desire to help. The aforementioned research serves as the basis for the following hypotheses for the current study.

Organ (1997) as well as Flynn and Schaumberg (2011) noted that personality factors, including guilt or shame, influence helping behavior. Tangney and colleagues (1992) and Lewis (1971) suggested that like all emotional responses, guilt and shame proneness should remain consistent across situations. In addition, Tangney and Dearing (2002) take this a step further and make the connection between higher levels of shame and guilt displays and subsequent helping behaviors. However, Cohen et al. (2011) suggested that shame and guilt are not on the same dimension and do not necessarily correlate with the same behavioral outcomes, so they might best be measured separately as shame proneness and guilt proneness. Since previous researchers suggest that shame and guilt can differentially affect helping behavior, this research proposes that:

*H1a:* Guilt proneness will have a significant relationship with the desire to help.

*H1b*: Shame proneness will have a significant relationship with the desire to help.

Though shame and guilt responses are universal (Lewis, 1971; Tangney et al., 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2002) it has been hypothesized by Tangney et al., 2002, that women may care more about feelings and the wellbeing of others. Previous research demonstrated that women scored higher than men on shame and guilt proneness, as well as characteristics related to helping as measured by scores on previous shame and guilt inventories (Cohen et al., 2011). Since previous research has found sex differences between guilt and shame, it is hypothesized that:

*H2a*: Reported guilt proneness will be higher for women than men.

*H2b*: Reported shame proneness will be higher for women than men.

Furthermore, Tangney and colleagues (1992) have also reported that levels of shame and guilt proneness act as the best predictors for actual shame and guilt. They hypothesized that a positive linear relationship existed with perceived shame and guilt proneness scores and actual perceived shame and guilt states. Also, those with higher proneness are suspected to trigger a shame or guilt response more easily than those with low shame or guilt proneness (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Related to these findings, Cohen and colleagues (2011) suggested that there is a correlation between negative evaluations of behaviors (NBE) and attempting to correct a past transgression (guilt-repair) which leads to the third hypothesis that:

*H3*: As the guilt NBE dimension increases so will the guilt-repair dimension.

Along the same line of thought, Cohen et al. (2011) suggested a correlation between negative evaluations of an individual's self as a whole (NSE), and removing the self from situations that cause an individual to think negatively about the self (i.e., the shame-withdraw dimension). This correlation leads to the fourth hypothesis that:

*H4:* As the subscale scores from the shame NSE dimension increase there will be a corresponding change in the shame-withdraw dimension.



## CHAPTER II: METHOD

### **Participants**

Participants consisted of 393 college students who attended a large Southeast university in the United States. The students were college undergraduates selected through a research participant pool composed of students enrolled in introductory psychology students. Participants ranged from 18 to 22 years old and covered a large ethnic demographic. Most of the participants were white (67%), college-age (18 to 22 years old) women (78%). Incentive to complete the study was provided in the form of participant pool class credit assigned by the researcher after the completion of an online survey through ECU Experimentrak. Those who opted to not complete the study were able to choose from other study options on Experimentrak in order to complete their class requirement.

### **Procedure**

In order to determine a baseline for shame and guilt proneness, participants were administered the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP; Cohen et al., 2011). This measure consists of 16 questions involving realistic vignettes depicting guilt or shame reactions. The scale asked how likely the participant would be on a one to seven rating scale to commit a guilt or shame reaction.

Then each participant was asked to carefully read through several short vignettes for approximately three minutes per vignette. These vignettes consisted of situations involving opportunities to help. Participants were then asked to put themselves into the situation and think about how they would actually handle the given situation. The participants were then administered a helping questionnaire which asked questions about their desire to help the victim of the situation based on each research vignette, and the degree to which they would be likely to

try to help them as determined by several questions related to helping. However, the vignette did not imply whether the participant was actually able to help during the situation. The vignettes represented a variety of realistic workplace events that would spur onlookers to help. The three vignettes consist of a computer theft, noticing domestic abuse at work, and public sexual harassment by a superior. All of which are situations that could be observed in everyday activity and are the same as the vignettes described below as well as those found in Appendix D.

Desire to help was determined based on a seven-point rating scale and was averaged across the three vignettes for each participant. The Helping Questionnaire items were based on realistic options available to someone attempting to help. All questions were developed by the researcher and were previously tested on a college population of 10 graduate students with a similar demographic to the intended population, all of whom participated voluntarily. Participants received the vignettes in the same order. The participants were asked to complete a basic demographics survey before the end of the study. Upon completion of the study, participants were assigned half a participation credit, in accordance with the psychology department rules for credit distribution. Since a full credit is usually distributed for one hour of time, all participants were awarded a half credit, because the survey was only 30 minutes in duration. Participants had the option to choose other studies on Experimentrak for credit as well, so participation in this study to gain credit was voluntary.

## **Measures**

**Demographics survey.** All participants completed demographic questions in order to obtain basic background data. The demographic survey was completed online prior to administration of the other measures, and included information regarding age, race, sex, year in school, and whether participants had a history of working in groups.

**Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP).** The Guilt and Shame Proneness scale (Cohen et al., 2011) was derived from the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA-3), developed by Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, and Gramzow (2000) which sought to uncover underlying shame and guilt proneness. It consists of 16 questions used to gauge shame and guilt proneness using four dimensional factors including: guilt-negative behavior evaluation (NBE), guilt-repair, shame-negative self-evaluation (NSE), and shame-withdraw. This was used to determine proneness to shame and guilt as well as demonstrate how guilt is perceived by the individual. The guilt and shame analysis is based on a seven-point rating scale with responses ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*). The GASP was found to have acceptable validity above the recommended cutoff for scenario-based measures (Cohen et al., 2011). An example of a question from the GASP is, “After realizing you have received too much change at a store, you decide to keep it because the salesclerk doesn’t notice. What is the likelihood that you would feel uncomfortable keeping the money?” and, “You give a bad presentation at work. Afterwards your boss tells your coworkers it was your fault that your company lost the contract. What is the likelihood that you would feel incompetent?” These questions were intended to reveal different dimensions of guilt and shame proneness through examples from realistic situations and outcomes.

**Vignettes.** The vignettes (as found in Appendix C) consisted of three different situations. The vignettes were written to reflect a situation that would require the participant to help another. Participants reported their desire to help after reading each situation. The vignettes were created by the researcher of the current study. The vignettes were constructed from the input of 10 graduate students, who ranked and rated the vignettes on the degree of helping behaviors that they believed the situations would realistically require from an individual in the given situation.

If the raters decided that the situation required basic helping behaviors (ex: “giving their support” or “giving the victim a means to seek help”) from the person in the vignette’s helping role then the vignette was deemed acceptable to use in the study. The vignettes consisted of one paragraph and took approximately three minutes to read for a total of nine minutes. All vignettes were administered in the same order and each participant was exposed to each vignette only once. The three vignettes included a computer theft from an office, noticing that a coworker is being domestically abused, and public sexual harassment from a superior. Each vignette was created to show a realistic situation that could occur in a work setting.

**Helping Questionnaire.** The helping questionnaire consists of 12 questions involving helping intentions. These questions are scored on a seven-point rating scale with responses ranging from 1= *very unlikely* to 7 = *very likely*. The helping questionnaire was created by the researcher of the current study in order to give realistic options in a situation that could be used to help the victim. Questions range from “offering support” to “calling the police” and give a variety of helping options as displayed in Appendix E. A higher cumulative score indicates a greater desire to help. Each helping questionnaire was similar across vignettes and followed each associated vignette.

## CHAPTER III: RESULTS

### Scale Reliabilities

Alpha coefficients were computed to determine the reliability of each measure used in this research. Descriptive statistics and reliability alphas are found in Table 1. For the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP; Cohen et al., 2011), higher scores on the scale represent a greater proneness to shame and guilt. The overall GASP is composed of 16 items, had a mean of 4.85 (range = 2.5 to 6.1) and showed acceptable internal consistency and reliability ( $\alpha = .76$ ) in this study. Removal of any items would increase the alpha only a negligible amount.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach's Alpha*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
Guilt and Shame Proneness scale (GASP) Average	4.85	0.72	.76
GASP: Guilt Dimension Average	5.50	0.92	.75
GASP: Shame Dimension Average	4.23	0.82	.60
Helping: Theft Average	4.51	0.97	.84
Helping: Domestic Abuse Average	5.55	0.72	.72
Helping: Sexual Harassment Average	5.26	0.88	.83
Helping: Vignette Overall Average	5.11	0.70	.89

The GASP shame subscale, consisting of 8 items had a mean score of 4.23 (range = 2.46 to 5.8) and was in line with the original GASP benchmark (Cohen et al., 2011) of .6 in regard to reliability ( $\alpha = .604$ ). Removal of the question regarding “avoiding guests” increased the reliability slightly ( $\alpha = .617$ ); thus, the item was retained. Additionally, Schmitt (1996) as well as John and Benet-Martinez (2000) suggested that a minimum reliability coefficient has not been established, but a cutoff of .70 has been suggested. Subsequently, they also noted that Cronbach's alpha underestimates the reliability of an instrument. The GASP guilt subscale,

consisting of 8 items had a mean score of 5.47 (range = 4.79 to 6.10) and showed high reliability ( $\alpha = .75$ ). Removing any items would result in a less reliable subscale.

With regard to the helping vignettes, higher scores on each subscale reflected a greater desire to help a victim in a given situation (theft, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment). The overall helping vignette average reported score was 5.11 (range 3.29 to 6.55) and demonstrated strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89$ ). With regard to the Theft condition, the average reported score was 4.51 (range = 3.29 to 5.45) and this subscale also demonstrated strong reliability ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Removal of any items would result in a less reliable subscale. For the Domestic Abuse subscale, the average reported score was 5.55 (range = 4.02 to 6.55) and acceptable internal consistency was shown ( $\alpha = .72$ ). Removal of question regarding “asking others for help” would only lead to a slightly higher reliability ( $\alpha = .74$ ); thus the item was retained. With regard to the Sexual Harassment subscale, the average score was 5.26 (range = 3.36 to 6.12) and demonstrated a strong reliability ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Removal of questions 1 and 6 would only lead to a slightly higher reliability ( $\alpha = .84$ ) respectively, thus the items were retained.

### **Associations Between Helpfulness and Guilt/Shame Proneness**

Six Hotellings/Williams tests were employed to determine whether the association between shame and guilt proneness and helping behavior differed across vignettes. For both the guilt-helpfulness association and shame-helpfulness association, no significant differences were found among vignettes ( $.12 < p < .83$ ). These findings allowed the use of overall helping scores for both the shame and guilt proneness conditions in the subsequent analysis.

The correlations among predictors are reported in Table 2. Each correlation is based on the scores of 393 participants. Total guilt proneness, (combined guilt repair and NBE items) was significantly correlated with helping scores on the theft vignette scores  $r = .372, n = 393, p <$

.001. Guilt scores were also significantly correlated with domestic abuse vignette scores  $r = .307, p < .001$ , and the sexual harassment vignette scores  $r = .380, p < .001$ . Guilt proneness showed an additional significant correlation with overall helping scores  $r = .438, p < .001$ . Thus Hypothesis 1a, “Guilt proneness will have a significant relationship with the desire to help” was supported.

Table 2. *Correlation Matrix*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Guilt	1					
2. Shame	.391**	1				
3. Theft Helping	.372**	.169**	1			
4. Abuse Helping	.307**	.116*	.376**	1		
5. Harassment Helping	.380**	.127*	.469**	.649**	1	
6. Overall Helping Score	.438**	.172**	.790**	.790**	.861**	1

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Total shame proneness, (shame-withdraw and NSE items) was significantly correlated with helping scores on the theft vignette  $r = .169, p = .001$ . Shame scores were also significantly correlated with domestic abuse vignette  $r = .116, p = .021$  and the sexual harassment vignette  $r = .127, p = .012$ . Shame proneness showed an additional significant correlation with overall helping scores  $r = .172, p = .001$ . Thus Hypothesis 1b, “Shame proneness will have a significant relationship with the desire to help” was also supported. A finding of interest was that NSE, separated from shame-withdraw, also had a significant positive correlation with helping  $r = .307, p < .001$ . Shame-withdraw, separated from NSE, had a slight and non-significant negative correlation  $r = -.06$  with helping

### **Associations Between Guilt/Shame Subscales**

The two guilt proneness subscales (NBE and guilt repair) were well correlated,  $r = .515$ ,  $n = 393$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus Hypothesis 3, “As the guilt NBE dimension increases so will the guilt-repair dimension” was supported. Although the two shame proneness subscales were significantly correlated, the magnitude of the correlation was small,  $r = .160$ ,  $n = 393$ ,  $p = .002$ . Thus Hypothesis 4, “As the subscale scores from the shame NSE dimension increase there will be a corresponding change in the shame-withdraw dimension” was supported.

### **Comparing Women and Men**

When compared on the guilt proneness dimension, women’s average guilt proneness score ( $M = 5.55$ ,  $SD = .90$ ,  $N = 306$ ) was significantly higher than men’s average guilt proneness ( $M = 5.18$ ,  $SD = .91$ ,  $N = 87$ ),  $t(391) = 3.36$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = .41$ , 95% CI [.17, .65]. A Cohen’s  $d$  of .41 is a medium effect. These findings support Hypothesis 2a that guilt proneness would be higher for women than for men.

Additionally, women’s average shame proneness score ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = .80$ ,  $N = 306$ ) was significantly higher than men’s average shame proneness ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = .81$ ,  $N = 87$ ),  $t(391) = 4.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .54$ , 95% CI [.30, .78]. This is also a medium-sized difference. These findings support Hypothesis 2b that shame proneness would be higher for women than for men. Women’s average overall helping score ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = .68$ ,  $N = 306$ ) was significantly higher than men’s average helping score ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = .75$ ,  $N = 87$ ),  $t(391) = 2.01$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $d = .25$ , 95% CI [.01, .49], a small difference.

A Potthoff analysis was used to determine whether the linear relationship between helping and shame or guilt proneness differed across men and women. The Potthoff test of coincidence revealed that the regression line did not differ significantly between the sexes on



both the guilt,  $F(1, 389) = 1.65, p = .20$ , and shame  $F(1, 389) = 2.51, p = .11$  dimensions when correlated with helping. Following retention of the hypothesis of coincidence, the interaction term was dropped from the model (changing the model to an ANCOV model). When the sex differences in guilt proneness were removed, there was no significant difference between the sexes on helpfulness,  $F(1, 390) = 0.43, p = .52$ . When the sex differences in shame proneness were removed, there was no significant difference between men and women on helpfulness,  $F(1, 390) = 1.81, p = .18$ .

### Comparing the Vignettes

A Sex x Vignette mixed factorial ANOVA was utilized to compare the vignettes on helpfulness elicited. There were, significant main effects of sex  $F(1, 391) = 4.183, p = .042$ , as well as vignette  $F(2, 390) = 165.129, p < .001$ . The interaction of sex and vignette fell short of significance  $F(2,390) = .515, p = .598$ .

Descriptive statistics found in Table 1 and pairwise comparisons in Table 3, suggested that there are significant differences between all helping vignettes. Mean scores suggest that helping was greatest in the Domestic Abuse vignette ( $M = 5.55$ ), least in the Theft vignette ( $M = 4.51$ ), with the Sexual Harassment vignette ( $M = 5.26$ ) in between.

Table 3. *Pairwise Comparisons of Helping Scores*

Vignettes Compared	<i>M diff</i>	<i>t</i>	Correlation	<i>p</i>
Theft & Domestic Abuse	-1.04	-21.23	0.38	.000
Theft & Sexual Harassment	-0.75	-15.59	0.47	.000
Domestic Abuse & Sexual Harassment	0.28	8.13	0.65	.000

## CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

Both shame and guilt proneness factors were shown to be associated with helping behaviors across the vignettes. The strength of correlation between guilt and each helping vignette supported previous beliefs that guilt proneness is a strong predictor of willingness to help. In this study, shame proneness was also revealed to have a positive correlation with helping across vignettes, though to a weaker degree. Thus, while shame was predictive of helping behavior, this correlation was most likely due to the strength of the relationship between helping and the NSE dimension. Since helping and NSE were positively correlated, and shame-withdraw and helping had a slight negative correlation ( $r = -.06$ ), it is likely that a potential outcome of NSE is helping others, and a potential outcome of shame withdraw is a reluctance to help others.

The relationship between NBE and guilt-repair was strong ( $r = .52$ ), the highest overall correlation of any subscale correlation. This was not surprising, and was probably due to the self-reflective component of behavioral evaluations. Once the behavior had been evaluated as unfavorable a repair component was able to take effect, and the bad action was repaired. The relationship between NSE and shame-withdraw is more complex. The weak correlation between the two ( $r = .16$ ) demonstrated a significant ( $p = .002$ ) link between NSE and shame-withdraw. As with guilt, this suggested that NSE precludes a shame-withdraw behavior. However, shame-withdraw's negative relationship with helping seemed to show that the behavioral outcomes of NSE and shame-withdraw were different. This is one of the possible shortcomings of thinking that all shame is negative, when some aspects of shame proneness can lead to increased prosocial acts.

Additionally, an unexpectedly strong relationship occurred between NSE and guilt-repair ( $r = .47$ ), as well as NSE and NBE ( $r = .50$ ). The correlation between NBE and NSE was likely due, in part, to the self-reflective nature shared by the two types of guilt and shame proneness. However, the relationship between guilt repair and NSE was more complex, and was likely due to the tendency of those high in NSE to perform ethical behaviors (Cohen et al., 2011).

Relationships were further examined by sex, across vignette and dimensions revealing that women's mean scores were consistently higher than men. This shows that on average women displayed higher levels of guilt proneness, shame proneness, and desire to help others. The implication of these findings is that women are more prone to shame and guilt, which influences their desire to help others. Or women value helpfulness more than do men, and that causes women to feel guilty and shameful if they do not help (more so than do men). It is also interesting to note that men and women's scores on the helping dimension had the smallest differences when compared to the difference of their scores on guilt or shame. This small ratio may be due to women feeling shame-withdraw more frequently, which is related negatively to helping. Thus, the scores between women and men would seem more similar since women are more prone to shame-withdraw and these women would be less likely to help. Though mean differences between the sexes existed in regard to helping, it appeared that shame and guilt may have played a large part in these differences.

Shame and guilt proneness also played a mediating role in the relationship between sex and helping. On the guilt dimension, when we removed the sex differences in guilt-proneness, there was no significant difference between the sexes on helping. This may mean that women were more helpful because they are more guilt-prone, instead of differences being attributed to sex. In regard to the shame dimension, when we removed the sex differences in shame-

proneness there was no significant differences between the sexes on helping. Similar to the guilt dimension, women were more helpful because they have a more frequent tendency to be shame prone than men. These findings imply that there was some other factor influencing women. This factor caused them to be both more shame prone and guilt prone than men. This may be related to social differences between men and women's gender roles.

### **Future Research**

The major purpose of this research was to determine whether or not desire to help others in a work setting was related to the moral emotion dimensions of shame proneness and guilt proneness. The findings suggest that shame and guilt proneness are both related to helping desire, and that desire to help changes depending on the presented vignette. Although this study explored the effect of shame and guilt proneness on helping desire, further studies with more diversity within their samples would be able to provide a more generalizable impact and discover further consequences of guilt and shame proneness. Future research could also focus on the use of a work sample so that experiences within an occupational setting can be examined, as experience in a workplace setting is not something that all college students have experienced. Because shame NSE and general guilt proneness are related to helping behaviors, work studies should be able to test predictive models of workplace helping.

### **Limitations**

The most prominent limitation of this study was the reliance on survey techniques to study a student sample, which may have increased error due to non-uniform environmental factors since participants accessed the measures online. The use of a homogenous, college-aged student population resulted in restricted data; however, since college-aged students will eventually make up the future workforce the use of a student population was reasonably

appropriate. Lastly, this study focused on reported helping and not actual helping behaviors so results may have been skewed by a social desirability bias. Having uniform, in-person, helping role-playing scenarios may lead to different results. Additionally, a large portion of the prominent literature on shame and guilt is over 15 years old and much of the literature relates back to Tangney and Dearing's TOSCA measure as a primary resource. Future development and use of other shame and guilt proneness measures like the GASP will help to increase the breadth of knowledge on shame and guilt.

### **Conclusion**

While guilt and shame are often thought of as analogous concepts, the results of this research indicated some differences. While there was some overlap between shame and guilt the, proclivity of a shame or guilt prone individual towards helping behaviors is different. However, guilt and shame paralleled each other across vignettes, increasing and decreasing depending on the situation though guilt was always more prevalent. Thus, when talking about the moral emotions of shame and guilt, the response strength of moral emotions depended on the situation. It was also possible that shame proneness' relationship to helping was heavily influenced by the NSE dimension.

In regard to the shame and guilt sub-dimensions, the relationship between NBE, guilt-repair, and NSE produced particularly interesting results because all three were related to each other and related to helping. A reason for this may have been the close relationship with introspection and the desire to rectify cognitive distress or negative acts which would result in helping. This excludes the shame-withdraw dimension which was negatively related to guilt-repair and only slightly correlated with the other shame proneness dimension of NSE.

Lastly, women tended to have higher levels of guilt, shame, and helping across situations. However, this may have been due in part to other factors that caused women to be more guilt and shame prone than men. Specifically, women tended to have higher levels of both shame and guilt proneness which is one explanation of women's higher levels of desire to help.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB Approval

**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office**  
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682  
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834  
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · [www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)

### Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: John Cope  
CC:  
Date: 2/25/2013  
Re: UMCIRB 13-000372  
Shame and Guilt Types and Helping Behaviors

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 2/25/2013. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category #2.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

The UMCIRB office will hold your exemption application for a period of five years from the date of this letter. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit an Exemption Certification request at least 30 days before the end of the five year period. The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

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IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418  
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418 IRB00004973

## **APPENDIX B: Consent to Participate**

You are being invited to participate in a **research** study titled “*The Effect of Proneness to Shame and Guilt Types on Helping Behavior*” being conducted by Bryan Wallace, a graduate student at East Carolina University in the Psychology department. The goal is to survey about 400 individuals through Experimentrak surveys. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It is hoped that this information will assist us to better understand the function of shame and guilt personality traits impact on desire to help others. We are asking you to provide identifying information in order to assign credits. However, your responses will be kept confidential. No data will be released or used with your identification attached. Your participation in the research is **voluntary**. You may choose not to answer any or all questions, and you may stop at any time. There is **no penalty for not taking part** in this research study. Please call John Cope or Bryan Wallace at (252)-328-6497 for any research related questions or the Office for Human Research Integrity (OHRI) at 252-744-2914 for questions about your rights as a research participant.

## **APPENDIX C: Demographics Questionnaire**

### **What is your age in years?**

- 18 or younger
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24 or older

### **What is your race?**

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian (e.g., Asian Indian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, or other Asian)
- Pacific Islander (e.g. Native Hawaiian, Guamanian, Chamorro, or other Pacific Islander)

### **Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?**

- No
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, other

### **What is your sex?**

- Male
- Female

### **What is your marital status?**

- Single
- Not married, in a relationship
- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced

### **What year are you in school currently?**

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate student

### **What is your current enrollment status?**

- Part time student
- Full time student

**Are you currently employed?**

- Yes
- No

**If yes, how many hours per week do you work?**

- Not employed
- Less than 10 hours
- 10-20 hours
- 20-30 hours
- 30-40 hours
- More than 40 hours



## **APPENDIX D: Vignettes**

### **Theft**

You are walking through the halls of your office building. While walking by a coworker's cubicle you notice that they have an unplugged, spare, company computer monitor. This seems a little unusual because the monitor is tucked away underneath the desk. When you are leaving work at the end of the day you notice the coworker is acting suspicious and packing the monitor into their car. The coworker drives away with the monitor and does not return with it the following day.

### **Domestic Abuse**

You have been talking with a female coworker all week and notice that her behavior has changed. She is coming to work late and wearing long sleeved shirts and pants despite the warm weather. She appears more timid than usual, and you notice that she is avoiding contact with coworkers. This is strange because she is normally very social and outgoing. She tells you that her boyfriend had been angry at her recently, but it was "her fault". Later, you notice that she has bruising on her wrists as if she was grabbed by someone. At the end of the week she is wearing makeup in order to conceal a black eye.

### **Sexual Harassment**

While at lunch with your coworkers you notice a young female coworker sitting alone. Your male boss comes over, sits down, and begins a conversation. The young woman seems visibly upset by this. You notice your boss is making several inappropriate sexual explicit comments about the young woman. The woman tries to ignore him and then asks him to stop. Your boss persists and claims that he was "just joking". As your boss gets up to leave he puts his hand on the young woman's leg and tells the young woman that he "can't wait to see her next time". The young woman seems visibly disturbed.

## **APPENDIX E: Helping Questionnaire by Vignette**

### **Vignette 1.**

1 = Very unlikely, 2 = Unlikely, 3 = Slightly Unlikely, 4 = About 50%, 5= Slightly Likely, 6 = Likely, 7 = Very Likely

1. What is the likelihood you would call the police?
2. What is the likelihood you would report the behavior to a superior?
3. What is the likelihood you would leave the situation without helping?
4. What is the likelihood you would attempt to help the company by yourself?
5. What is the likelihood you would suggest they get help?
6. What is the likelihood you would ask others around you to help resolve the situation?
7. What is the likelihood you would offer the company your support?
8. What is the likelihood you would ignore the situation and pretend it is not going on?
9. What is the likelihood you would tell the coworker to stop?
10. What is the likelihood you would feel like you need to help?
11. What is the likelihood you would feel prepared to help in this situation?
12. What is the likelihood you would feel you cannot help?

### **Vignette 2.**

1 = Very unlikely, 2 = Unlikely, 3 = Slightly Unlikely, 4 = About 50%, 5= Slightly Likely, 6 = Likely, 7 = Very Likely

13. What is the likelihood you would call the police?
14. What is the likelihood you would report the behavior to a superior?
15. What is the likelihood you would leave the situation without helping?
16. What is the likelihood you would attempt to help the victim by yourself?
17. What is the likelihood you would suggest they get help?
18. What is the likelihood you would ask others around you to help resolve the situation?
19. What is the likelihood you would offer the victim your support?
20. What is the likelihood you would ignore the situation and pretend it is not going on?
21. What is the likelihood you would tell the abuser to stop?
22. What is the likelihood you would feel like you need to help?
23. What is the likelihood you would feel prepared to help in this situation?
24. What is the likelihood you would feel you cannot help?

### **Vignette 3.**

1 = Very unlikely, 2 = Unlikely, 3 = Slightly Unlikely, 4 = About 50%, 5= Slightly Likely, 6 = Likely, 7 = Very Likely

25. What is the likelihood you would call the police?
26. What is the likelihood you would report the behavior to a superior?
27. What is the likelihood you would leave the situation without helping?
28. What is the likelihood you would attempt to help the victim by yourself?
29. What is the likelihood you would suggest they get help?
30. What is the likelihood you would ask others around you to help resolve the situation?

31. What is the likelihood you would offer the victim your support?
32. What is the likelihood you would ignore the situation and pretend it is not going on?
33. What is the likelihood you would tell your boss to stop?
34. What is the likelihood you would feel like you need to help?
35. What is the likelihood you would feel prepared to help in this situation?
36. What is the likelihood you would feel you cannot help?