



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

The relationship between shame and different types of anger: A theory-based investigation

Jennie Hejdenberg*, Bernice Andrews

Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 October 2010

Received in revised form 18 February 2011

Accepted 23 February 2011

Available online 21 March 2011

Keywords:

Shame

Anger

Shame–rage

Social rank

STAXI

ABSTRACT

The link between shame and anger is widely recognised in the clinical literature and a positive correlation between dispositions to the two emotions is evident in numerous studies. However research into the mechanisms behind the relationship is sparse, with little consideration of when anger is shame-related and when it is not. Both shame–rage theory (Lewis, 1971) and social rank theory (Gilbert, 1997) suggest that shame would be more strongly associated with anger in response to criticism than to having an angry temperament and this hypothesis was tested in the current study. Questionnaire measures of shame and anger were completed by 188 university students. The results were in line with predictions, and indicated that the relationship between shame proneness and trait anger is due to an association between shame and the tendency to become angry in reaction to criticism. In the absence of such a tendency, having an angry temperament was not related to shame, and this effect did not vary by gender. The findings extend previous research by confirming that shame is related to a tendency to a particular type of anger, namely that felt after specific provocation.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Whilst shame is often seen as an adaptive emotion as it can motivate prosocial behaviour (de Hooge, Breugelmans, & Zeelenberg, 2008; Keltner & Harker, 1998), dispositional shame has been viewed as maladaptive and likely to be associated with negative outcomes including anger and aggressive behaviour (e.g., Farmer & Andrews, 2009; Harper, Austin, Cercone, & Arias, 2005; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996). Although numerous studies have demonstrated positive correlations between shame and anger proneness, with few exceptions (Tangney et al., 1992, 1996) authors have not attempted to disentangle this relationship or describe what it may represent. The current paper reviews theories and evidence for an association between shame and anger and presents further evidence to elucidate this relationship.

1.1. Theoretical models of shame and anger

Theoretical notions of shame and anger derive mainly from the original work of Lewis (1971) and have been adopted by current theorists such as Tangney and Dearing (2002). Based on clinical

observation, Lewis's shame–rage theory posits that feelings of shame may instigate a seething, hostile type of anger described as humiliated fury. Lewis proposed that this is an essentially defensive response to the powerlessness and defectiveness felt when experiencing shame. Supported by evidence (Tangney et al., 1992), Tangney and Dearing (2002) have proposed that as shame also involves concern of how one appears to others, its cause may be attributed to a perceived disapproving other resulting in blame toward the other with anger as a consequence. Protecting the self by shifting blame and becoming angry towards others allows the shamed individual to gain some sense of control and relief from the self-impairing experience of shame (Lewis, 1971; Retzinger, 1991; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Although shame–rage theory describes the interplay between shame and anger in a situational context, the implication is that such interactions represent an entrenched pattern. Indeed, evidence used in support of the theory usually involves studies of dispositional shame and anger (Tangney et al., 1992, 1996).

Whilst Lewis's theory is the most referred-to model, the connection between shame and anger is also compatible with evolutionary theories of emotion. From this perspective shame and anger have been linked to fundamental concerns at opposite ends of the spectrum, shame with defeat and anger with counterattack and survival (Andrews, Brewin, Rose, & Kirk, 2000). Gilbert's social rank theory (1997) extends these notions to a later phylogenetic stage of group living by proposing that both emotions are concerned with rank and social status.

* Corresponding author. Address: Psychology Department, Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX, United Kingdom. Tel.: +44 7835738135.

E-mail address: jennie.hejdenberg@rhul.ac.uk (J. Hejdenberg).

In evolutionary terms, competing for scarce resources is one of the most primitive behaviours to increase fitness and the potential to acquire such resources is thought to underlie social status conferral (Gilbert, 1997). When faced with threats to status and resources, evolved defence systems are rapidly activated, including fight, flight or submission, which are related to different types of defence emotions (anger, fear, shame; Gilbert, 2002). According to Gilbert (1997), shame evolved to protect one's social status by signalling a threat to status or loss of status. This can be countered in several ways: one can accept the lowered status and show submissiveness to avoid further conflict. Alternatively, status can be maintained or improved by strategies that increase social attractiveness through prosocial behaviour, competence or talent, or by strategies that signal agency and power using anger and aggression (Gilbert, 1997, 2002). The defensive strategy adopted may depend on individual differences such as those relating to prior learning experiences, or on situational factors and physiological states (Gilbert, 2002).

In general terms, Lewis's shame–rage theory and Gilbert's social rank theory both construe anger as a defensive action. According to shame–rage theory, anger should be particularly motivated by and associated with self-concept concerns. According to social rank theory, anger should be associated with concerns over status. Both models imply that shame should be related to anger as a response to threats to ego and rank rather than to the type of unfocused anger that might result from having an angry temperament.

1.2. Research and methodological issues in the study of shame and anger

The different types of anger outlined in the clinical and evolutionary models are reflected in Spielberger's well established anger scale (STAXI; Spielberger, 1999). The measure consists of two subscales: angry temperament and angry reaction to criticism, which have consistently been identified in factor analytic studies of STAXI trait anger items (Forgays, Forgays, & Spielberger, 1997; Fuqua et al., 1991). Whilst the angry temperament subscale reflects the tendency to feel angry in the absence of specific provocation (with items such as 'I am a hot headed person' and 'I am quick tempered'), angry reaction to criticism represents the frequency of angry feelings in response to criticism ('I feel infuriated when I do a good job and get a poor evaluation', 'it makes me furious when I am criticised in front of others'). One of these studies reported a modest correlation between the two subscales in college students ($r = .37$, $N = 455$; Fuqua et al., 1991) and the authors suggested that they should be considered separately.

Five studies have presented data on the relation between shame-proneness and the STAXI trait anger scale (Farmer &

Andrews, 2009; Harper et al., 2005; Hoglund & Nicholas, 1995; Milligan & Andrews, 2005; Tangney et al., 1992), three of which reported data from the two subscales. In the two which did not, relevant data were retrieved from the authors for the purpose of this review. The subscales' relative contributions to shame-proneness were however not the focus of any of these studies and were not specifically considered. Further details of these studies are presented in Table 1; they do not represent an exhaustive review of all shame and anger studies, but only those in which the STAXI trait anger scale was used as this is presently the only trait anger measure that distinguishes between angry temperament and angry reaction to criticism.

With the exception of Farmer and Andrews' (2009) offender sample all these studies found significant correlations of moderate magnitude between shame-proneness and trait anger overall. The relation between shame and the STAXI subscales has however been somewhat inconsistent across studies. In three studies shame appeared to be more strongly related to angry reaction to criticism than to angry temperament although correlational differences were not specifically tested (Farmer & Andrews, 2009; Hoglund & Nicholas, 1995; Tangney et al., 1992). Tangney et al. (1992) reported in a student sample that whilst both angry reaction to criticism and angry temperament were significantly related to increased levels of shame measured by the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1989), the effect size for angry temperament was small (.13 bivariate correlation; see Table 1). Hoglund and Nicholas (1995) considered the relative importance to TOSCA shame of a number of anger and hostility variables in students including the two STAXI trait anger subscales in a regression analysis. However, the actual correlation coefficients were not reported and could not be retrieved. The results were described in text, such that when all anger and hostility variables were considered simultaneously, shame was positively related to angry reaction to criticism in females only, and there was no relation to angry temperament in either gender. In the third study, Farmer and Andrews (2009) examined the relation between shame as measured by the Experience of Shame Scale (ESS; Andrews, Qian, & Valentine, 2002) and the STAXI trait anger subscales in two male samples, young offenders, and students. The authors found that angry reaction, but not angry temperament, was significantly correlated with shame-proneness in the male students. Neither correlation was significant in the young offenders, whose shame levels were comparatively low. Two further studies did not find any apparent differential effects for angry temperament and angry reaction in relation to shame. In the studies by Harper et al. (2005) using TOSCA with male students in dating relationships and Milligan and Andrews (2005) using the ESS with female offenders, angry temperament and angry reaction to criticism both correlated significantly with shame at similar magnitudes.

Table 1
Summary of studies examining the relationship between STAXI trait anger subscales and measures of shame proneness.

Study	Sample	N	Shame measure	STAXI trait anger		
				Temperament	Reaction	Overall
Tangney et al. (1992) Study 2	Students (71% female)	252	TOSCA	.13*	.26***	.33***
Hoglund and Nicholas (1995) (No correlation coefficients reported)	Students (49% female)	208	TOSCA	Correlation not significant	Correlation significant	Not reported
Harper et al. (2005) ^a	Male students	150	TOSCA	.30**	.29**	.35***
Milligan and Andrews (2005) ^a	Female prisoners	89	ESS	.32***	.41***	.42***
Farmer and Andrews (2009)	Male students	60	ESS	.12	.56**	.47**
	Male young offenders	56		-.03	.17	.05

Note. ESS, Experience of Shame Scale (Andrews et al., 2002); STAXI, State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 1999); TOSCA, Tests of Self-Conscious Affect (Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1989).

^a Correlation coefficients provided by personal communication with the study's authors

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/891745>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/891745>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)