



A • M • E • R • I • C • A • N
A N T H R O P O L O G I C A L
A S S O C I A T I O N

Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self

Author(s): Takie Sugiyama Lebra

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Ethos*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Self and Emotion (Autumn, 1983), pp. 192-209

Published by: [Blackwell Publishing](#) on behalf of the [American Anthropological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/639973>

Accessed: 26/11/2011 08:40

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Blackwell Publishing and American Anthropological Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Ethos*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Shame and Guilt:

*A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self*¹

TAKIE SUGIYAMA LEBRA

In a previous paper (Lebra 1971) I attempted to analyze shame and guilt with a focus on the *social* mechanism underlying these emotions, shame being associated with status occupancy and guilt with the rule of reciprocity. The present paper supplements that paper by concentrating on the *psychocultural* dimension of shame and guilt. The Japanese case is taken, but I do not claim that the following discussion applies exclusively to Japan. Some attempts will be made, however, to differentiate the more culture-bound from the more culture-free aspects of both concepts.

Shame and guilt are defined here as two psychic channels for processing stress into self-punishment. "Stress" rather than "norm violation" is chosen in this definition because among the Japanese norm

¹ This paper is based upon a set of research projects which have been pursued over the years under the support of the National Science Foundation (Grant BNS76-11301), the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, and the University of Hawaii Japan Studies Endowment (funded by a grant from the Japanese Government). I am also grateful to Linda Kimura for her research assistance and typing.

TAKIE SUGIYAMA LEBRA is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

violation is not a necessary condition for giving rise to shame or guilt, as will be explained below.

Psychoculturally viewed, both shame and guilt are anchored in the individual's self, and yet they reflect concern with others. Both are thus allocentric in that they are based upon the actor's ability in empathy to "take the role of other" (Mead 1967) or to be aware of his self as an object of sanction. The "other" may be human or supernatural, specific or generalized, alive or dead. In the case of shame, others are visualized as audience or spectators, whereas in the case of guilt they appear as victims of or sufferers from one's action. This viewpoint is meant to be universally valid, but there may be cultural variation in the degrees of allocentric awareness especially with respect to guilt. In guilt as well as shame, I propose, the Japanese tend to be more aware of others than, for instance, those who have been socialized in the Judeo-Christian theistic tradition.

SHAME

Benedict (1946), while wrong in characterizing Japan as a shame culture *in contrast to* a guilt culture, was nonetheless right in capturing the pervasiveness of shame in Japanese culture. Shame is pervasive partly because Japan, unlike culturally and ethnically diverse societies such as the United States, has its cultural norms well defined so that their violations are readily recognized, and partly because the Japanese individual is more surrounded by significant audiences to whom his action is exposed. In conjunction with these objective factors, I propose another, more subjective factor to explain the pervasiveness of shame, that is, the exposure sensitivity of the outer self.

THE EXPOSURE SENSITIVITY OF THE OUTER SELF

Lynd (1958:27) identifies shame as the experience of "exposure of peculiarly sensitive, intimate, vulnerable aspects of the self." As she claims, shame is more intensely painful and irreversible than guilt, involving "the whole self." Similarly, Lewis (1971:30) describes shame as involving the self more directly than guilt does:

The experience of shame is directly about the *self*, which is the focus of evaluation.

In guilt, the self is not the central object of negative evaluation, but rather the *thing* done or undone is the focus. In guilt, the self is negatively evaluated in connection with something but not itself the focus of the experience. Since the self is the focus of awareness in shame, "identity" imagery may be evoked. [Emphasis in original]

This kind of intense shame, afflicting the total self, more painful than guilt, is by no means alien to the Japanese. It is indeed shared by a Japanese individual who is exposed to significant spectators when he seriously fails in living up to an expected level of ability, knowledge, performance, rectitude, propriety, or any other value. Inherent in this shame is the exposure of a distinct norm violation.

What sets the Japanese apart from Westerners seems to be their particular sensitivity to the surface-level shame affecting the outer self only, or what might be more properly called "embarrassment." The Japanese actor is embarrassed when he is exposed to an audience, no matter whether he has done anything wrong or not. Norm violation is not a necessary condition. It might be argued that embarrassment and shame are two distinct categories. But I think these are continuous for the Japanese under a single word *haji*. Furthermore, the prevalence of embarrassment-*haji*, in my view, makes the Japanese all the more vulnerable to shame-*haji*.

A culture-bound aspect of Japanese *haji* thus lies in the exposure sensitivity of the outer self. It is no coincidence that Sakuta (1967), a Japanese sociologist, criticized Benedict for her exclusive attention to "public shame" in disregard of "private shame." The concept of public shame alone, Sakuta contends, cannot explain why one feels *haji* when subjected not only to ridicule but to praise. What gives rise to *haji* here is the fact that one is exposed to the concentrated attention or "gaze" of others, whether it is malevolent or benevolent. Sakuta (1967:18) further attributes the Japanese *haji* to the failure of a social group to protect the privacy of its members from the gaze of external groups:

Members of a group are often exposed simultaneously to the eyes of those within the group and the eyes of those outside the group. When a member engages in personal interaction with fellow members of his group, he feels *haji* because he becomes aware of outsiders' eyes focusing on him. [My translation]

Gaze as a stressor arousing physiological reactions has been experimentally demonstrated on the basis of an American sample (Mazur, Rosa, Faupel, Heller, Leen, and Thurman 1980). In the

Japanese case it seems that stress aroused by gaze is processed foremost into *haji*. Furthermore, exposure sensitivity for Japanese is so intense that imaginary gaze alone tends to suffice to generate *haji*. This tendency is derived from the allocentric empathy with which the Japanese actor is prone to take the role of audience and to stare at his own action as if he were an object of attention.

The primacy of the exposure sensitivity of the outer self in Japanese *haji* may be illustrated by TAT responses. In 1969, a sample of residents of Eastern City² were asked to write stories in response to a Japanese version of the TAT (a selection from *Rinsho Shinri Gaku Kenkyu Kai* [1953]). The responses used here are from 35 women (33 to 59 years of age) who were participating in a PTA meeting and a women's club meeting, and from one class of high school students including 20 males and 18 females. The picture intended to elicit shame responses was of an adult male looking away from an adult female, with the female looking at the back of the male's head while placing her right arm upon his shoulder. In a corner of the background hung a tiny picture of a bikini-clad woman, which, however, could well be overlooked because of its peripheral location and the vagueness of its subject. A written instruction was given to insert in the story one of the words *haji*, *hajiru*, and *hazukashii*, which are the noun, verb, and adjective forms of shame/embarrassment. Because of the sample bias and stimulus bias (for a sexual overtone), the test result is undoubtedly limited in its generalizability but still may elucidate the above proposition regarding *haji* and exposure sensitivity.

An overwhelming majority of respondents identified the couple as husband and wife, and only a few saw them as lovers, as father and daughter, and the like. With negligible exceptions, shame was associated with one form of exposure or another, feared or actualized. Adult women in particular tended to project themselves into the woman in the picture. Some examples are given below (the number indicates the age of the respondent):

Woman 35: My husband came home from work. "Welcome home. You must be exhausted from your hard work."³ So saying, I gently put my hand

² A resort city in central Japan with a population of 70,000 where I have been conducting fieldwork periodically since 1968.

³ A common form of greeting that defies a meaningful translation.

upon his shoulder as he sat down upon a chair. He felt *hazukashii* and looked away toward the children.

Woman 34: The woman, I think, is displaying herself to the man too daringly. Doesn't she feel *hazukashii* in front of me?

Female

student 17: A young man and woman. They had been enjoying chatting until moments before, but one word she said upset him and made him turn away from her. At a loss, she wondered what to do. She felt *hazukashii*, but gathered up the courage to put her hand upon his shoulder and whisper, "I love you."

The most common theme across generations is the exposure—not only inadvertent exposure but voluntary disclosure and confession—of intimacy or love within a sexual dyad as it is expressed physically or verbally. The audience for the exposure is the sexual partner, a third party present, or a general, often invisible, public.

One might suspect that exposure sensitivity expressed in these responses is simply due to the sexual nature of the stimulus picture. Indeed, it is likely that the stimulus of sexual intimacy, because of its private nature, did intensify exposure sensitivity. But this confirms, not negates, the proposed relationship between exposure sensitivity and *haji*. For another demonstration, I shall draw upon Barnlund's (1975) comparison of Japanese and American college students with respect to self-disclosure in communication. He tested the hypothesis that Japanese disclose themselves less than Americans. It was found that the tactic of nondisclosure is resorted to by Japanese even in defense against threats:

In threatening interpersonal settings some people relied heavily upon only one or two defensive tactics. In the case of the Japanese it was usually a preference for remaining silent, laughing, or replying ambiguously; in the case of the Americans it consisted of talking their way out of a situation or defending themselves through argument. [1975:128]

It appears that the Japanese individual makes himself vulnerable to embarrassment/shame by disclosing himself (e.g., his opinion), whereas the American does so through his inability to disclose himself. As a result, the "private self," that part of self that remains unexpressed and hidden, occupies a greater area of the total self for the Japanese, whereas the "public self," the part which is externally communicated, is greater for the Americans (1975:90).

It is understandable that Japanese reticence is often explained as a sign of *haji*, or more correctly, as a strategy for avoiding *haji*, and that a variety of typical Japanese gestures, behavior styles, or speech patterns are described as *tereru*, *hanikamu*, or other untranslatable equivalents of "shy." Further, the avoidance of exposure has much to do with the cultural emphasis on the expressiveness of the back of the body or what Aida (1970:21-26) calls *haigo-shugi* (the primacy of the back). Two actors in a kabuki play express their mutual love typically by attaching themselves back to back, and what people on earth, wonders Aida, would understand the expressions of a person's back as sensitively as the Japanese? Similarly, the woman's beauty has been, and somewhat still is, symbolized by the kimono which conceals rather than exaggerates its wearer's body curves (McCoy 1980).

The foregoing suggests that exposure sensitivity is not only a spontaneous response but a culturally desirable and even prescribed attitude. What underlies this is the modesty code whereby the self is supposed to remain hidden, unexpressed, or inconspicuous. One is thus expected, when exposed or about to be exposed, to behave as if one were embarrassed or shy. Viewed this way, self-exposure itself can be said to amount to a norm violation.

PERFECTIONISM IN DISPLAY

Exposure sensitivity, while it encourages nonexposure, also motivates a Japanese actor to display himself, when he has to, in perfection as if he were on stage. What is required is a formally impeccable presentation of the self. To insure or facilitate such self-presentation, Japanese culture abounds with codes of formal communication,⁴ verbal and nonverbal, to which Japanese are generally ready to conform their action: highly conventional forms of greetings for routine usage; status-congruous or occasion-appropriate rules of speech, gesture, facial expression, posture, and other display rules; coordinated or joint actions of group members as in singing and athletics; regimentation in the procedures of ceremonies, banquets, and the like. To make a staged self-presen-

⁴ By "formal" I mean all the four aspects of "formality" identified by Irvine (1979): code structuring, code consistency, invoking positional identities, and centrally focused communication.

tation flawless, the predictability of the sequence of events is maximized, and personal, extemporaneous disruptions and variations are minimized.

In light of the cultural premium placed on formal display, it is not surprising that Japanese have cultivated and perpetuated what might be called formal arts. The tea ceremony is an outstanding example. One finds in the tea ceremony the actor's self-presentational performance in conformity to the fixed and elaborate rules for posturing, manipulating tea utensils, preparing and serving or accepting and appreciating tea. But tea rules encompass much more. In addition to teamaking and drinking, a participant must know, or must imitate a co-participant who knows, what to wear, what to take with him, how to go through the tea house gate, how to enter the tea room, how to bow and what to say while bowing, where to take his seat, how to comment on a wall picture, on the hearth, and so on. One person's move or utterance serves as a signal for another person's action so that the whole event, if successful, looks like a well synchronized choreography (Mayuzumi 1976). It is against the background of the *haji* complex that one can understand why such a rule-bound self-presentation is accepted by Japanese as relaxing, therapeutic, or tranquility-inducing.

ANTHROPOPHOBIA

Exposure sensitivity and the pressure for perfectionism in display may augment one another to drive a person into a neurotic syndrome called *taijin kyōfushō*, anthropophobia or the fear of interpersonal contact, which has been designated by psychiatrists as characteristic of Japanese. It takes various forms including the fear of blushing, of body odor, of facial expression, saliva swallowing, etc., but the most typical symptom seems to be the fear of being stared at or of staring at another. The fear of eye-to-eye contact involves the worry that being overly conscious of another person's stare one would look unnatural, or the feeling that "I cannot look others in the face: if I force myself to look, my gaze would appear too intent and cause discomfort in others" (Iwai and Abe 1975:69). Implicit here is a morbid fear of self-exposure, as the self is localized in various parts of the body; eye, mouth, face, etc.

The fear of self-exposure may take the form of *hitomishiri*, the

term identified by Doi (1969) as the Japanese version of "stranger anxiety." *Hitomishiri* usually refers to an infant who has begun to discriminate the familiar from the unfamiliar persons around it and to fear the latter, but is also used by psychiatrists to describe adult behavior (*Seishin Bunseki Kenkyū* 1969). Maeda (1969) applied this concept to the behavior patterns he observed in sensitivity-training sessions with normal adult participants who were mutual strangers. He noted that, even after several sessions, the members remained tense, nervous, and reticent, and would rather listen to what older members would say than discuss their own feelings. Fujita (1969) attributes the *hitomishiri* characteristic of Japanese to shyness arising from the clear demarcation line drawn between *uchi* (the psychological or socially internal domain) and *soto* (the external domain).

The anthropophobic Japanese has a dilemma: he fears self-exposure to the audience and thus is inclined to withdraw from social interaction; and yet, being aware of his oddness, he is driven to overcome this inclination and to present himself in a perfectionist manner. In this sense it may be safe to consider *taijin kyōfushō* a part of the shame complex.

OFF-STAGE SELF-DISCLOSURE

Aversion to exposure and the desire for formally flawless display underlying the Japanese sensitivity to shame, act together to inhibit self-expression. These would cause a morbid hypertrophy of what Barnlund (1975) calls the private self unless there are some legitimate occasions for self-disclosure, or for releasing the excess of the private self into the public self. The truth of the matter is that Japanese set aside certain occasions or situations for free, personal, uninhibited self-disclosure.

Two persons, or a small group of persons, engage in "gut-level" communication by "splitting the *hara* (belly) open," or "becoming *hadaka* (naked)." It appears that the rhythm of the Japanese life represents cycles of alternation between on-stage inhibition and off-stage shamelessness, or underexposure and overexposure. Same-sex peers, particularly those who have grown up together such as schoolmates, make an ideal group for an uninhibited mutual self-disclosure. Such occasions are marked off from the workaday life, as when two men meet at a bar and talk out their accumulated frustra-

tions over their work experiences, social lives, and so on, in a state of inebriation. The occasion may involve around-the-clock contact, as in a group tour that permits not only the verbal but physical exposure of the participants to one another. An Eastern City woman says she looks forward to a reunion, once or twice a year, with several of her high school classmates at a local hotel where they usually stay overnight, enjoy co-bathing in the hotspring bath, and talk all night about themselves, their husbands, and in-laws, while lying in beds adjacent to one another.

Off-stage communication is an essential part of decision-making process in Japan. Japanese leaders in group decision making consider it absolutely necessary to go through *nemawashi* or *jinarashi* (off-stage communication to secure agreement or acquiescence) prior to a formal session which tends to be reduced to a ritual.

The cycles of the on-stage formality constrained by shame and the off-stage informality allowing for shamelessness are so well patterned in Japanese expectations that what is essentially an on-stage event tends to include an off-stage phase as an integral part. The wedding banquet I observed in Eastern City in 1978 is a case in point. A large tatami-matted banquet hall of a local hotel contained roughly two hundred people, sitting along the rows of tables where a full dinner was set for each guest. On one side of the room was a platform with a raised head table along which were seated the bride and groom, flanked by the formal go-betweens and parents, facing the assembled guests. The first phase was dominated by the extreme formality of the occasion, marked by a series of highly stylized speeches given by "important guests" such as the president of the company employing the groom and a prefectural assemblyman who had been invited primarily to render prestige to the whole ceremony. The participants looked serious, remained absolutely quiet, listened attentively to the lengthy, often boring speeches, and no one touched the dishes. When this phase was over exactly as programmed, the second phase was begun by toasting in unison. Now the master of ceremonies told the guests to start eating while listening to another series of speeches. This time, speakers stood up to speak at their own seats, unlike the previous speakers, who stepped forward to the head table to command the attention of the whole audience. Another contrast was that these speakers were less prestigious but more familiar with the groom or bride (the groom's

schoolteacher, the bride's uncle) so that they could tell personal anecdotes, some of which drew laughter from the audience. The audience, however, was listening half-heartedly, dividing its attention between the auditory stimuli and palatal pleasure. The third and final phase, as announced by the master of ceremonies, was "entertainment." By this time, inebriation was making its progress, people were moving from table to table to exchange sake cups as a token of friendship, talking loudly, and some stretching out their limbs on the tatami floor, half asleep. In charge of "entertainment" were intimate friends of the groom and bride, and the center of action switched to a stage located at the opposite end of the room from the head table. Popular songs and dances were performed on the stage, their contents became increasingly indecent and obscene, and the performers presented themselves more as clowns. Middle-aged women in particular cracked erotic jokes and sang about copulation. The whole event may be described as "liminal" (Turner 1969), but it should be noted that liminality can thus range from the sacred to the profane, from extraordinary regimentation to a chaotic mess, from shame-sensitive underexposure to obscene overexposure. These opposite extremes, I believe, should be together considered inherent in the shame complex.

GUILT

Contrary to Benedict's (1946) designation of Japan as a shame culture, a keen sense of guilt has been recognized to prevail among Japanese (DeVos 1974). I even argue that the Japanese type of shame, as characterized above, intensifies, rather than precludes, guilt, because exposure avoidance embedded in the shame complex orients one inward. Paradoxical as it may sound, a strong concern about what one looks like outwardly in the eyes of audience preoccupies one with the state of his inner self. It is my proposition that, for Japanese, guilt is locked together with introspectiveness or self-reflection.

SELF-REFLECTION

Japanese are socialized to be self-reflective, and *hanseikai* (classroom session for self-reflection) is part of the school curriculum.

Their self-reflective tendency can be demonstrated by the result of sentence-completion tests given to adult samples of urban Japanese and Hong Kong Chinese. As reported in Lebra (1973), nearly half (46%) of the Japanese sample ($n = 201$) responded to the sentence fragment, "If you are kind to others," with expectations for inner rewards: "your heart will be brightened," "you will feel good," "it will stay with you as a heart-brightening memory," and the like. Only 4% of the Chinese sample ($n = 205$) responded in this manner, and more than half (53%) showed expectations for direct, reciprocal repayment: "they, too, will be kind to you," "the kindness will come back to you," and so forth. In response to another sentence fragment, "After having committed all sorts of wrongdoing,"⁵ the majority of both Japanese and Chinese respondents projected the efficacy of immanent justice: "he was ruined," "he was rejected by the world," "after death, he was not even admitted to Hell," and the like. Yet, such responses were 20% fewer among the Japanese (66% of 203 respondents) than among the Chinese (86% of 200). Conversely, more Japanese (23%) than Chinese (10%) referred to inner retribution, such as anxiety, repentance, confession, or reform, indicative of guilt feelings independent of external justice: "you feel uneasy at heart," "he will feel regretful and guilty," "he settled down to work seriously."

Compared with shame, guilt is more likely to be preceded by a definite norm violation and to involve a moral transgression, as will be illustrated by the TAT responses in the next section. Nonetheless, even guilt, when translated into a Japanese version, does not always presuppose a norm violation. The Japanese actor tends to, or is encouraged to, reflect upon himself when in trouble and to examine where he has gone wrong: he may come to realize that he has committed a moral transgression only after self-reflection and then to feel guilty. Again, it may be just stress rather than a clear-cut norm violation that is processed, through self-reflection, into guilt. In the TAT responses summarized and analyzed by DeVos (1974) we find the theme of self-blame a typical Japanese response to a stressful situation: "A husband comes home very late at night; *the wife thinks it is for the lack of her affection* and tries hard; he finally reforms"

⁵ This portion of the results of the sentence-completion-test project and another to be referred to below have not been reported yet in print.

(1974:128); "An elder brother did something wrong and is examined by the policeman; he will be taken to the police station, but will return home and reform. *The younger sister also thinks that she was wrong herself*" (1974:129; emphasis supplied).

Guilt is systematically aroused and intensified to cope with stress in many religious sects in Japan. The Gedatsu,⁶ for example, insists that illness or any other kind of suffering is to be imputed to the sufferer's own fault such as negligence of his or her duty. Whatever adversity one encounters, one should reflect upon oneself in search for one's own wrongdoing. Moreover, the convert is supposed to blame another person's misery upon him or herself: A child's illness should arouse guilt in its mother. What appears clearly to be the other person's fault is to be blamed on oneself. The husband's infidelity should be taken as a sign of the wife's character defect. A child's rebellion should remind the mother of her own disobedience to her parents, her repentance being the key to the child's reform. If an alter aggresses against ego, it should be understood that the aggression originated from ego against the alter and now has returned to its origin. This kind of reasoning would not be persuasive unless the listener is susceptible to guilt arousal through self-reflection without necessarily having consciously deviated from a norm.

THE ALLOCENTRIC SELF-BLAME

The Japanese sense of guilt ties in with the allocentric concern in that one's awareness of another as a victim of one's action or inaction is essential. Guilt is aroused or intensified through ego's vicarious sharing of alter's suffering. This will be illustrated again by the TAT responses (of the same sample as the "shame" respondents used above). The guilt-eliciting picture had a front view of an old man's face at the upper-right of the frame and a profile of a younger person—male or female—at the lower-left, looking up and close to the old man. The instruction was to use one of the common expressions equivalent to "guilty": *sumanai*, *mōshiwakenai*, and *ki ga togameru*.

The two persons in the picture were identified as a heterosexual

⁶ Fieldwork was conducted on this cult, primarily on the activities of its Eastern City branches, in 1970-71. The results have appeared in Lebra (1974, 1976a, 1976b, and 1982).

pair, married or unmarried, more by adult respondents, whereas cross-generational relationships—father and son/daughter, grandfather and grandchild—were seen more by the students. The themes of norm deviation in association with guilt feelings vary more widely and are more serious than those with shame. Those who saw a heterosexual pair associated guilt with adultery, other forms of clandestine sexual engagement, and disregard of age imbalance; as many as 10 out of the 35 women explicitly mentioned adultery (and several more if implicit accounts are added). The respondents who saw a father-child or grandfather-grandchild pair tended to associate guilt with disobedience, runaway, unpaid debt, causing trouble/suffering/worry, inadequate parental care. Several respondents, in both the sexual and kin contexts, mentioned *wagamama* (selfishness, having one's way) as the cause of guilt. A few examples:

Woman 44: He falls in love with a married woman and, unable to keep it within himself, confesses his love. She, too, in time, finds herself, to her astonishment, in love with the *sensei*. This illicit love, while it makes her feel *sumanai* and *mōshiwakenai* toward her husband and children, cannot be curbed, and they continue to meet.

Male

student 17: Father, why did you die before me? I am *mōshiwakenai* for having caused you so much hardship without a chance to repay you.

These and most other stories specify the persons toward whom guilt is felt as the victims of ego's action or inaction: a woman in adultery feeling guilty toward her husband and children, or toward the wife and children of her partner; a widow guilty toward her child for getting sexually involved with a man; a son guilty toward parents and siblings for causing trouble; a daughter guilty toward her father for abandoning him in order to marry, and so on. Such victim-consciousness, or more generally, allocentric empathy is what induces self-blame. It is not surprising that intense guilt is often associated with the death of the victim which makes ego's guilt unredeemable.

The allocentric aspect of guilt comes into focus when guilt is aroused more by the sight of an alter in pain than by ego's own action. It is not uncommon for Japanese to become sensitized to guilt-feelings when they see their kin or other significant persons suffer from illness, death, or other misfortunes, regardless of their respon-

sibility for these sufferings. This point reinforces what was said in the previous section regarding a norm violation not always being involved in guilt. This also explains why some of the guilt-arousing transgressions, as shown in the TAT responses of Eastern City residents, tend to be diffuse and ambiguous, such as “causing trouble (*meiwaku*),” “causing worry (*shimpai*),” “being selfish (*wagamama*),” or having oneself “looked after (*sewa o kaketa*).”

The therapeutic method called Naikan (meaning “inner examination”) intensifies guilt consciousness through self-reflection and allocentric self-blame. The client, under the guidance of a counsellor, is supposed to reflect in isolation upon his faults in relation to the most significant persons around him, his mother in particular. Specifically, he is to recall in detail how much he owes to the alter, how little he has repaid, and most importantly, what *meiwaku* and *shimpai* he has caused the benefactor instead. Unable to recall anything at first, the client begins in a few days to “recall” what wrong he has done against the person he is most indebted to (Yoshimoto 1965; Okumura, Sato, and Yamamoto 1972; Murase 1974; Lebra 1976c:201-214). Again, the efficacy of this therapy may well be embedded in Japanese culture with its particular definition of guilt.

Guilt is so other-oriented that feeling guilty tends to amount to feeling apologetic to a specific person. Indeed the words for “guilty” such as *sumanai* and *mōshiwakenai* are expressions for apology; they imply the alter whom ego owes an apology. Given such an equivalence between guilt and apology, a person who is guilty and yet fails to apologize is extremely offensive to Japanese. In fact most Japanese are only too willing to offer an apology for the slightest annoyance they happen to create for others.

The last point calls attention to the fact that admitting guilt and apologizing is not only a spontaneous tendency, but, like shame, a matter of cultural style or social gesture as well. *Sumanai*, while expressive of deep guilt derived from one’s empathy for another’s pain, is also taken as a perfunctory ritual lacking sincerity or even as a strategic camouflage of rule breaking on the part of its user in presenting an apology. *Sumimasen*, the conversational form of *sumanai*, is thus detested by some Japanese. Both shame and guilt, then, cover a wide range of emotional intensity, from deep and

serious to superficial and ritualistic. The point is that this variety makes guilt and shame all the more pervasive among Japanese.

THE PRIMACY OF GUILT

The allocentricity of guilt has a further implication. Although shame and guilt are perhaps equally pervasive, Japanese tend to stress guilt feelings in expressing their emotions. What is likely to be experienced as shame may therefore be talked about and thought about as guilt. A failure in expected performance may elicit a guilt response, as it happened in some TAT stories (of the above-cited Eastern City sample), rather than a shame response: an unsuccessful candidate for an entrance examination felt *sumanai* toward his parents. This particular point reconfirms DeVos's (1974) argument in refuting the equation, as proposed by Piers and Singer (1953), between ego ideal and shame. The Japanese data suggested to DeVos a closer relationship between the inability to achieve the parental expectation and guilt. To illustrate the primacy of guilt further, reference may be made to another result of my sentence-completion tests. The fragment, "If you do not know manners and etiquette," was meant to elicit shame responses, and, indeed, the majority of both groups (60% of Japanese, 71% of Chinese) anticipated the shame experience, either internal or external: "people will make fun of you," "you will be ashamed," "you will be called a barbarian." However, many more Japanese (33%) than Chinese (6%) gave responses like: "your parents will be criticized," "you will cause discomfort in the people around you," "you will cause trouble (*meiwaku*) for others." This group of responses indicates the allocentric awareness of the victims of ego's impropriety. Here it is not so much ego himself as alter who suffers, whereas the shame response shows ego as the sufferer.

The same point may be reinforced by the case of anthropophobic patients who often turn out to be more concerned with the discomfort they arouse in others by, for instance, staring at them than with losing face by being stared at. An extreme case involving the fear of "symptom contagion" was reported by Tsukamoto, Takagaki, and Yamagami (1973). This patient did not only worry that his nervousness and other defects would be revealed, but was much more afraid that his tenseness would hurt other persons, and that his

symptom, which he was convinced was contagious, would appear in others. In a severe case like this, the guilt complex appears to overwhelm the shame complex.

The reason behind this relative primacy of guilt among Japanese may be the ultimate moral value associated with self-denial.⁷ Shame, though it is also allocentric, still involves an egocentric concern for self-image. Egocentricity entailed in shame arouses a degree of ambivalence in Japanese regarding admission of shame, whereas guilt admission involves no such ambivalence. This explains why a few of the Eastern City TAT respondents denied that there was any feeling of shame in disclosing one's love while no respondent denied the existence of guilt feelings toward someone. Both shame and guilt are important moral sanctions for Japanese, but at the same time, Japanese tell one another to transcend shame-sensitivity although guilt-sensitivity is considered always desirable.

Given this primacy of guilt, the behavior patterns usually associated with shame may well be reinterpreted in light of the guilt complex. Exposure-avoidance, shyness, fear of eye-to-eye confrontation, the culturally stylized self-denigration and humility—all these may be attributed to the actor's thoughtfulness to avoid hurting or annoying others, that is, to avoid the Japanese version of guilt.

It might be concluded that guilt is anchored more firmly than shame in the Japanese moral system, and that shame emotions, therefore, are often translated into guilt terms. This conclusion reverses Benedict's position regarding Japanese emotions.

REFERENCES

- AIDA, YUJI. 1970. *Nipponjin no ishiki kozo* (The structure of Japanese mentality). Tokyo: Kodansha.
- BARNLUND, DEAN C. 1975. *Public and Private Self in Japan and the United States*. Tokyo: The Simul Press.
- BENEDICT, RUTH. 1946. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- DeVOS, GEORGE. 1974. The Relation of Guilt toward Parents to Achieve-

⁷ Self-denial entails the sincerity, purity, cleanness, transparency, and ultimately "emptiness" or "nothingness" of the self. This logically links to the Japanese association of *tsumi* (sin or guilt) with *kegare* (pollution), the latter implying an impure, unclean, clouded state of the self.

- ment and Arranged Marriage among Japanese. *Japanese Culture and Behavior: Selected Readings* (T. S. Lebra, and W. P. Lebra, eds.), pp. 117-141. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- DOI, TAKEO. 1969. [Preface to] Shimpojumu hitomishiri (*Hitomishiri* as a Japanese concept of stranger anxiety). *Seishin Bunseki Kenkyu* (The Japanese journal of psychoanalysis) 15(2):12.
- FUJITA, CHIHIRO. 1969. Hitomishiri to taijinkyofu (*Hitomishiri* and anthropophobia). *Seishin Bunseki Kenkyu* (The Japanese journal of psychoanalysis) 15(2):20-25.
- IRVINE, JUDITH T. 1979. Formality and Informality in Communicative Events. *American Anthropologist* 81:773-790.
- IWAI, HIROSHI, and TORU ABE. 1975. *Morita ryoho no riron to jissai* (The theory and practice of *morita* therapy). Tokyo: Kongo Shuppan.
- LEBRA, TAKIE SUGIYAMA. 1971. The Social Mechanism of Guilt and Shame: the Japanese Case. *Anthropological Quarterly* 44:241-255.
- _____. 1973. Compensative Justice and Moral Investment among Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 157:278-291.
- _____. 1974. The Interactional Perspective of Suffering and Curing in a Japanese Cult. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 20:281-286.
- _____. 1976a. Ancestral Influence on the Suffering of Descendants in a Japanese Cult. *Ancestors* (W. H. Newell, ed.), pp. 219-230. The Hague: Mouton.
- _____. 1976b. Taking the Role of the Supernatural 'Other': Spirit Possession in a Japanese Healing Cult. *Culture-Bound Syndromes, Ethnopsychiatry, and Alternate Therapies* (W. P. Lebra, ed.), pp. 88-100. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- _____. 1976c. *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- _____. 1982. Self-Reconstruction in Japanese Psychotherapy. *Cultural Perceptions of Mental Health and Therapy* (A. J. Marsella, and G. M. White, eds.), pp. 269-283. Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel.
- LEWIS, HELEN B. 1971. *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*. New York: International Universities Press.
- LYND, HELEN M. 1958. *On Shame and the Search for Identity*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- MAEDA, SHIGEHARU. 1969. Hitomishiri. *Seishin Bunseki Kenkyu* (The Japanese journal of psychoanalysis) 15(2):16-19.
- MAYUZUMI, TOSHIRO. 1976. *Watakushi no sado nyumon* (How I was introduced to the tea ceremony). Tokyo: Kobunsha.
- MAZUR, ALLAN, EUGENE ROSA, MARK FAUPEL, JOSHUA HELLER, RUSSELL LEEN, and BLAKE THURMAN. 1980. Physiological Aspects of Communication via Mutual Gaze. *American Journal of Sociology* 86:50-74.
- MCCOY, SHARON L. 1980. *Keikogoto*: The Study of Polite Accomplishments by Japanese Women. Unpublished ms. (in author's possession).
- MEAD, GEORGE H. 1967. *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MURASE, TAKAO. 1974. Naikan Therapy. *Culture-Bound Syndromes, Ethnopsychiatry, and Alternate Therapies* (W. P. Lebra, ed.), pp. 259-269. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- OKUMURA, NIKICHI, KOJI SATO, and HARUO YAMAMOTO, eds. 1972. *Naikan ryoho* (*Naikan* therapy). Tokyo: Igaku Shoin.

- PIERS, G., and M. B. SINGER. 1953. *Shame and Guilt*. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas.
- RINSHO SHINRI GAKU KENKYU KAI. 1953. *TAT Nihon-ban shian 1, kaiga tokaku kensa zuhan* (The Japanese tentative version of the thematic apperception test, No. 1). Tokyo: Kaneko Shobo.
- SAKUTA, KEIICHI. 1967. *Haji no bunka saiko* (Shame culture reconsidered). Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo.
- SEISHIN BUNSEKI KENKYU (The Japanese journal of psychoanalysis). 1969. Special issue on *hitomishiri*. Vol. 15, No. 2.
- TSUKAMOTO, YOSHIHISA, CHUICHIRO TAKAGAKI, and MASAKO YAMAGAMI. 1973. *Taijin kyofu ni tsuite* (On anthropophobia). *Seishin Igaku* (Clinical psychiatry) 15:237-242.
- TURNER, VICTOR W. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- YOSHIMOTO, INOBU. 1965. *Naikan yonjunen* (Forty years of *naikan*). Tokyo: Shunjusha.