

The organisation of Chinese shame concepts

Jin Li*

Brown University, Providence, RI, USA

Lianqin Wang*

World Bank

Kurt W. Fischer

Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, USA

This study examined Chinese shame concepts. By asking native Chinese to identify terms for shame, we collected 113 shame terms. Hierarchical cluster analysis of sorted terms yielded a comprehensive map of the concept. We found, at the highest abstract level, two large distinctions of “shame state, self-focus” and “reactions to shame, other-focus.” While the former describes various aspects of actual shame experience that focuses on the self, the latter focuses on consequences of and reactions to shame directed at others. Shame state with self-focus contained three further sets of meanings: (1) one’s fears of losing face; (2) the feeling state after one’s face has been lost; and (3) guilt. Reactions to shame with other-focus also consisted of three further sets of subcomponents at the same level: (4) disgrace; (5) shamelessness and its condemnation; and (6) embarrassment. Except for guilt, there were several subclusters under each of these categories. We discussed both universal trends and specific constellations of shame concepts in Chinese culture.

Propriety, Righteousness, Integrity, and a Sense of Shame
(Carvings in Chinese on the Gate to Chinatown, Boston)

The prevalence and importance of shame in Chinese culture are self-evident when the phrase “a sense of shame” even found its way onto a Chinese monument in a foreign land. Chinese immigrant adults and children encounter

Correspondence should be addressed to Jin Li, Assistant Professor of Education and Human Development, Brown University, Education Department, Box 1938, 21 Manning Walk Providence, RI 02912, USA; e-mail: Jin_Li@Brown.edu

* Both Jin Li and Lianqin Wang are first authors.

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this sight upon entering the cultural enclave of Chinatown in Boston, Massachusetts. For them this significant concept is a positive reminder of their cultural heritage. Why does shame assume such importance in Chinese culture? How is this emotion organised as a whole in Chinese people's psychological functioning?

Shame as a core member of the so-called self-conscious emotions involves the self centrally. It is also generated in social relationships, in which people interact with one another, evaluate, and judge themselves and each other. People feel ashamed when they perceive that someone is making a negative judgement about some activity or characteristic of theirs (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). Shame often occurs when a person becomes aware of him/herself as having violated a moral standard, goal or social convention, and it leads typically to expressive behaviours of hiding the face, turning away, and escaping. Shame may be a highly painful state resulting in the wish to hide, disappear, or even die (H. Lewis, 1971; M. Lewis, 1992; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991; Tangney, 1995).

Even though shame has been found to exist among all humans (Casimir & Schnegg, 2003), recent research on shame documents large cross-cultural differences in meaning, antecedents, actual experience of the shame state, and ensuing action tendencies. For example, Heider's (1991) study of emotion words in three cultures within Indonesia showed finely differentiated aspects of shame that do not seem to exist in English-speaking cultures. In Orissa, India, shame also indicates a heightened awareness and is seen and experienced both as a healthy emotion and an antidote to rage (Menon & Schweder, 1994). Compared to Western cultures, shame is more prevalent in Japan and Indonesia according to various kinds of assessments (Benedict, 1946; Crystal, Parrott, Okazaki, & Watanabe, 2001; Lebra, 1976; Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995), although two studies of the primary language of Indonesia did not find shame to form a salient category of emotion words in that particular culture (Fontaine, Poortinga, Setiadi, & Markam, 2002; Shaver, Murdaya, & Fraley, 2001). Besides the West-East differences, shame has also been found to be a significant emotion in the so-called honour cultures in the Mediterranean region. Abu-Lughod's (1990, 1996) anthropological research described how shameful events can threaten one's honour, especially women's honour among the Awlad 'Ali in western Egypt. Similarly, shame is more related to family and masculine honour as well as female sexuality in Spain than in the Netherlands (Fischer, Manstead, & Rodriguez Mosquera, 1999; Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2002).

In explaining these cultural differences in shame, most of the above research draws on an important distinction commonly made between cultures that emphasise the group and those that focus on the individual and related construals of self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Typically, most Western cultures (perhaps with the exceptions of the Mediterranean European cultures) have been

characterised as more individualist (Triandis, 1989, 1995), whereas most non-Western cultures have been found to be more collectivist. In individualist cultures, independence, autonomy, and equality are fostered, while in collectivist cultures, values of conformity, interdependence, group solidarity, and hierarchical authority are encouraged. In both cases, shame functions as a social control mechanism that makes use of the emotion's aversive properties. The control may be more extensive and elaborated in collectivist cultures, however, because of the use of shame as a prominent technique of social control and child rearing (Fung, 1999; Fung & Chen, 2001).

Shame in Chinese culture

Like many group-oriented cultures, Chinese culture emphasises shame. However, due to its own cultural value system and development, Chinese concepts of shame may possess their own features. The importance of shame in Chinese culture is associated with the dominant social and moral thought of Confucianism. According to Confucian teaching, life's highest purpose is seeking self-perfection, as represented by the concept of *ren* (仁), which means becoming the most genuine, most sincere, and most humane person one can be (Tu, 1979). This moral aspiration is not envisioned as solely an individual undertaking but as a process embedded in one's daily social existence. Given that Confucianism emphasises harmonious social relations among people, one's capacity to reflect on one's social interactions and moral behaviour assumes central significance in the process of self-perfection (Lee, 1996; Wu & Lai, 1992).

Confucianism conceptualises shame as an emotion as well as a human capacity that directs the person inward for self-examination and motivates the person toward socially and morally desirable change. When one has done something wrong or socially inappropriate, admitting one's misconduct and desiring to change oneself is also believed to be an act of expiation requiring personal courage (Fung, in press; Wu & Lai, 1992). It is this very function and power of shame that Confucianism values and fosters. The common Western association of shame as being harmful to a person's health (Schneider, 1977; Wurmser, 1981) does not appear to be part of the Confucian aspiration. In Chinese culture, if a person is perceived as having no sense of shame, that person may be thought of as beyond moral reach, and therefore is even "feared by the devil". Thus, shame to the Chinese is not a mere emotion, but also a moral and virtuous sensibility to be pursued (Fung, in press; Hu, 1944; Hwang, 1987; Schoenhals, 1993; Zhai, 1995). That may be why a sense of shame is one of the four Confucian moral principles carved on monuments such as the Chinatown Gate in Boston. Its meaning overlaps with that of one's conscience (Wu & Lai, 1992).

Indeed, this particular acknowledgement of shame echoes in writing throughout Chinese history. For example, Chu (1972) found that more than 10% of the chapters in the Confucian *Analects*, one of the classics Chinese scholars master, are concerned with the value of shame. Tu (1979) also discussed how other influential Confucian scholars (e.g., Wang Yang-ming, AD 1472–1529) viewed shame as an essential human emotion/capacity that underlies one's moral development and conscience.

Empirical research has also provided evidence for the role shame plays among contemporary Chinese. For example, Wilson (1980, 1981) found the use of shaming to be a moral training technique, including ostracism or abandonment by the group for breeches of social norms. Wilson also noted that shame is a group rather than an individual concern in China: People almost always belong to a closely integrated group on which their honour or shame is reflected. People's families and their wider community of friends, relatives, and superiors all have an interest in a member's advancements and setbacks. When people achieve well, the entire community shares the honour. Likewise, when people fail, they do not simply lose their own face, but they shame all those around them.

Related to Wilson's descriptions, the Chinese notion of face, which belongs to the larger area of honour and respect, has received extensive research attention (Hu, 1944; Hwang, 1987; Yu, 1987; Zhai, 1995). Similar to the Mediterranean concept of honour (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Fischer et al., 1999; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002), loss of face is a common cause of shame in Chinese people (Hu, 1944; Hwang, 1987; Yu, 1987).

Shaver and his colleagues provided further understanding of Chinese shame by analysing the organisation of emotion words in English, Italian, Chinese, and Indonesian (Shaver et al., 2001; Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz, 1992). While people in all four cultures categorised emotion words similarly in terms of a few basic emotion families (i.e., anger, fear, sadness, love, and joy), only the Chinese produced the additional emotion family of shame. For the English, Italian, and Indonesian speakers, self-conscious emotion terms were subsumed under other emotion families, but for the Chinese speakers shame, including guilt and embarrassment, emerged as a separate family.

More recently, Stipek (1998) documented that whereas both US and Chinese college students rated similarly on shame and guilt for their own wrongdoing, the Chinese extended these emotions to their close relatives significantly more than the Americans. Shaver et al. (1992) also compared the first words acquired by children in the United States, England, and China and found that Chinese children used shame from an early age, whereas US and British children did not do so (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Fischer, Shaver, & Carnochan, 1990; see also Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Most recently, Fung's (1999) observational data in a longitudinal study showed the prevalent shaming techniques that Chinese caregivers used to socialise their children in the realm of social/moral

behaviour. These socialisation strategies started with children as young as two and half and increased as children got older.

Taken together, the above research suggests the prevalence of shame among the Chinese. Despite the millennia-long cultural practices, related philosophical writing, and recent empirical endeavours, shame in Chinese culture has received inadequate empirical attention. It is not clear what shame means to the present-day Chinese. As stated earlier, shame may mean different things to members of other cultures. Assuming that culturally specific meanings do exist among the Chinese, what are they? How might these meanings be organised as a whole? What important differentiations among shame-related concepts do Chinese people make? The present study thus sought to address these important research questions.

Based on the above literature review, we hypothesised that the Chinese shame concept would be a large domain consisting of several key dimensions. First, face would emerge as a core notion based on specific aspects of shame. These features would include anxiety about or threat of loss of face and face-related feeling states when shame is actually experienced. These also would show a focus on the self. Whereas we expected some universal elements, such as physiological signs of blushing and desires to hide, we also expected to find these elements to be linked to face threats (e.g., hushing up scandal).

Second, because the Chinese shame concept is closely related to moral concerns, we anticipated extensive notions of anger and rage toward those who commit shameful acts. However, there would be even stronger shame-related responses to those who do not show a sense of shame for their shameful acts. This was based on the notion of “reintegration” that Chinese culture also uses to encourage people to face their wrongdoings and to amend themselves, a process by which they can be reintegrated back into the community (Mascolo, Fischer, & Li, 2003). Even though committing shameful acts generates anger in people, showing a sense of shame signals that one still cares about others’ feelings, thereby displaying what Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa (2000) called socially “engaging emotions”. This may result in forgiveness. However, if one does not show a sense of shame, people may feel an urge to condemn the person not only for his/her shameful act but more strongly for the person’s unwillingness to amend him/herself. Whereas face-related concerns would be self-focused, shame-induced reactions would be directed at others.

Moreover, based on Li’s (2002) research on the blurry distinction between shame and guilt among Chinese students facing failure in learning, we anticipated some notions of guilt to emerge in close association with shame. Finally, we hypothesised some references to the lighter concept of embarrassment (Miller & Tangney, 1994), which would focus more on social ramifications instead of moral concerns.

METHOD

To tap the meanings of shame in Chinese culture, we examined the organisation of shame terms in Chinese using methods similar to those employed by Shaver et al. (1992) to study emotion terms more generally. Accordingly, we began collecting Chinese shame terms by using the primary Mandarin Chinese dictionary. We asked native Chinese to elaborate this list by adding other relevant shame terms. Then, we asked other native Chinese to indicate which words most centrally involved shame. Finally, to explore the organisation of these shame terms, we asked a third group of native Chinese to sort the terms, and we analysed their sorting using hierarchical cluster analysis.

The technique of hierarchical cluster analysis provides an empirical method for determining the hierarchical structure of prototypical categories (Rosch, 1978). According to the prototype approach, human mental representation of categorical systems (e.g., natural objects) can be analysed as consisting of levels along both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension consists of three main levels: *superordinate*, *basic*, and *subordinate*. Whereas the superordinate level concerns the broadest distinctions (e.g., furniture), the basic level contains less abstract differences (e.g., chair). The subordinate level captures the finer categorical differences (e.g., kitchen chair). The horizontal dimension pertains to the categorical distinctions at the same level. A characteristic of the horizontal dimension is that many common categories (e.g., chair, sofa) present “fuzzy sets” rather than possessing clear boundaries from one another. Such fuzzy categories are usually not subject to definitions with precise attributes, but are organised as *prototypes*, that is, sets of distinct features of categories, such as the “prototypical” chair. Research has documented that human beings reliably categorise objects according to prototypes rather than using clear, precise definitions (Rosch, 1978). Emotion knowledge is one categorical system and has been studied with prototype methods (Fontaine et al., 2001; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O’Connor, 1987). This approach lent itself readily to the study of shame in Chinese.

Emotion knowledge has been analysed in terms of three broad factors or dimensions: evaluation (e.g., positive-negative, approach-avoidance, acceptance-rejection), potency, and self-other (Higgins, 1996; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Wundt, 1905/1907). For example, the aforementioned studies conducted by Shaver et al. (1987, 1992, 2001) found the positive versus negative dimension at the superordinate level of general emotion terms. For our study, however, we predicted Chinese shame terms to distinguish between self and others at the superordinate level and the basic and the subordinate groups to be further differentiated underneath each of these two headings. This hypothesis was based on the fact that shame is a negative emotion, which obviates the positive valence on the one hand, and on the other hand, that the shame

experience is so intense and so fundamentally social in Chinese culture (Fischer & Tangney, 1995; Kitayama et al., 1995).

Participants

Participants were 82 native mainland-Chinese adults living in the US or Canada and ranging in age from 20 to 45 years. All of them were born and raised in mainland China and came to the US and Canada either as graduate students, visiting scholars at universities, businessmen, or visitors to families, with their length of stay in North America ranging from 1 to 6 years. All of the participants received tertiary education or beyond.¹ Different participants took part in each phase of the study.

Selection of shame terms

To determine the Chinese terms that would best capture the sense of shame, we chose and evaluated terms in three steps. First, we searched through the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (IRCL, 1978) to find shame words and shame-related terms commonly used in spoken and written Chinese. We started with all those words that Shaver et al. (1992) used in their study. We began with *xiu* (羞, shame/shyness), *chi* (耻, disgrace), *ru* (辱, humiliation/shame), *can* (惭, sense of shame for one's wrongdoing), *kui* (愧, shame/guilt), and *lian/mian/yan* (脸/面/严, face). If any of those words led to other shame-related meanings as indicated in the dictionary, we continued to search those. For example, the word *kui* led to the discovery of *jiu* (疚, guilt), and we then looked for *jiu* related terms as well. This process produced 83 Chinese terms related to shame.²

Second, we expanded the list by asking 10 native speakers to add shame terms. Each participant viewed the 83 terms and added additional terms to the list. As a result, 61 additional terms were identified, yielding a total of 144 terms. Third, to choose terms that were more central to shame, we asked 20 different participants to rate each of the 144 shame words on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the weakest sense of shame and 7 representing the strongest sense. In order to ensure that final shame terms covered a reasonable range of meanings, experiences, reaction tendencies, and social ramifications, we first examined the ratings of all items carefully; then used a cut-off line of $>$ or $= 2.6$ to eliminate 31 less central terms. For example, humility, anger, arrogance, and sadness were among those eliminated, which conveyed weaker meanings of

¹ The study was conducted for the most part with written words. All of these 82 participants spoke Mandarin, the official language of China despite the fact that they also spoke dialects in their regions. Written Chinese is the only literacy system taught in school.

² Chinese is a logographic language with fixed characters. New words are not formed morphologically. Different characters or words are added to form new words and phrases.

shame. The remaining 113 terms represented a reasonable degree of group consensus regarding important meanings of shame in Chinese (listed in Table 1 in both Chinese and their English translations).

Sorting shame terms into categories

Another group of 52 participants individually sorted the 113 words into categories, which lasted about one hour. Before the session, every term was written on a removable label, and each person sorted the 113 labels into categories representing his/her best judgements about which shame words had “similar meanings or belonged together”. After sorting, people were asked to explain why they put certain words into each category. The purpose of this task was to clarify the core meanings for the categories chosen and to provide information for labelling the categories that would eventually be generated by the hierarchical cluster analysis. These brief interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Since no limit was placed on either the number of categories or the number of terms within each category, these parameters varied widely across subjects. The number of categories ranged from 6 to 35, and the category size from 1 to 50 terms.

Analysing the hierarchical clusters

Following the method by Shaver et al. (1987), we constructed a 113×113 co-occurrence matrix for each of the 52 participants. Whereas 1 indicated that two terms were placed in the same category, 0 indicated they were not. The total of 52 matrices were aggregated to form a single 113×113 matrix, with the number in each cell representing the number of subjects (0 to 52) who placed a particular pair of terms in the same category. If two terms were never placed in the same category, the corresponding cell in the matrix would have a count of 0, whereas the cell count would grow higher the more often people placed two terms together. The matrix thus identified how frequently terms were placed together in the same category. The matrix was then analysed using the average linkage method of the cluster analysis program in the Statistical Analysis System (SAS Institute, 1990), which generated the hierarchical clusters. Hierarchical clusters were computed by the distances of sorted items indicated by the *RMS* value. Thus, the higher the *RMS*, the further apart clusters were.

RESULTS

The results of the cluster analysis are shown in a simplified version of the empirical hierarchical tree diagram in Figure 1. There are three levels in the vertical structure, labelled superordinate, basic, and subordinate, following common practice (Fontaine et al., 2002; Rosch, 1978; Shaver et al., 1987).

TABLE 1
Rank and mean proportionality ratings (M) for shame words/phrases in English and Chinese

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Item No.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Item in English</i>	<i>Chinese</i>
1	3	5.91	Shame-disgrace	羞耻
2	2	5.54	Disgrace	耻
3	99	5.42	So ashamed that the ancestors of eight generations can even feel it	羞死八辈子先人
4	11	5.40	Ashamed to death	羞死人
5	1	5.38	Shyness or shame (depending on context)	羞
6	21	5.30	Disgrace-humiliation	耻辱
7	4	5.12	Shame-guilt	羞惭
8	47	5.12	Not knowing there are things to feel shame about	真不知天下有羞耻事
9	51	5.11	Shame on you!	羞！羞！羞！
10	7	5.09	Face covered with shame-guilt	满面羞惭
11	64	5.07	Nowhere to place one's face (too ashamed to show one's face)	脸没处搁
12	33	5.03	Too ashamed to see anyone	没脸见人
13	13	5.02	Nation's humiliation/shame	国耻
14	5	5.01	Shame-guilt/conscience	羞愧
15	61	5.00	Can find no place to hide oneself for shame/looking for a hole to crawl into	无地自容
16	16	4.98	Blushing with shame	羞红了脸
17	82	4.96	Face filled with an expression of shyness	满脸羞色
18	9	4.94	Shame/humiliation	羞辱
19	44	4.91	Barefaced/does not care to maintain one's face (what a shame!)	不要脸
20	40	4.84	Thick-skinned face without shame	厚颜无耻
21	42	4.82	Shameless/no sense of disgrace	无耻
22	46	4.81	Truly losing face	真丢人
23	6	4.80	Hanging one's head in shame-guilt	羞愧地低着头
24	78	4.80	Utterly shameless	死不要脸
25		4.78	Face that blushes with shyness/shame	臊红了脸
26	10	4.72	Being ashamed	羞人
27	77	4.71	Making a fool of oneself/disgracing oneself	丢人现眼
28	12	4.70	Shame to anger/indignation	羞愤
29	34	4.67	Shy or embarrassed or ashamed (depending on context)	难为情
30	43	4.61	No sense of shame	不害臊
31	39	4.60	No sense of shame/disgrace	不知羞耻

(Continued)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Item No.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Item in English</i>	<i>Chinese</i>
32	15	4.59	Flying into a rage from shame	恼羞成怒
33	66	4.58	Brazen in the extreme/absolutely no sense of shame	无耻之尤
34	17	4.56	Coy/timid/shy	羞答答
35	8	4.53	Sense of shame/disgrace	羞耻之心
36	49	4.50	Disreputable/dishonourable face	不体面
37	23	4.47	Bashful/shamed	害臊
38	18	4.44	Shamed and guilty beyond words	羞愧难言
39	48	4.42	Losing face terribly	真丢脸
40	41	4.39	Thick-skinned/face/brazen faced	厚脸皮
41	63	4.39	A sense of inferiority or inadequacy/feeling unworthy	自惭形秽
42	20	4.37	Shy/bashful	害羞
43	76	4.36	Family shame should not be made public/ don't wash your dirty linen in public	家丑不可外扬
44	79	4.33	Does not want one's skin (shameless)	不要皮
45	14	4.30	Shame to loathing/aversion	羞恶
46	50	4.18	Dishonourable face	不光彩
47	32	4.13	No honour on face	脸上无光
48	36	4.13	Losing face	丢面子
49	71	4.12	Embarrassed to death	丑死人
50	88	4.11	Does not feel ashamed/no sense of shame/ disgrace	恬不知耻
51	19	4.10	Bashful/coy	怕羞
52	68	4.10	Blushing down to the bottom of the neck (because of shame/embarrassment)	脸红到脖子根
53	80	4.10	No blood nor skin (faceless and shameless)	无血无皮
54	87	4.09	Sense of honour/integrity and sense of shame	廉耻
55	85	4.08	With shyness/shame on face	面带羞容
56	111	4.05	Does not know the immensity of heaven and earth (lacking appropriate knowledge about self's capacity)	不知天高地厚
57	84	4.04	Thin facial skin (easy to feel ashamed)	脸皮薄
58	106	4.00	Displaying one's picture on an airplane— does not know how shameful one is (Henan saying)	飞机上搁像片--丢 人不知高低 (河南 歇后语)
59	24	3.99	Shy-timid	羞怯
60	31	3.93	Embarrassed	难堪

(Continued)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Item No.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Item in English</i>	<i>Chinese</i>
61	38	3.93	Embarrassing others	使难为情
62	30	3.92	Shy/embarrassed/fear of losing face	不好意思
63	75	3.92	Lost face totally (Hubei dialect)	掉底子 (湖北方言)
64	65	3.91	Guilt-regret	愧悔
65	62	3.89	Blushing up to the ears (with shame/ embarrassment/shyness)	面红耳赤
66	67	3.89	Blush flies into one's face (because of shame/embarrassment)	飞红了脸
67	93	3.88	One's facial skin is even thicker than the corner of the city wall (absolutely no sense of shame. Sichuan dialect)	脸皮比城墙倒拐还 厚 (四川方言)
68	107	3.86	Pulling down an old face (an elder, usually due to anger, does not give face to someone anymore. It implies that the older one is, the more one needs to maintain grace by giving face to others because age is associated with wisdom and grace)	拉下老脸
69	35	3.82	Hushing up scandal	遮羞
70	95	3.80	A person lives by face as much as a tree lives by bark and as much as a light bulb is covered with glass (human beings must have sense of shame. Sichuan dialect)	人活脸, 树活皮, 电 灯泡子活玻璃 (四 川方言)
71	101	3.77	Afraid of being gossiped about	怕人家说闲话
72	103	3.76	Keeping someone on the stage or in the spotlight (embarrassing someone)	让人下不了台
73	70	3.70	Fear of embarrassment	怕丑
74	94	3.67	Even a devil would be scared of one who doesn't want to maintain his/her face (a shameless person is hopeless. Sichuan dialect)	人不要脸鬼都害怕 (四川方言)
75	98	3.65	Embarrassing someone (Sichuan dialect)	方人 (四川方言)
76	28	3.64	Guilt-conscience	愧疚
77	29	3.63	Feeling guilty	惭愧
78	81	3.60	Feeling self inferior/being self-abased	自卑
79	102	3.58	Does not save others' faces	不给人留面子
80	97	3.54	Face swatted with shame	汗颜
81	26	3.52	Showing guilt	愧色
82	27	3.50	Feeling pain because of guilt	愧痛
83	45	3.50	Embarrassing someone	给人难堪

(Continued)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Item No.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Item in English</i>	<i>Chinese</i>
84	86	3.46	Timid looking	怯生生
85	74	3.40	Feeling embarrassed/awkward	尴尬
86	92	3.38	Why don't you go pee and look at your reflection in it (said to someone who greatly over-evaluates him/herself)	你也不撒泡尿自己照照
87	22	3.36	Sneering	耻笑
88	54	3.33	Having a guilty conscience upon self-examination	问心有愧
89	112	3.28	Exposure of something shameful	丢丑
90	25	3.22	Feeling guilty to bitterly remorseful	愧恨
91	55	2.99	Lacking in self-confidence/afraid of being found out	心虚
92	73	2.93	Owing a debt of guilt	欠疚
93	109	2.90	Hiding one's illness from doctors (trying to hide shameful things)	讳疾忌医
94	104	2.89	If you show no respect to the monk, you should at least show respect to the Buddha (one should respect the face of a highly respected person even if not his/her associates)	不看僧面看佛面
95	105	2.86	Dismissing somebody's opinion by interrupting him/her in the conversation (very impolite. Sichuan dialect)	打头子 (四川方言)
96	89	2.81	No filial piety for one's parents	不孝
97	91	2.80	An ugly toad dreams of eating a swan's flesh (someone wants to do something unrealistic, greedy, or over his ability. Often applied to a man who wants to get a woman who is considered much better than the man)	癞蛤蟆想吃天鹅肉
98	100	2.76	Challenging the general (embarrassing someone by challenging him/her)	将人的军
99	53	2.74	Feeling/carrying guilt	负疚
100	37	2.71	Bragging unblushingly/talking big	大言不惭
101	96	2.68	Despising	鄙薄
102	56	2.66	Despising/looking down on/holding someone in contempt	鄙视
103	90	2.65	Something too embarrassing/shameful to mention	难言之隐
104	52	2.64	Feeling guilty/having a nagging conscience	内疚
105	59	2.63	To one's disgust	恶心

(Continued)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Item No.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Item in English</i>	<i>Chinese</i>
106	57	2.63	Being disgusted with	厌恶
107	58	2.63	Being disgusted/disliking	讨厌
108	60	2.62	Nauseated	令人发呕
109	72	2.61	Overcautious/hesitant	畏手畏脚
110	69	2.61	Overly self-cautious/uneasy/unassertive	放不开
111	110	2.61	Not buying what one sells (challenging, not trusting, or not respecting someone)	不买账
112	113	2.60	The old father-in-law carries the young daughter-in-law on his back to cross a river—he works hard but is not appropriate (in Chinese culture, it is considered inappropriate for a father-in-law to have physical contact with his daughter-in-law. Henan dialect)	老公公背儿媳妇过河--出力不讨好 (河南歇后语)
113	108	2.60	Be clear who is its master before you beat a dog (even the lowliest creature you embarrass may be related to someone you do not want to embarrass)	打狗看主人

While the superordinate level was a clear-cut division ($RMS = 1.06$, the highest), the basic and subordinate levels were decided by approximation. Following Shaver et al. (1987), we took two steps to arrive at these latter levels. We first identified the largest number of the clusters that seemed to fit a given RMS line (similar to the notion of fitting the residuals to a linear regression line). However, before we finalised RMS values, we also carefully examined the content of each cluster falling within these two levels. Our final choices were $RMS = 0.99$ for the basic and $RMS = 0.84$ for the subordinate level because these RMS values best met our selecting criteria. The location, sequence, and connections of clusters in Figure 1 were determined by both the output graph and the sequential occurrences of all items on the list as computed by the analyses (see Wang, 1994 for more details).

The criteria (representativeness for vertical and distinctness for horizontally) used by Shaver et al. (1987) were also adopted to name all groups. If actual terms did not meet the criteria, subjects' own labels were consulted. In some cases, both procedures were used to arrive at the most suitable name for a given cluster. Due to the length of many phrases, short forms were extracted to fit them in Figure 1. Table 2 shows the sorted groups that correspond to Figure 1.

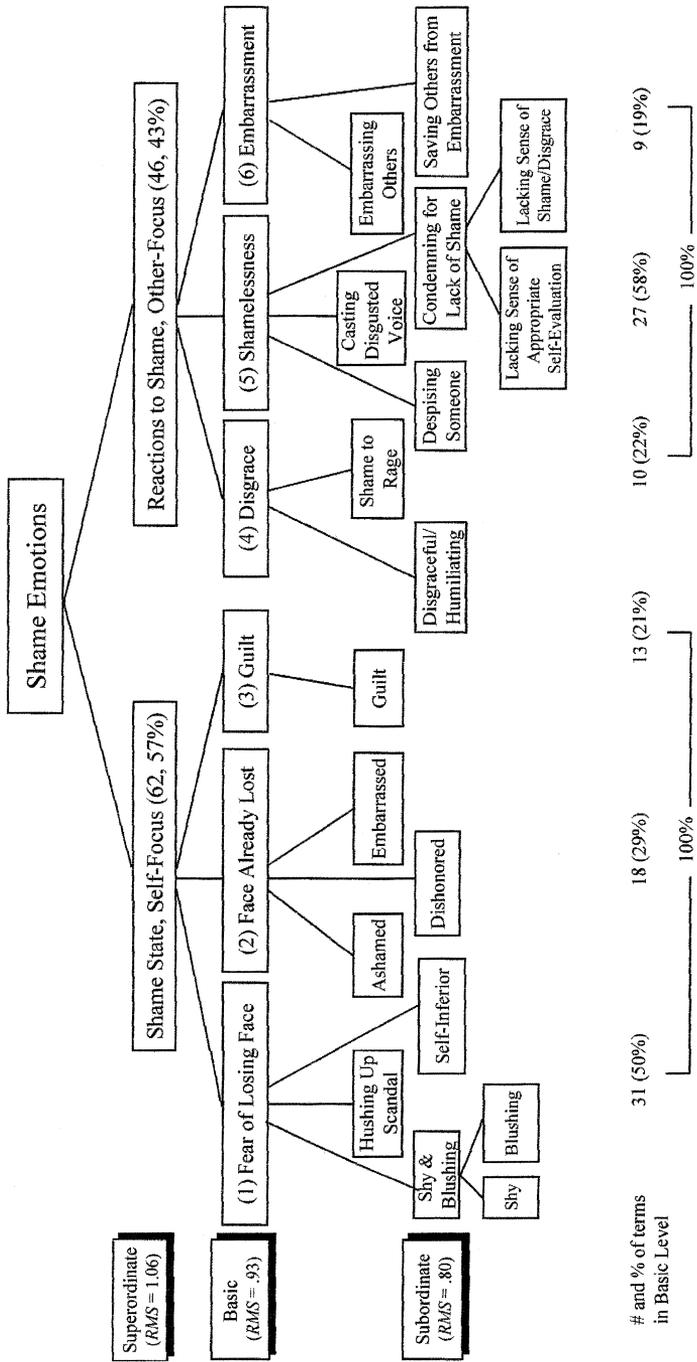


Figure 1. Hierarchy of shame terms.

TABLE 2
Terms in each hierarchical category of shame

SHAME STATE, SELF-FOCUS (superordinate level: 62 items, 57%)

Fear of Losing Face (basic level: 31 items, 50%; whole list: 29%)

Shy and Blushing (21 items, 2 subcategories)

Shy

- 1. Shyness or shame (depending on context)
- 17. coy/timid/shy
- 19. bashful/coy
- 20. shy/bashful
- 23. bashful/ashamed
- 24. shy-timid
- 30. shy/embarrassed/fear of losing face
- 34. shy or embarrassed or ashamed (depending on context)
- 70. fear of embarrassment
- 84. thin facial skin (easy to feel ashamed)
- 86. timid looking

Blushing

- 6. hanging one's head in shame-guilt
- 7. face covered with shame-guilt
- 16. blushing with shame
- 62. blushing up to the ears (with shame/embarrassment/shyness)
- 67. blush flies into one's face (because of shame/embarrassment)
- 68. blushing down to the bottom of the neck (because of shame/embarrassment)
- 82. face filled with expression of shyness
- 83. face that blushes with shyness/shame
- 85. with shyness/shame on face
- 97. face swatted with shame

Hushing Up Scandal (5 items)

- 35. hushing up scandal
- 76. family shame should not be made public/don't wash your dirty linen in public
- 90. something too embarrassing/shameful to mention
- 101. afraid of being gossiped about
- 109. hiding one's illness from doctors (trying to hide shameful things)

Self-Inferior (5 items)

- 55. lacking self-confidence/afraid of being found out
- 63. a sense of self-inferiority or inadequacy/feeling self unworthy
- 69. overly cautious/uneasy/unassertive
- 72. overcautious/hesitant
- 81. feeling self inferior

Face Already Lost (basic level: 18 items, 29%; whole list: 17%)

Ashamed (5 items)

- 10. being ashamed
 - 11. ashamed to death
 - 51. shame on you!
 - 71. embarrassed to death
 - 99. so ashamed that the ancestors of eight generations can even feel it
-

TABLE 2
(Continued)

Dishonoured (11 items)

- 32. no honour on face
- 33. too ashamed to see anyone
- 36. losing face
- 46. truly losing face
- 48. losing face terribly
- 49. disreputable/dishonorable face
- 50. dishonourable face
- 61. can find no place to hide oneself for shame/looking for a hole to crawl into
- 64. nowhere to place one's face (too ashamed to show one's face)
- 77. making a fool of oneself/disgracing oneself
- 112. exposure of something shameful

Embarrassed (2 items)

- 31. embarrassed
- 74. feeling embarrassed/awkward

Guilt (basic level: 13 items, 21%; whole list: 12%) (no subordinate categories)

- 4. shame-guilt
- 5. shame-guilt/conscience
- 18. shamed and guilty beyond words
- 25. feeling guilty to bitterly remorseful
- 26. showing guilt
- 27. feeling pain because of guilt
- 28. guilt-conscience
- 29. feeling guilty
- 52. feeling guilty/having a nagging conscience
- 53. feeling/carrying guilt
- 54. having a guilty conscience upon self-examination
- 65. guilt-regret
- 73. owing a debt of guilt

REACTION TO SHAME, OTHER-FOCUS (Superordinate level: 46 items, 43%)

Disgrace (basic level: (basic level: 10 items, 22%; whole list: 9%)

Disgraceful/Humiliating (8 items)

- 2. disgrace
- 3. shame-disgrace
- 8. sense of shame/disgrace
- 9. shame/humiliation
- 13. nation's humiliation/shame
- 21. disgrace-humiliation
- 87. sense of honour/integrity and sense of shame

Shame to Rage (3 items)

- 12. shame to anger/indignation
- 14. shame to loathing/aversion
- 15. flying into a rage from shame

(Continued)

TABLE 2
(Continued)

Shamelessness (basic level: 27 items, 58%, whole list: 25%)

Despising (Someone (3 items)

- 22. sneering
- 56. despising/looking down on/holding someone in contempt
- 96. despising

Casting Disgusted Voice (4 items)

- 57. being disgusted with
- 58. being disgusted/disliking
- 59. to one's disgust
- 60. nauseated

Condemning for Lack of Shame (20 items, 2 subcategories)

Lacking Sense of Appropriate Self-Evaluation

- 37. bragging unblushingly/talking big
- 91. an ugly toad dreams of eating a swan's flesh (someone wants to do something unrealistic, greedy, or over his ability. Often applied to a man who wants to get a woman who is considered much better than the man)
- 92. why don't you go pee and look at your reflection in it (said to someone who greatly overevaluates him/herself)
- 106. does not know how shameful one is
- 111. does not know the immensity of heaven and earth (lacking appropriate knowledge about self's capacity)

Lacking Sense of Shame/Disgrace

- 39. no sense of shame/disgrace
 - 40. thick-skinned face without shame
 - 41. thick-skinned face/brazen faced
 - 42. shameless/no sense of disgrace
 - 43. no sense of shame
 - 44. barefaced/does not care to maintain one's face (what a shame!)
 - 47. not knowing there are things to feel shame about
 - 66. brazen in the extreme/absolutely no sense of shame
 - 78. utterly shameless
 - 79. does not want one's skin (shameless)
 - 80. no blood nor skin (faceless and shameless)
 - 88. does not feel ashamed/no sense of shame/disgrace
 - 93. one's facial skin is even thicker than the corner of the city wall (absolutely no sense of shame)
 - 94. even a devil would be scared of one who doesn't want to maintain his/her face (a shameless person is hopeless)
 - 95. a person lives by face as much as a tree lives by bark and as much as a light bulb is covered with glass (human beings must have sense of shame)
-

(Continued)

TABLE 2
(Continued)**Embarrassment (basic level: 9 items, 19%; whole list: 8%)***Embarrassing Others (7 items)*

- 38. embarrassing others
- 45. embarrassing someone
- 100. challenging the general (embarrassing someone by challenging him/her)
- 102. does not save others' faces
- 103. keeping someone on the stage or in the spotlight (embarrassing someone)
- 107. pulling down an old face (an elder, usually due to anger, does not give face to someone anymore. It implies that the older one is, the more one needs to maintain grace by giving face to others because age is associated with wisdom and grace)
- 110. not buying what one sells (challenging, not trusting, or not respecting someone)

Saving Others from Embarrassment (2 items)

- 104. if you show no respect to the monk, you should at least show respect to the Buddha (one should respect the face of a highly respected person even if not his/her associates)
- 108. be clear who is its master before you beat a dog (even the lowliest creature you embarrass may be related to someone, you do not want to embarrass)

Note: Capitalised items indicate superordinate groups, boldfaced items indicate basic family categories, and italicised items indicate subordinate categories. Subcategories under subordinate categories are also noted with items in regular typeface under the subordinate categories. The number for each term corresponds to the item number of the same term on Table 1.

Five terms were discarded because they did not fit any of the subordinate categories: 75, 89, 98, 105, and 113. They were all regional expressions from Sichuan and Hubei.

Superordinate level

As Figure 1 indicates, the first split divided the 113 shame terms into two groups with 62 and 51 terms, respectively. Close inspection of the first group revealed that the self is experiencing a state of shame by negatively judging the self's activity and characteristics as well as by assuming that others are making negative judgements about the self. Clearly, this category represents a person in a state of shame. The core meaning of the second group consists primarily of expressions used to point out, voice anger/rage toward, or condemn people not only for their shameful acts but more severely for not showing a sense of shame for such acts. In other words, this category represents people casting a negative judgement on others who behave in a way deemed shameful. Thus, we named the former superordinate category Shame State, Self-Focus and the latter Reactions to Shame, Other-Focus (Figure 1).

Basic and subordinate levels

Beneath the two superordinate level categories, six basic level clusters emerged: Fear of Losing Face, Face Already Lost, Guilt, Disgrace, Shamelessness, and Embarrassment with the first three under the first superordinate category, and

the latter three under the second superordinate category (Figure 1). In addition, each of the basic level categories contains two or three subordinate level categories, except for the basic category Guilt, which has no such categories. Some of the subordinate categories also show further differentiations.

We next describe each of the basic categories successively in the order from left to right in Figure 1. For each basic category, we highlight the most distinct subordinate categories immediately after we describe the basic category.

Fear of Losing Face

This first basic category (31 terms) contains three subcategories, which reflect psychological and physiological reactions to fear of losing face (Table 2). As part of the cultural orientation toward the group, saving face is of extreme concern to Chinese people (Hu, 1944; Hwang, 1987; Zhai, 1995). The concept of face refers to personal integrity, good character, and the confidence of society and of oneself in one's ability to play one's social roles. When failing to live up to the expectations set by themselves and others for their roles, people "lose face". Not only may they themselves face ridicule, contempt, or social ostracism, but their failure may also reflect upon their families, their ancestry, their friends, and even the larger community (Eberhard, 1967). Thus, having an honoured face is vital to Chinese people. This basic level category contains three distinguishable subordinate categories.

Shy and Blushing. The subordinate category Shy and Blushing (21 terms) has two divisions. For *Shy*, most terms are a combination of two components—one representing fear plus another representing shame, such as *xiu* (e.g., 19 and 20), which is one of the main Chinese characters used to symbolise shame. But in the shyness context, *xiu* connotes a milder sense of shame.

Psychologically, we cannot say that all shyness is shame, but in some contexts they are related. Shy people are usually self-conscious and therefore sensitive to others. For example, very young children are sensitive to strangers' presence, but for older children and adults, they could be sensitive to how others evaluate them. Therefore, shyness could be closely related to fear of losing face. In addition, shyness in Chinese culture may not be viewed as a personality weakness, as it is commonly viewed in the West, but as a virtue in children (Chen, Rubin, & Sun, 1992). This positive value of shyness fits the Chinese emphasis on one's self-consciousness in regulating social relations, a core component of shame. Thus, the affinity between shyness and shame seems tighter in Chinese culture than in Western cultures.

For *Blushing*, we found three kinds of physiological reactions to shame: (1) blushing on the face; (2) sweat on the face; and (3) hanging one's head. The words describe different forms and extents of blushing, for example, blushing on the face only (16 and 67), blushing up to the ears (62), and blushing down to the

bottom of the neck (68). Facial blushing as a manifestation of shame was noted by Darwin (1972/1965) long ago, and it has also been documented as a pan-cultural phenomenon in the world's languages (Casimir & Schnegg, 2003). Since shame is so closely related to losing face for Chinese people, the physiological reactions to shame in many cases naturally represent their fear of losing face.

Hushing up Scandal. This subordinate cluster (5 terms) captures fear of losing face by referring to what people do to deal with such fear: Covering up something shameful. This is a common and important strategy for saving face. There is reason to assume that this kind of desire is virtually universal (Schneider, 1977), although different cultures may vary in what are deemed as shameful things. The terms here may reflect some unique concerns to the Chinese. Mental illness and sexual diseases are considered shameful in Chinese culture. To avoid losing face, Chinese do not willingly reveal these illnesses even to the doctor (see 109)! Another example is "family scandal should not be made public" (76). Due to the central importance attached to kinship relationships (Hsu, 1949), the entire family is shamed if one family member commits a shameful act. To avoid losing the entire family's face, great efforts are made to keep a family scandal within the family, hidden from the public.

Self-Inferior. This subordinate category (5 terms) exhibits self-inferior, self-debased, self-defective, or overly self-cautious feelings and withdrawal, all of which are related to the fear of losing face. Piers and Singer (1971) stated that shame follows a failure to live up to one's ego ideal. Feelings in this subgroup indicate that the self is judged not good or not good enough. To avoid losing face, one sacrifices the self with self-debasement and tries to generate in others a low expectation toward the self. Thus, if the self in fact is not good enough, then this is beyond the self's control; the self may not be blamed for failure and will not feel shame and lose face.

Face Already Lost

This basic level category (18 terms) concerns feelings that arise when face is already lost (Table 2). The difference between this category and the previous one is that the previous one is about the psychological and physiological reactions *before* face is lost, whereas this category is about those reactions *after* face is lost. The former implies the fear of shame and the effort to avoid shame, but the latter captures the suffering of shame already felt. Considering the vital importance of saving face among the Chinese, lost face is very painful, as expressed in the terms here. For example, no honour on face (32), too ashamed to see anyone (33), and can find no place to hide oneself for shame or looking

for a hole to crawl into (61). All of these involve a desperate desire to hide oneself to reduce the painful experience.

Ashamed. This group (5 terms) describes one's feelings in the state of shame, ranging from the relatively mild "ashamed" to the strongest expressions. For example, 99 ("so ashamed that the ancestors to eight generations can even feel it") is an expression of severe shame feeling that may be specific to Chinese culture. Ordinary Chinese people believe that a good offspring should honour his/her ancestors due to the value placed on extensive kinship relations (Hsu, 1949). Causing eight generations of ancestors to feel ashamed is extremely shameful indeed!

Dishonoured. This category (11 terms) indicates dishonored feeling, from no honour on the face (32 and 33), to too much shame to show one's face (64), to a desire to vanish from the earth (61). Eberhard (1967) proposed that shame is the reverse of honour, which is a focus not only in China but also among some Mediterranean cultures (Abu-Lughod, 1996; Fischer et al., 1999; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002). This honour/shame mirroring relationship is part of Chinese traditional reasoning and practice (Hwang, 1987; Li & Fischer, 2002; Mascolo et al., 2003; Tu, 1979). The loss of honour was important in Confucian thought. As such, the feeling of being dishonoured is very painful and suggests as a remedy hiding one's face or even one's whole body.

Embarrassed. This category (2 terms) expresses mild feelings of embarrassment and awkwardness. Some investigators have argued that embarrassment is closely linked to shame and that the most notable difference is the intensity level (M. Lewis, 1992; R. Miller, 1995; Miyake & Yamazaki, 1995). Our data seem to support the argument that embarrassment is less intense and does not involve strong painful feelings and the tendency of wishing to disappear as shame does.

Guilt

The basic level category (13 terms) of guilt has no subordinate groups. Chinese culture has been characterised as a shame culture. Even though our data were collected to examine shame, many guilt terms also entered our pool because subjects either nominated or rated them as highly shame-related (i.e., their appearance was not solely due to our initial selection from the dictionary). This suggests that the distinction between shame and guilt may be less clear than in the West (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). The cluster analysis resulted in guilt as a separate basic category of shame (Figure 1). This finding suggests that labeling a culture as an either-or case without clear empirical support is questionable.

The primary words for guilt are *kui*, *can*, and *jiu*. The first two are used mostly in oral communications whereas the latter is used mostly in writing. In

addition, it is the first two that are combined with the shame word *xiu* as noted earlier. However, the latter, *jiu*, is never combined with *xiu*; instead, it is combined only with the other guilt words, which may signal a more distinct feeling of guilt.

There are three characteristics in this category. First, some of the words are a combination of shame and guilt (e.g., 4 and 5). This indicates that guilt and shame are indeed overlapping and sometimes barely differentiated (Li, 2002). Eberhard (1967) maintained that shame in Confucianism is a moral concept and is internalised, together with the precepts of the code of social behaviour. Recent research also confirms that shaming is heavily involved in moral teaching in daily interactions (Fung, 1999; Fung & Chen, 2001). Thus, shame and guilt sometimes may operate interchangeably in such a way that shame is just as heavily related to moral issues as guilt is. Second, whereas some terms clearly lean toward shame, others lean toward guilt. On the one hand, this shading and flexible nature of combinatorial meaning may signal the culture's awareness and acknowledgement of the inseparability of the two emotions. On the other hand, the combined emotion may be stronger than either one alone and can therefore serve as a more powerful motive for desired behavioural change (Li, 2002). Third, Chinese guilt is strongly related to regret, remorse, or a nagging conscience, perhaps expressed mostly with *jiu* and its various combinations such as guilt-regret (65), feeling guilty to bitterly remorseful (25), and feeling/carrying guilt (53). These meanings directly express guilt, in contrast to shame, which focuses more on the self's actions and behaviours that are likely to repair the failure (Mascolo & Fischer, 1995; Tangney, 1998). What the Chinese call regret, remorse, or conscience seems to be oriented toward correcting wrongdoing.

Disgrace

This basic category is about *chi*, which is also the first basic category under the superordinate Reactions to Shame, Other-Focus (Figure 1). An appropriate Chinese translation of the English word shame would be *xiuchi*, which is a combination of two characters: *xiu* and *chi*. Each of the two characters possesses the meaning of shame, but *chi* is much stronger than *xiu*. Some subjects said that *xiu* is often about the face issue, while *chi* is about the moral issue. One example of *chi* given by a subject was: "If you are abroad and you did something to humiliate your motherland, it is *chi*". Thus, *chi* is stronger and a much worse feeling than *xiu*, and it usually means morally wrong. There are two subordinate groups.

Disgraceful/Humiliating. Showing the core meaning of extreme shame, this cluster (8 terms) is created by combinations of *chi*, *xiu*, and another closely related meaning *ru*: humiliation (i.e., 3, 21, and 9). Terms involving *chi* usually indicate serious moral wrongdoings. Terms involving *ru* (humiliation) further

indicate that something extremely shameful is forcing the shamed person down into a debased position. Loss of dignity and loss of power are crucial elements of humiliation (S. Miller, 1985). In the humiliated state, it is difficult to escape from damage to self-esteem as well as the self's painful realisation of it.

Some terms in this category mean both the disgraced and the humiliated states, whether related to the self or reacting to others' behaviour. The literal translation of the two Chinese characters for 13 is "nation" and "disgrace", which is nation's shame, a very serious kind. For example, the Chinese people consider it as their nation's shame that China was invaded by Japanese aggressor troops from 1937 to 1945 (such shame can mobilise people into concerted action to resist foreign aggression, which did happen during the Resistance War against Japan).

Shame to Rage. This subordinate category (3 terms) reflects an angry reaction to one's own shame. For example, 15 (fly into a rage from shame) clearly describes this kind of complicated psychological process. The unspoken language is that one is enraged because one knows that one is shameful! The spectator is telling the enraged person that he/she is just covering shame with rage. The shame-rage sequence is well discussed by many investigators (Lindsay-Hartz, de Rivera, & Mascolo, 1995; Scheff, 1989; Tangney, 1995). One might be ashamed of being ashamed and even more ashamed by admitting to being ashamed. Thus substituting rage for shame helps the person to avoid shame or not to admit his/her shame to others. Being angry may have some adaptive significance, especially if the person's culture allows for such anger. In Chinese culture, losing face (shame) is so painful that covering up shame by showing rage is understandable (to the self and to others) and anticipated.

Shamelessness

This basic level category (27 terms) captures the meaning of shamelessness (Table 2). Many of the expressions are the vehicle for scolding others by characterising their behaviour as exhibiting no sense of shame or no sense of disgrace (Figure 1).

In Western cultures shame feelings may not be encouraged, but in Chinese culture, a sense of shame is inculcated into children at a very young age. Shame is employed strategically and serves as an important means of behaviour control, both in socialisation of children and later in adult life. For example, if a 3-year-old asks for candy from a neighbour, the mother will confront the child by saying "Xiu! Xiu! Xiu!" ("Shame! Shame! Shame!") while repeatedly scratching her own face with her index finger. This physical scratching of the face may indicate metaphorical harm to or destruction of the face (Fung, 1999; Fung & Chen, 2001; Mascolo et al., 2003).

In Chinese culture, a shameless person is considered even more shameful than a shamed person. If a person has no sense of shame or no sense of disgrace, others would be very indignant and would feel that this person is hopeless and disgusting (e.g., 94, “even a devil would be scared of a man who doesn’t want to maintain his face”). Such a person is feared and censured. On reflection, this may be because a person lacking the sense of shame is no longer predictable, trustworthy, and controllable. Such people may be perceived as a threat to the moral order of society (e.g., encouraging others to follow their suit or setting wrong models for children). There are three subordinate groups.

Despising Someone. This subordinate cluster (3 terms) captures the meaning of looking down on somebody whose behaviour is judged despicable, which can lead the person to feel shame.

Casting Disgusted Voice. This subordinate category (4 terms) captures casting disgusted tone of voice to somebody whose behaviour is judged disgusting. Parents use a disgusted face or voice when the child does something of which the parent disapproves (Fung, 1999). When children see a disgusted face or hear a disgusted voice, they turn away and seem inhibited for a moment, frequently displaying some shame. Adults may use a disgusted face and voice to elicit shame in one another (M. Lewis, 1992).

Condemning for Lack of Shame. This subordinate cluster has two further distinctions. The core meaning of *Lacking Sense of Appropriate Self-Evaluation* is to condemn a person’s lacking a sense of realistic self-evaluation. Term 91 (an ugly toad dreams of eating a swan’s flesh) means that someone wants to do something unrealistic, greedy, and beyond his ability. Term 92 (why don’t you go pee and look at your reflection in it) is often said to someone who greatly overvalues him/herself. Term 111 (does not know the immensity of heaven and earth) refers to one’s lacking appropriate knowledge about one’s own capacity.

Why is overevaluation of self considered shameful and therefore condemned? It may be that overevaluation of self violates one of the Chinese culture’s values—modesty. Modesty or humility is a fundamental aspect of the Chinese conception of oneself based on the Confucian model of ideal human development. The concept of *ren*, as mentioned earlier, aims at the notion of becoming the most genuine, sincere, and humane person one can be (Tu, 1979). Modesty is an essential ingredient in this lifelong process toward self-perfection. Thus, a person engaged in becoming *ren* feels the need to improve him/herself continuously. Li’s (2001, 2002, 2003; Li & Wang, in press) recent research on Chinese conceptions of learning confirms this very tendency of continuous striving toward self-improvement through learning. A person with an inflated sense of self is thus perceived as lacking the desire to self-reflect and therefore lacking the desire to self-improve and seek *ren*. Since shame is deeply connected

to this moral search, overevaluation of oneself can easily infuriate people. However, people's reactions are not always serious but comical at times (here the meaning may shade into contempt). Probably it is because the boastful person is the only one who is taking him/herself seriously whereas others watch with surprise and entertainment (perhaps sayings such as "an ugly toad..." and "go pee..." are popular, because they are not very different from the comical effect in Hans Christian Anderson's *The Emperor's New Clothes*).

A related explanation of the disapproval of overevaluation of oneself is that Chinese people emphasise harmony in their interpersonal relationships. In order to maintain harmony in daily life, they value benevolence, empathy, introspection, caution, restraint, politeness, patience, moderation, and finally modesty (Chen, 1991). Therefore, self-abasement techniques are widely used to foster modesty. For example, if the child is praised by guests, the parents would say "You didn't see her when she was naughty" (Mascolo et al., 2003) or they would even denigrate the child with words like "She is like a bandit", as documented recently by Fung and Chen (2001).

Lacking Sense of Shame/Disgrace (15 terms) refers to scolding a person's shameful/disgraceful behaviour in an indignant tone. A frequently used set of terms include saying that some one is shameless (e.g., 66 and 42), possesses thick facial skin (e.g., 80 and 41), or doesn't care for saving one's face at all (e.g., 43 and 44). These show that the person is incapable of feeling shame or is beyond shame, which is considered the worst moral state. A shameless person is no longer constrained by one of the culture's strongest censures, shame!

Embarrassment

This final basic category (9 terms) has two subordinate clusters: people's attempts (1) to embarrass others and (2) to save others from embarrassment.

Embarrassing Others. This subordinate category (7 terms) indicates the meaning of placing others in an embarrassing situation. For example, to embarrass someone by challenging him (100) or by keeping him on the stage or in the spotlight (103). Embarrassment in Chinese also concerns face saving. Due to their emphasis on social harmony, embarrassing others and causing them to lose face is considered improper or even immoral, violating the social norm. Therefore, putting people in embarrassing situations is to be avoided at all costs. The more socially acceptable behavior is the opposite, called "social honouring" (Kitayama et al., 1995; Mascolo et al., 2003) where one praises others for their strengths. Notice that one should be humble when others praise the self, but one should honour others. In this realm, embarrassment in Chinese culture may be more intense than in Western cultures.

Saving Others from Embarrassment. This final subordinate cluster (2 terms) indicates that one should be mindful of relationships in order to avoid embarrassing the person one really doesn't want to anger because of that person's high status. Term 104 (if you show no respect to the monk, you should at least show respect to the Buddha) means that one should attempt to preserve others' face in one way or another. The two terms here deal with face preservation in situations where one does not fully know the social context in which one is acting.

DISCUSSION

In line with our predictions, this study provides support for the prevalence and importance of shame concepts among the Chinese. Even though shame is biologically a universal emotion found in all human beings (Casimir & Schnegg, 2003), this emotion is highly elaborated and organised based on specific Chinese cultural meanings. As a whole, these meanings in their relationships (organisation) may reflect what anthropologists call a "cultural model" or an ethnotheory (D'Andrade, 1995; Harkness & Super, 1992) of Chinese shame concepts. Such an ethnotheory, seems to consist of two overarching categories, that is, the two superordinate categories found in this study: (1) the shame state as experienced by individuals themselves; and (2) reactions to shame as directed at others.

Within the first superordinate category, most feeling states in self centre around the concept of face, either in fear of losing face or at a moment when face is already lost. The Chinese concept of face, as analysed extensively by scholars (Hu, 1944; Hwang, 1987; Yu, 1987; Zhai, 1995), emphasises the two key meanings of moral integrity and social status (e.g., social roles such as that of parents to children). Violation of either or both is cause for shame. The intensity of shame depends on the nature of the violation. For instance, pointing out a teacher's math error publicly by a student is not nearly as severe a cause of shame as catching the teacher stealing public goods. Furthermore, based on the number of terms falling in each basic group, the most significant shame state is fear of losing face (31 items). Due to the high value Chinese culture places on social relationships, losing face is not merely an individual event but one that affects one's larger social circles. It is understandable why one's fear of losing face was found to be the most elaborate dimension of the shame state in self.

Within the second superordinate category of a Chinese ethnotheory of shame, the key concepts focus on observers' reactions to shameful acts as committed by others. Considering research on emotional concepts, this finding may appear surprising because reactions to shame directed at others do not directly pertain to the shame event itself, but to reactions from a spectator's perspective. Nevertheless, participants preserved a rather large number of shame terms (46 terms,

or 43% of the list) that fit within the superordinate category of reactions to shameful acts in others.

Two considerations may help explain this finding. First, as stated previously, shame in Chinese culture is primarily related to morality. A sense of shame is regarded as a moral discretion and sensibility to be acquired by people. It is in fact one of the Confucian moral principles (along with propriety, righteousness, and integrity) as carved on Boston's Chinatown Gate. From a Chinese perspective, wrongdoings are always experienced and interpreted as acts that call for a sense of shame in the actor. If the actor does not display such a sensibility, the social context or community is likely to regard the person as shameless (the largest basic group, with 27 terms), which can generate strong reactions. Recent research suggests that an individual's wrong act in Chinese culture can be seen as less determined by his/her personal dispositions but more by his/her social context (Menon, Morris, Chiu, & Hong, 1999; Morris & Peng, 1994). It is thus quite possible that other people are much more involved in one's emotional life in Chinese culture than in the West (Cohen & Gunz, 2002; Stipek, 1998) given the culture's overall social orientation (Kitayama et al., 2002).

Second, when other people are reacting to a shameful act as committed by someone, they are not casting an impartial judgement. Their reactions are anger, rage, and condemnation (angry declaration of the wrong act), which are real emotions. It is likely that in witnessing others commit shameful acts, Chinese people may either experience a real feeling of shame (as when a mother feels ashamed when watching her child misbehave in public, Fung, 1999) or a vicarious feeling of shame (as when one puts oneself in the shoes of a miscreant when reading about a shameful event). Based on these interpretations, reactions to shame directed at others do seem to cohere with the shame state that a person experiences.

As part of a Chinese ethnotheory of shame, guilt also occupies a unique niche. Based on our findings, we argue that the distinction between shame and guilt is often blurred and unclear both in concept and in terminology. Even though we did not set out to examine guilt in the study, guilt was both nominated as a term associated with shame and rated as a shame-relevant concept. Moreover, many terms are combinations of shame and guilt words. In our analysis, guilt indeed became one of the basic shame categories. It is important to point out that based on Chinese terms, guilt was not obviously less intense than shame among Chinese, which differs from many Western investigators' arguments (M. Lewis, 1992; Wicker, Payne, & Morgan, 1983). These findings lead us to question the appropriateness of labelling Chinese as a shame-oriented culture, in contrast to guilt-oriented cultures.

Even though the prototype approach enabled us to uncover a conceptual map of Chinese shame concepts, there were limitations too, as with any research. First, due to the difficulty of translating shame terms from Chinese to English, some translated terms may not fully capture the original meaning in

Chinese, and as a result, some terms may not seem sufficiently distinct from one another in English. Second, because it was not possible to perform the study in China, only native Chinese living (for 1–6 years) in the United States and Canada participated in this study. Their acculturation may have affected their perceptions and interpretations of shame, which may limit the generalisation of our results. Third, despite many rich details of our findings, this study would have gained a comparative perspective if another cultural group had been included. Such a design could help clarify what is unique to Chinese culture. Fourth, our findings may serve as a basis for future research on the actual functioning of shame (e.g., shame-eliciting conditions, reactions, and coping). Finally, future research can examine how children develop shame and related understanding.

Shame as a fundamental emotion is found in all humans. While some cultures may regard it as harmful and undesirable to people's health, the Chinese adopt a different view and practice. For them, shame is an essential social and moral emotion, a virtue. Developing a sense of shame is an important life task in becoming a full member of their culture. Our study has served its purpose if we succeeded in adding knowledge to the growing literature on self-conscious emotions across cultures.

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