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HUMILIATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO EMBARRASSMENT AND SHAME

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Danielle J. Pulham

August 2009

Advisor: Dr. Susan Harter

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to expand our knowledge of humiliation by examining the cognitive correlates of this emotion. Since norm violations may often elicit this emotion, attributions of blame and perceived devaluation of the self from others were investigated as possible cognitions that may both link and distinguish this emotion from close emotion relatives, namely embarrassment and shame.

Participants were presented with vignettes that described a social versus moral norm violation. Blame for the event was manipulated by varying who/what caused the norm violation. Perceived devaluation was manipulated by varying what the observing audience knew about the cause of the norm violation. Participants were asked to rate the likelihood of their emotional response in addition to the degree of self/other-blame and the likelihood of perceived devaluation.

Results revealed that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame may be similar in their relationship to self-blame and perceived devaluation. All three emotions were reported as more likely for self-caused norm violations than other-caused and accidental norm violations. Moreover, when the violation was other-caused or accidental, humiliation and embarrassment were reported to be more likely when the audience did not know the cause (higher likelihood of perceived devaluation) than when the audience knew the cause (lower likelihood of perceived devaluation). Additional support for a link

with perceived devaluation was revealed by humiliation and shame being rated higher for self-caused moral violations (higher likelihood of perceived devaluation) than self-caused social violations (lower likelihood of perceived devaluation).

Unlike humiliation and embarrassment, shame was found to be rated high in likelihood only when the norm violation was self-caused. In addition, humiliation was the only of the three emotions related to both audience knowledge of the event cause *and* type of norm violation. These results suggest that a relationship with self-blame may be most meaningful for shame, while a relationship with perceived devaluation may be most meaningful for humiliation.

Overall, the similarities observed among these emotions suggest that humiliation may be appropriately placed alongside embarrassment and shame within the same emotion family. Moreover, the observed differences indicate that, while sharing some overlap, humiliation is fundamentally distinct from embarrassment and shame.

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## Introduction

Although empirical investigation into self-conscious emotions, such as pride, shame, guilt and embarrassment, has been steadily increasing over the past two decades, the emotion of humiliation remains largely unexplored. This is surprising given that humiliation is likely to be a common experience in late childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Moreover, a recurring theme in the histories of high-profile school shooters is the experience of humiliation (Harter, Kiang, Whitesell, & Anderson, 2003a; Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003). Indeed, several media accounts have described the shooters as individuals who were taunted and humiliated by other students on a daily basis (Chua-eoan & Monroe, 1997; Cornell, 1999, May 13; Gibbs, Roche, Goldstein, Harrington, & Woodbury, 1999; Perlstein, 1999).

Furthermore, numerous studies have demonstrated that social rejection, involving potentially humiliating events in the form of bullying, teasing, and ostracism, can lead to aggressive behavior (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Harter, Low, & Whitesell, 2003b; Pakaslahti & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 1998; Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; Waas, 1987). There is also evidence suggesting that humiliating experiences may result in negative consequences for the self, including depression, self-directed violent ideation, and significant reductions in self-esteem (Brown & Harris, 1978; Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Farmer & McGuffin, 2003; Harter *et al.*, 2003a). Thus, humiliation may be an unpleasant emotional experience, both

for the victim and others who may become the target of the victim's desire for revenge or retaliation. Given the potential for humiliation to be associated with such negative and destructive consequences, additional empirical investigation is needed to further understand this emotion.

*What Have We Learned from Recent Empirical Investigations into Humiliation?*

To date, there are but a handful of empirical studies that have attempted to directly explore the emotion of humiliation (see Elison & Harter, 2007 for review). Although limited in number, these studies have been valuable in enhancing our understanding of possible situational antecedents and various cognitive, emotional, and behavioral correlates of humiliation. In general, recent empirical investigation into humiliation suggests that the emotion may be more likely to be experienced when one is publicly demeaned, mocked, or harassed by individuals with hostile intent (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Harter et al., 2003b; Jackson, 2000; Pulham & Harter, 2005). Moreover, studies have also found that the presence of observing others may be a critical element in the experience of humiliation (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Harter et al., 2003a; Jackson, 2000; R. H. Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002).

Studies also suggest that the experience of humiliation may often involve a number of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. With regard to cognitive correlates, humiliation has been found to be accompanied by: (a) heightened concern over evaluations from others, (b) negative self-appraisals, both by the self and others, (c) self-concept congruence (e.g., when one's clumsy behavior is seen as consistent with one's perception of the self as a klutz), (d) beliefs that one has been received unfair or

undeserved treatment from others, (e) excessive rumination about the humiliating incident, and (f) violent ideation involving the self and others (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Harter et al., 2003a; Harter et al., 2003b; Jackson, 2000; R. H. Smith et al., 2002). Emotional correlates have been found to include: anger (directed both at the self and others), embarrassment, sadness, hate, and shame (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Harter et al., 2003a; Harter et al., 2003b; Jackson, 2000; R. H. Smith et al., 2002). Last, studies investigating behavioral correlates have found reports of humiliation to be accompanied by desires to (a) inflict physical harm on others or “get revenge,” (b) escape, withdraw, or hide from others, and (c) minimize the event by laughing it off or explaining it away (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Harter et al., 2003a; Harter et al., 2003b; Jackson, 2000; R. H. Smith et al., 2002). Thus, overall, humiliation appears to be a negative emotional experience that may often be experienced at the hands of others and accompanied by a number of unpleasant external and internal consequences.

#### *What's missing in Our Empirical Investigations into Humiliation?*

Although progress has been made in advancing our understanding of humiliation, our knowledge of this emotion is still limited and additional research is needed to broaden our understanding of the possible situational antecedents and correlates of this emotion. One area in which research is particularly needed is in understanding the various cognitions associated with the experience of humiliation. While findings from previous studies have been helpful in providing insight into some of the possible cognitive correlates of humiliation, these results need to be replicated and expanded.

Moreover, further work is needed to identify additional cognitions that may be related to the experience of humiliation.

There are two primary reasons to focus specifically on the cognitions associated with humiliation. First, most theories of humiliation suggest this emotion is linked to specific cognitions. Indeed, one of the most prevalent themes in the literature on humiliation is that this emotion involves a perceived loss of status or devaluation of the self by others (Elison & Harter, 2007; Gilbert, 1997; Klein, 1991; Lazare, 1987; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Stamm, 1978; Tantam, 1998). Klein (1991), for example, has stated that, “To be humiliated is to be excluded and made less [of a person]. It involves a threat to your personal integrity and wholeness, a dirtying of your countenance in the eyes of others. When you’re humiliated, you become less than those who exclude you, often as if in their eyes you do not exist at all” (p. 97). In addition to perceived devaluation, it has also been suggested that humiliation is associated with blame attributed to others for the emotion-eliciting event (Gilbert, 1997, 1998). According to Gilbert (1997), humiliation is “an experience of external attack” (p. 133) and therefore involves external rather than internal attributions of responsibility for the unpleasant event.

Other cognitions argued to be associated with humiliation include: (a) beliefs that one has failed to live up to the expectations of others, (b) low levels of responsibility attributed to the self, (c) negative evaluations of others, and (d) beliefs that others perceive the self as having unattainable goals or aspirations (Gilbert, 1997; Klein, 1991; Lazare, 1987; W. I. Miller, 1993; Silver, Conte, Miceli, & Poggi, 1986; Stamm, 1978; Tantam, 1998). However, despite the numerous claims that humiliation is associated

with specific cognitions, there is little empirical evidence to support these arguments. Thus, additional work is needed to provide empirical support for the various claims made in the literature regarding the cognitive correlates of humiliation.

The second, and perhaps most important, reason to explore the cognitive correlates of humiliation is that appraisal theories of emotion suggest that this could provide valuable insight into the nature of this emotional experience. According to appraisal theories, an intimate connection exists between cognitions and emotion (Arnold, 1960; Frijda, 1986, 1993; Lazarus, 1982, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984a; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). At a descriptive level, these theories argue that cognitions play a critical role in distinguishing emotions from one another. That is, emotions are thought to be associated with specific appraisal profiles that can be useful in identifying shared and unique characteristics among emotions. For example, a study by Smith and Ellsworth (1985) found happiness to be related to judgments that the situation was pleasant and that the self was responsible for the event. In contrast, sadness was linked to judgments that the situation was unpleasant and unavoidable. Anger and fear were both found to be associated with the belief that the situation was unpleasant, but differed in that anger involved a fair degree of certainty about the situation, while fear tended to be accompanied by a great deal of uncertainty about future outcomes. Such evidence supports the idea that strong links may exist between specific appraisals and emotional experiences.

In addition to a descriptive connection, appraisal theorists have also suggested that cognitions and emotions may also have a causal connection. Specifically, each

distinct emotion is thought to be elicited by a specific pattern of appraisal (Arnold, 1960; Frijda, 1993; Roseman & Smith, 2001; Scherer, 1993). While several studies have been cited in support of potential causal connections between appraisals and emotions, the most frequently mentioned are those conducted by Lazarus and colleagues (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Alfert, 1964; Speisman, Lazarus, Mordkoff, & Davison, 1964). In these studies, participants were asked to watch movies showing unpleasant events while interpreting the scene in various ways. Those encouraged to view the scene as harmful and painful were found to experience more stress and negative emotions than those in two other groups that were encouraged to view the scene as benign or in a more detached intellectual manner. These results suggest that changes in cognitive appraisal may produce different emotional responses.

Beyond descriptive and causal connections, appraisal theorists have also suggested that links may exist between emotion-related cognitions and the additional thoughts, feelings, and behavioral tendencies that may accompany emotional experiences (Frijda, 1986, 1993; Scherer, 1984b; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1987). Frijda (1993), has suggested that additional thoughts may accompany emotions due to “cognitive elaboration of the appraisal process” (p. 317). That is, there may be a cascading effect in which the cognitions associated with emotions may actually trigger additional thoughts during emotional episodes. Some have also argued that additional emotions may accompany a particular emotional experience via the activation of multiple emotion-eliciting appraisals in response to an event (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1987). Thus, it is possible that the cognitions associated with a particular

emotional experience could actually elicit additional emotional responses. Last, with regard to action tendencies, Frijda (1993) has proposed that the cognitions that accompany emotional experiences may help focus states of action readiness into specific response tendencies. Anger, for example, may involve the readiness to remove an obstacle or right a wrong. Additional cognitions regarding the responsible agent for the obstacle or wrongdoing may aid in directing the action tendency toward a specific target.

Overall, then, appraisal theorists have been instrumental in suggesting that the cognitions associated with emotions may not only distinguish emotions from one another, but may also influence various aspects of emotional experience. Thus, with regard to humiliation, exploring the cognitive correlates of this emotion may be helpful in understanding the similarities and differences between humiliation and other close emotion relatives (e.g., embarrassment and shame), as well as the additional thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that may accompany the experience of humiliation.

To summarize, our knowledge of humiliation is limited and additional research is needed to broaden our understanding of this emotional experience. Studies aimed specifically at exploring the cognitive correlates of this emotion may be beneficial for two reasons. First, several theories of humiliation suggest this emotion is associated with specific cognitions. Thus, empirical investigation focused on the cognitions related to the experience of this emotion may be helpful in providing support for these numerous theoretical claims. Second, appraisal theories of emotion suggest that exploring the links between humiliation and various cognitions may be useful in (a) determining how this emotion may be similar or different from other closely related emotions, (b) identifying

possible causes of humiliation, and (c) understanding the additional thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that may often accompany this emotional experience. Therefore, continued investigation into the cognitions associated with humiliation may aid in constructing a more complete understanding of fundamental elements that define humiliation and the factors that may contribute to the characteristic “flavor” of this emotional experience.

### *Goals of the Current Study*

Given that research is needed to better understand the cognitions associated with humiliation, this study had two primary goals. First, this study aimed to extend our knowledge of cognitive correlates of humiliation by exploring relationships between humiliation and a particular set of cognitions. Specifically, this study focused on cognitions related to attributions of blame for the emotion eliciting event and perceived devaluation of the self from others. Second, this study sought to investigate how the cognitions related to humiliation may be similar to or different from those related to other closely related emotions, namely embarrassment and shame.

Embarrassment and shame were of particular interest in this study because these emotions are frequently mentioned in the psychological literature as being close relatives of humiliation (e.g., Elison & Harter, 2007; Gruenewald, Kemeny, Aziz, & Fahey, 2004; Scheff, 2003; R. H. Smith et al., 2002; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). Moreover, when humiliation is distinguished from other emotions, it is most often compared to embarrassment and shame (e.g., Gilbert, 1997; Klein, 1991; W. I. Miller, 1993; Tantam, 1998). Thus, embarrassment and shame were included in attempt to place

humiliation in the context of other closely related emotions and identify possible elements that may both link and distinguish humiliation from other emotional experiences.

### *Norm Violations*

When exploring the cognitions associated with humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, it should first be recognized that certain types of events or behaviors elicit these emotions. As a result, emotion-cognition relationships for these emotions are likely to be most meaningful for these particular situations. While it is commonly acknowledged that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are experienced in response to unpleasant events, not *all* unpleasant experiences elicit these emotions. For example, when someone cuts you off in traffic, this event is likely to elicit anger, but the probability of humiliation, embarrassment, or shame may be quite low. However, when you spill food in a busy restaurant, this may elicit embarrassment, and potentially humiliation and shame. What makes the second event more likely to elicit these emotions? The answer may lie in the fact that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are most often experienced in response to norm violations.

In general, social norms serve as guidelines for the attributes and behaviors that are considered acceptable or desirable for members of a particular social group. A norm violation occurs when one's behaviors, beliefs, personal characteristics, or abilities sufficiently deviate from what is valued or expected within a given group, society, or culture (Brauer & Chekroun, 2005; Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004; Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Sherif, 1936). Thus, in the example above, spilling food in a restaurant could be

considered a violation of the social rules dictating how one should behave in public places. Individuals who are judged to be in violation of the agreed upon rules or standards for a particular group often suffer severe social consequences in the form of ridicule, put-downs, and ultimately rejection or isolation from the group (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Bierbrauer, 1992; Dickerson, Gruenewald, & Kemeny, 2004; Gilbert, 1997; Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

While it is likely that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame *can* be experienced in response to a variety of different behaviors and events, empirical evidence suggests that these emotions are most often experienced in response to norm violations. This evidence comes from studies that have looked at past or typical instances of these emotions. Because these studies have explored participant descriptions of actual or prototypical humiliating, embarrassing, or shameful experiences, they provide insight into the types of events that may most often elicit these emotions. What has been consistently found among these studies is that participant descriptions of past or typical instances of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame most often mention events that involve norm violations that are witnessed by others (Harter *et al.*, 2003a; Keltner & Buswell, 1996; R. S. Miller, 1992; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994; Sharkey & Stafford, 1990; Tangney, 1992). For example, Harter *et al.* (2003a) found that, when participants were asked to describe typical situations that would cause most people to feel humiliated, a majority of participants (68%) described events that involved public norm violations (e.g., dressing inappropriately or inept social skills that elicited laughter from others). Similarly, Keltner and Buswell (1996) found that the most frequently reported

antecedents of embarrassment (e.g., clumsiness, loss of body control) and shame (e.g., stealing, harming others) included violations of social or moral conventions. Thus, there is evidence suggesting that humiliation, as well as embarrassment and shame, may often be experienced when one's deviant behavior or personal flaws are witnessed by others.

Given that norm violations appear to be a critical part of the emotional experience, this study focused on cognitions that are most likely to accompany these emotions when experienced in response to norm violations. While it is quite possible that the hypothesized emotion-cognition relationships may apply to other events that may elicit these emotions, these relationships are expected to be most meaningful when the event involves a violation of a social rule or standard.

#### *Blame Attributed to the Self or Others*

When it comes to the specific cognitions that may be associated with the experience of humiliation, the theoretical literature on this emotion suggests that attributions of blame, on the part of the victim of the emotional experience, may be associated with the experience of humiliation. Specifically, the experience of humiliation may be related to belief that others are to blame for the emotion eliciting event. Indeed, several researchers and theorists have argued that humiliation is often experienced at the hands of others (Elison & Harter, 2007; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Klein, 1991; Lazare, 1997; S. B. Miller, 1988; Sarphatie, 1993; Stamm, 1978). Klein (1991), for instance, has suggested that prototypical humiliating experiences involve three types of people: a *humiliator*, a victim, and a witness. Furthermore, S. B. Miller (1988) has stated that, "humiliation implies an activity occurring between oneself and another person" (p. 44).

More direct claims regarding the relationship between humiliation and thoughts related to other-blame have been made by Gilbert (1997) who has argued that humiliation is associated with external rather than internal attributions of responsibility for a loss of social status or desirability.

In support of this argument, the self-report studies mentioned earlier suggest that humiliation may often be elicited in response to norm violations that are accompanied by laughter and derogatory comments from the observing others (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Elison & Harter, 2007; Harter et al., 2003a; Harter et al., 2003b; Jackson, 2000). Harter et al. (2003a) discovered that, when asked to reflect on typical instances of humiliation, individuals frequently mentioned social norm violations that elicited teasing, taunting, harassment, and put-downs from others. Furthermore, studies investigating the role of the audience in humiliating events, have found humiliation to be rated higher when observing others laugh or give condescending looks in response to norm violations than when others respond with more empathetic responses (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Pulham & Harter, 2005). There is also evidence to suggest that hostile-others may also play a more active role in causing the humiliating event. A study conducted by Pulham and Harter (2005) discovered humiliation to be more highly rated for vignettes that described an individual as the target of a cruel practical joke than for vignettes that simply described the individual engaging in an accidental behavior (e.g., spilling food) or a demonstration of incompetence (e.g., giving a stupid answer).

While the studies above focused on external event details, a more direct link between humiliation and internal attributions of blame can be seen in a study by Jackson

(2000) that found ratings of humiliation for past experiences of this emotion to be positively correlated with ratings of “other as the cause.” Furthermore, this study found humiliation to be more likely to be reported in response to vignettes that elicited higher ratings of “other as cause” than for vignettes that elicited lower ratings of cause attributed to another. Together, this study along with the findings above, provide both indirect and direct support for the claim that humiliation is associated with other-blame.

In addition to suggesting that humiliation may be associated with cognitions related to other-blame, the literature on humiliation also suggests that these cognitions may distinguish humiliation from shame. Several researchers and theorists have argued that humiliation is a more other-focused emotion that is often experienced at the hands of others, while shame is a more self-focused emotion that results from the actions of the self (Gilbert, 1997; Klein, 1991; S. B. Miller, 1988; Sarphatie, 1993; Stamm, 1978). Saphartie (1993), for example, has proposed that a key difference between humiliation and shame lies in the role of the self and others in the elicitation of the emotion. According to Saphartie, shame is always self-inflicted, whereas humiliation tends to be inflicted by others. Similar arguments have been made by Klein (1991) who has suggested that humiliation is an emotion experienced when one is ridiculed, scorned, or belittled by others, but shame is experienced when one fails to live up to the ideals of the self or others. More direct distinctions, pertaining specifically to attributions of blame, have been made by Negaro et al. (2005). According to Negaro et al., humiliation is an emotion that requires negative attributions of blame to another, while shame is an emotion that requires blame put onto the self.

In support of these arguments, several self-report studies have found results that suggest shame may be associated with perceptions of personal responsibility and self-blame for the emotion eliciting event. Studies investigating recalled instances of shame have consistently found that individuals tend to report high levels of self-blame and personal responsibility when reflecting on their past experiences of shame (Manstead & Tetlock, 1989; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994; Mosher & White, 1981; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Tangney *et al.*, 1996). For example, when Manstead and Tetlock (1989) and Smith and Ellsworth (1985) asked participants to recall situations in which they had experienced shame (as well as other emotions), they found shame to differ from all other negative emotions with regard to attributions of personal responsibility. Along similar lines, Smith et al. (2002) found ratings of shame to be higher for vignettes that elicited higher ratings of self-blame than vignettes that elicited lower ratings of self-blame. Moreover, results from a study conducted by Gilbert and Miles (2000) revealed that individuals who were more likely to blame themselves for negative criticism or put-downs were also more likely to have higher scores of shame-proneness. Such evidence suggests shame may be associated with cognitions related to a high level of self-blame.

As for humiliation and embarrassment, little has been mentioned in the psychological literature as to how these two emotions may differ with regard to attributions of blame or the involvement of the self or others in the emotion eliciting event. However, a review of the empirical findings from studies investigating embarrassment suggests that this emotion may be associated with cognitions related to self-blame. Specifically, embarrassment may be more likely to be experienced in

response to events that involve a *low* level of blame attributed to the self than events that involve a high level self-blame for the emotion eliciting event.

Studies looking at participant descriptions of past episodes of embarrassment have found that individuals frequently report having experienced embarrassment following accidents that violate social norms (e.g., awkward acts – such as spilling or tripping, verbal blunders, forgetfulness, etc.) (Cupach & Metts, 1992; Keltner & Buswell, 1996; R. S. Miller, 1995a; Sharkey & Stafford, 1990). While such accidents often involve actions of the self, individuals may not attribute a substantial amount of blame to the self for the negative outcomes associated with these events. For example, an individual may experience embarrassment after inadvertently tripping over a misplaced trash can at work. In such events, the individual may believe he/she had little control over the event and, as a result, attribute a low level of blame to the self. In line with this idea, Miller and Tangney (1994) have found that recalled incidents of embarrassment to be less likely to involve self-blame and more likely to be viewed as accidents than recalled incidents of shame. In addition, Tangney et al. (1996) found that individuals tend to report feeling less personally responsible and more like “victims of circumstance” when reflecting on past embarrassing events than shameful events. Such evidence suggests a low level of self-blame may be a cognition that is related to the experience of embarrassment. Thus, it is possible that humiliation may differ from embarrassment in that humiliation is associated with a high level of blame attributed to others, while embarrassment is associated with a low level of blame attributed to the self.

### *Empirical Support for Emotion-Blame Relationships is Lacking*

Although humiliation may differ from embarrassment and shame with regard to attributions of blame, evidence in support of these arguments is lacking. To begin with, there is the problem of indirect evidence. Because few studies exploring these emotions have directly asked individuals to report the degree of blame they would attribute to the self or others, it is difficult to establish definitive connections between the experience of these emotions and attributions of blame. This is most problematic for humiliation and embarrassment. The fact that humiliation has been found to be related to the presence of hostile-others, merely suggests that humiliation may be associated with other-blame. Likewise, studies demonstrating that individuals often report having experienced embarrassment following accidents that violate social norms simply hints at the idea that embarrassment may be associated with a low level of self-blame. Because such evidence is not directly linked to participant reports of blame to the self and others, it can only offer indirect support of the claim that humiliation and embarrassment are associated with different types of blame.

While some studies have attempted to make direct links between the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, and participant reports of blame, there are some methodological issues that need to be addressed. In general, these studies have made use of two methodologies. These include: (a) non-experimental designs in which participants are asked to reflect on past or typical instances of the emotion and (b) experimental designs in which the experimenter examines participant responses to series of vignettes or “real time” controlled situations.

The primary issue with non-experimental designs is that they are open to third variable explanations. Most studies that have directly examined emotion-blame relationships for humiliation, embarrassment, and shame have asked participants to reflect on past experiences of these emotions and rate the degree of blame or level of responsibility they attributed to the self or others (Jackson, 2000; Manstead & Tetlock, 1989; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Tangney *et al.*, 1996). While these studies found that past experience of these emotions tend to involve specific types of blame, such evidence does not demonstrate a *direct* link between these emotions and self/other-blame. For example, Jackson (2000) found ratings of humiliation for past experiences of this emotion to be positively correlated with ratings of “other as cause.” However, this study also found that participant descriptions of past humiliating experiences often included the presence of hostile-others who berated or derogated the self in front of others. Given that two cognitions are likely to occur for such events – (a) the recognition that one has been publicly demeaned by another and (b) the belief that someone else is to blame for the event – it is difficult to determine if one’s emotional response is related to other-blame or to the realization that the self has become the target of another’s hurtful actions in front of others.

Studies using experimental designs help address the problem of alternative explanations by attempting to manipulate attributions of blame while controlling for third variables. However, studies that have used experimental designs to manipulate reported levels of self/other-blame are limited (see Jackson, 2000; R. H. Smith *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, the manipulations used in these studies have incorporated additional factors

that may have influenced participant reports of these emotions. For example, Smith et al. (2002) found shame and self-blame to be rated higher for vignettes that involved public exposure of a transgression than for vignettes in which the transgression was private. Because both blame and audience presence were manipulated, this raises the question of whether the blame or the publicity of the event was related to participant reports of these emotions.

#### *A New Approach to Studying Emotion-Blame Relationships*

From the discussion above, there appears to be a significant gap between theory and research suggesting that the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame may be associated with specific cognitions related to self/other-blame. This study aimed to address the limitations of previous studies and find support for the argument that humiliation is associated with blame attributed to others. Furthermore, in attempt to distinguish humiliation from shame and embarrassment, this study also sought to find additional evidence for the claim that shame is associated with a high level of self-blame and embarrassment is associated with a low level of self-blame.

First, the problem of indirect evidence was taken into account. This was accomplished by explicitly asking participants about their attributions of blame to the self or others for various hypothetical events. Participants were presented with various hypothetical situations and asked to indicate how much they would blame themselves or someone else for the emotion eliciting event. Given that participants provided direct reports of their expected level of blame, this allowed for a direct relationship between the

reported likelihood of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, and blame attributed to the self and others to be explored.

Second, this study explored emotion-blame relationships by looking at differences in the reported likelihood of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame in response to norm violations that differed with regard to who or what caused the event. While event cause is likely to be the single most important factor related to attributions of blame, few studies have used event cause to manipulate attributions of blame. The primary advantage of using event cause to manipulate blame is that it can allow for differences in participant reports of these emotions to be observed while holding other event-related factors constant. Indeed, events that differ *only* with regard to who/what caused the event are likely to elicit different attributions of blame, but remain similar in most other respects. Thus, by looking at the experience of these emotions in response to *similar* events that have *different* causes, a stronger connection between these emotions and attributions of blame can be established.

#### *Event Cause and the Experience of Humiliation, Embarrassment, and Shame*

Since humiliation was hypothesized to be associated with a high level of blame attributed to others, it was anticipated that participants would report that humiliation would be more likely to be experienced in response to other-caused norm violations, than self-caused or accidental violations. As for shame, this emotion was thought to be associated with a high level of self-blame. Thus, it was expected that the reported likelihood of this emotion would be higher for self-caused norm violations than other-caused or accidental violations. Embarrassment, on the other hand, was hypothesized to

be related to a low level of blame attributed to the self. Because other-caused and accidental events were predicted to elicit lower levels of blame to the self, it was expected that the reported likelihood of embarrassment would be higher for other-caused and accidental norm violations, than self-caused norm violations.

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*Hypothesis 1a: Blame to the self will be rated higher for self-caused norm violations than other-caused or accidental violations. Blame to others will be rated higher for other-caused norm violations than self-caused or accidental violations.*

*Hypothesis 1b: The reported likelihood of humiliation will be higher in response to other-caused norm violations than self-caused or accidental violations. In contrast, the reported likelihood of shame will be higher in response to self-caused norm violations than other-caused or accidental violations. Last, embarrassment will be rated higher in likelihood for other-caused and accidental norm violations, than self-caused violations.*

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#### *Perceived Devaluation of the Self by Others*

In addition to attributions of blame, theories of humiliation also suggest that cognitions pertaining to negative social evaluation and lack of acceptance from others may be of particular interest. As mentioned previously, one of the most prevalent themes found among theories of humiliation is the idea that this emotion is associated with perceived devaluation of the self by others. Scheff (2003), for example, has claimed that humiliation is part of a group of emotions that arise from, “seeing one’s self negatively in the eyes of the other” (p. 254). Likewise, Harter et al. (2003a), along with other

researchers, have argued that humiliation is associated with the belief that the self has been judged negatively by others (Jennings & Murphy, 2000; Tantam, 1998).

Along similar lines, several researchers and theorists have suggested that humiliation involves a perceived reduction in social status or a perceived threat of social exclusion (Elison & Harter, 2007; Gilbert, 1997; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Jennings & Murphy, 2000; Klein, 1991; Lazare, 1987; H. B. Lewis, 1971; S. B. Miller, 1988; Scheff, 2003; Stamm, 1978). For instance, Stamm (1978) has proposed that humiliated individuals may feel, “belittled or slandered, lowered in the eyes of others or his own eyes” (p. 425). Moreover, Elison and Harter (2007) have claimed that humiliation is part of an emotion family thought to be an evolutionary adaptation to threats of social exclusion. Thus, humiliated individuals may often believe they have been negatively evaluated by others or that their social identity has been demeaned or devalued. Furthermore, the experience of humiliation may also be accompanied by the belief that one’s joining with others has been disrupted or that one’s acceptance has been diminished.

Yet, humiliation may not be the only emotion associated with perceived devaluation. Rather, this emotion may share this cognition with the close emotion relatives of embarrassment and shame. This argument is based on the idea that humiliation is part of an emotion family that shares a set of common characteristics (Elison, 2005; Elison & Harter, 2007; Gruenewald et al., 2004; H. B. Lewis, 1971, 1990a; Scheff, 2003; Tangney et al., 1996). Although specific theories vary with regard to the particular emotions included with humiliation in this family, the emotions of

embarrassment and shame tend to be consistently listed, along with humiliation, as members of the same family. As part of the common theme shared among these emotions, most researchers agree that emotions included in this family are associated with perceived devaluation of the self by others (Elison, 2005; Elison & Harter, 2007; Gruenewald et al., 2004; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 2003; Tangney et al., 1996). Thus, the experience of humiliation may be similar to that of embarrassment and shame in that it is associated with cognitions related to negative social evaluation and a lack of acceptance from others.

Evidence in support of this argument can be found in studies investigating humiliation, embarrassment, and shame that have found that these emotions tend to be more likely to be reported in response to public norm violations than private norm violations (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Gruenewald et al., 2004; Harter et al., 2003a; Jackson, 2000; R. H. Smith et al., 2002). While such evidence does not rule out the possibility that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame may be experienced in the absence of others, it does suggest that the presence of *evaluating* others may play a significant role in the elicitation of these emotions. Second, studies that have explored past or typical instances of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame have found the experience of these emotions to be associated with concern over others' evaluations of the self (Jackson, 2000; Parrott & Smith, 1991; R. H. Smith et al., 2002; Tangney, 1992; Tangney et al., 1996). Third, studies looking at individual differences have found that people with heightened sensitivity to negative evaluations from others tend to score higher on measures of embarrassability or shame proneness (Goss, Gilbert, & Allan,

1994; Halberstadt & Green, 1993; R. S. Miller, 1995b; Modigliani, 1968). Last, real-time studies conducted by Modigliani (1971) and Gruenwald et al. (2004) have found higher levels of shame and embarrassment to be reported in conditions that led to appraisals of disapproval or unfavorable judgments of the self from others.

*Empirical Support for Emotion-Devaluation Relationships is Lacking*

Despite the fact that numerous theoretical claims have been made suggesting that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are associated with perceived devaluation, evidence in support of these arguments is lacking. To begin with, there is the problem of indirect evidence. Although studies have found reports of these emotions to be related to the presence of observing others that witness the event, such evidence merely suggests these emotions are associated with perceived negative evaluation of the self from others. Because few studies have directly asked participants about perceived devaluation, it can only be assumed that, when an audience witnesses the event, individuals are more likely to believe the self was devalued by the observing others.

Although more convincing evidence can be seen in studies that have made direct links between these emotions and reports of negative social evaluation, these studies are limited by the fact that most have relied on participant reports of past or typical instances of these emotions (e.g., Harter *et al.*, 2003a; Parrott & Smith, 1991; R. H. Smith *et al.*, 2002; Tangney, 1992; Tangney *et al.*, 1996). As a result, these studies are prone to possible third variable explanations. For example, Parrott and Smith (1996) found items related to social anxiety (e.g., concern over others evaluation of the self) to be highly rated when participants were asked to reflect on recalled or typical instances of

embarrassment. However, this study *also* found the most frequently mentioned situational antecedents of embarrassment to include, “failures to present oneself to others in the manner desired, such as appearing incongruous, inappropriate, inconsistent, or defective” (p. 418). For such situations two cognitions are likely to occur. The first being the recognition that one has behaved in a way that is inconsistent with a social rule, standard, or expectation and the second being the belief that others have made unfavorable judgments of the self. Given that both cognitions are likely to co-occur, it is difficult to determine if one’s emotional response is related to perceived devaluation or simply to the realization that a norm has been violated.

Studies that look at the relationship between these emotions and perceived devaluation while accounting for other potential contributing factors (i.e., experimental designs) can be helpful in demonstrating a more direct link between the experience of these emotions and cognitions related to devaluation. Yet, these studies are not entirely immune to third variable explanations either. Studies that have used such designs (e.g., Gruenewald *et al.*, 2004; Modigliani, 1971) tend to incorporate manipulations that involve major changes to the external environment, such as the presence or absence of an audience. While such manipulations influence the level of reported devaluation, there is the question of whether reports of these emotions are associated with specific event details, such as the publicity of the event, or with perceived devaluation.

#### *A New Approach to Studying Emotion-Devaluation Relationships*

From the discussion above, there appears to be a significant gap between theory and research indicating that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are related to

perceived social devaluation. Thus, this study aimed to address the limitations of previous studies and find additional empirical support for the argument that these emotions are associated with perceptions of a devalued self.

First, the problem of indirect evidence was taken into account. This was accomplished by explicitly asking participants about their beliefs regarding devaluation of the self from others. Participants were asked to imagine themselves in various hypothetical situations in which they engaged in a norm violation and report the likelihood of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance from the observing audience. These direct reports allowed for stronger links to be made between the experience of these emotions and perceptions of devaluation.

Second, this study explored an alternative event-related factor that may be associated with perceptions of negative social evaluation from others. Specifically, this study investigated whether the observing audience's knowledge of the event cause may be related to perceptions of negative evaluation and lack of acceptance from others. While previous studies have found various other event-related factors, such as public derogation, to be associated with perceived devaluation (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Gruenewald *et al.*, 2004; R. S. Miller, 1996; Modigliani, 1971; Pulham & Harter, 2005), no study, thus far, has looked at whether the audience's knowledge of the event cause may be a factor related to perceived devaluation.

Exploring audience knowledge as a potential factor related to perceived devaluation may be beneficial in demonstrating a stronger link between the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, and cognitions related to perceived negative

social evaluation. Indeed, audience knowledge is likely to be an important event detail that can have a *major* impact on perceived devaluation. Most importantly, however, audience knowledge can be manipulated while holding other event-related factors constant. This is advantageous given that events that differ with regard to what the audience sees/hears about the cause are likely to elicit different perceptions of devaluation, but remain the same in most other respects. As a result, differences in the reports of these emotions are more likely to be related to variation in perceived devaluation of the self from others, rather than other event details that may have varied with perceived devaluation.

#### *Audience Knowledge of the Event Cause and Perceived Devaluation*

So, how might the audience's knowledge of the event cause influence perceived devaluation? In general, when an individual engages in a norm violation in front of observing others, he/she is likely to be concerned about who or what the observing audience thinks is responsible for the norm violation. The more one believes the audience attributes responsibility to the self for the violation, the more he/she is likely to believe the audience has formed a negative opinion of the self. Thus, audience knowledge of the event cause may affect perceptions of devaluation given that it may influence what the victim believes regarding how much the audience blames the self for the violation.

When the audience does *not* see the precipitating actions leading to the norm violation, the audience can only infer who/what caused the event. Thus, the victim of the event is likely to assume that the observing audience blames the self, regardless of

who/what actually caused the event. For example, if an individual in a department store happens to be pushed into a display of expensive dishes by another shopper, he/she may attract the attention of others in the store. Moreover, if the individual knows that the observing audience did not see him/her get pushed, he/she is likely to believe the audience attributes responsibility to the self for being careless. Thus, for norm violations in which the audience does not know the event cause, the likelihood of perceived devaluation may be relatively high.

In contrast, if the audience *knows* the cause of the norm violation, the victim's beliefs regarding the audience's attribution of responsibility should differ depending on who/what actually caused the violation. When the norm violation is accidental or caused by another, the victim of the event may expect the audience to attribute substantially lower levels of responsibility to the self. For the department store example above, if the individual who knocked over the display of dishes knew the audience saw him/her get pushed by another shopper, he/she would likely believe that the observing audience would attribute lower levels of responsibility to the self. In such cases, the likelihood of perceived devaluation may be lower when the audience knows the cause than when the audience does not know the cause.

Yet, if the norm violation is self-caused, the opposite effect would be expected. Indeed, it would be reasonable to assume that the audience would blame the self more when the audience knows the violation was self-caused than if the audience could only guess who/what caused the violation. With the department store example, if the individual happened to be carelessly swinging a shopping bag and knocked over the

display of dishes, he/she would likely believe the audience would attribute more responsibility to the self if the audience happened to see the careless handling of a shopping bag than if the audience could only infer the cause. Thus, given that one is likely to believe that the audience would attribute more responsibility to the self when the audience knows the event was self-caused, the likelihood of perceived devaluation should be higher when the audience knows the event cause than when the audience has to infer the event cause.

*Audience Knowledge of the Event Cause and the Experience of Humiliation, Embarrassment, and Shame*

From the preceding discussion, it appears that audience knowledge of the event cause may influence perceptions of devaluation of the self from others. Thus, in attempt to demonstrate a stronger link between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, and cognitions related to perceived devaluation, this study explored the relationship between reports of these emotions and the audience's knowledge of the event cause.

It was predicted that, for other-caused and accidental norm violations, participants would report that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, as well as perceived devaluation of the self from others, would be more likely to be experienced when the audience did *not* know the event cause than when the audience *knew* the event cause. For self-caused norm violations, it was expected that participants would report that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, as well as perceived devaluation of the self from others, would be more likely to be experienced when the audience *knew* the event cause than when the audience did *not* know the event cause.

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*Hypothesis 2: For other-caused and accidental norm violations the reported likelihood of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, as well as perceived devaluation of the self from others, will be higher when the audience does not know the event cause than when the audience knows the event cause. For self-caused norm violations, the reported likelihood of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, in addition to perceived devaluation of the self from others, will be higher when the audience knows the event cause than when the audience does not know the event cause.*

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#### *Social and Moral Norm Violations*

Although norm violations can be classified into numerous types, the most common distinction made in the literature on humiliation, embarrassment, and shame is between social and moral norm violations. In general, social violations can be thought of as behaviors or personal characteristics that sufficiently deviate from the rules and expectations that regulate behaviors in social situations (see Smetana, 1993; Turiel, 1994). These can include undesirable actions (e.g., wearing abnormal clothing, not bathing, being withdrawn, etc.), lack of ability, (e.g., deficient in athletic ability or some other desired skill), cognitive shortcomings (e.g., forgetfulness, stupid answers), and physical pratfalls (e.g., tripping, spilling food/drink). Moral violations, on the other hand, can be thought of as behaviors that go against rules regarding the rights and welfare of others (see Smetana, 1993; Turiel, 1994). These behaviors often include stealing, damaging another's property, and hurting others physically or emotionally.

Given that norm violations are commonly categorized as being either social or moral, this raises the question of whether humiliation may be associated with a particular type of norm violation that is similar or distinct from embarrassment and shame. The few studies that have explored humiliation provide some insight into this question. First, Harter et al. (2003a) found that participant descriptions of typical humiliating situations frequently included incidents involving *social* norm violations, such as abnormal clothing or talking funny, that elicited laughter and derogatory comments from others. Moral transgressions were rarely mentioned. Second, Smith et al. (2002) found humiliation to be rated higher in intensity in response to recalled events that involved “nonmoral” violations than recalled events that involved moral violations. Such evidence suggests that humiliation may be more likely to be experienced in response to social or nonmoral norm violations than moral norm violations.

With regard to embarrassment and shame, several researchers and theorists have argued that embarrassment results from more trivial, accidental *social* transgressions, while shame follows when more fundamental *moral* norms are violated (Buss, 1980; M. Lewis, 1992; Ortony *et al.*, 1988; Tangney *et al.*, 1996). Indeed, several studies exploring recalled instances of embarrassment and shame support this idea. For embarrassment, it has been consistently found that when individuals are asked to recall embarrassing situations, the most frequently reported antecedents of embarrassment include awkward acts, physical pratfalls, loss of body control, and cognitive shortcomings (Keltner & Buswell, 1996; R. S. Miller, 1992; Sharkey & Stafford, 1990; Tangney *et al.*, 1996). In contrast, studies investigating shame have found that recalled

or typical incidents of shame most often involve moral violations, such as hurting others and lying (Keltner & Buswell, 1996; Tangney, 1992; Tangney *et al.*, 1996). Together, this evidence suggests that embarrassment may be more likely to be experienced in response to social violations that are more accidental in nature while shame may be more likely for moral violations.

#### *Type of Norm Violation and Perceived Devaluation*

Given the evidence presented above, it appears that humiliation and embarrassment may be associated with social norm violations, while shame is associated with moral norm violations. However, when attempting to link emotional experiences to particular types of norm violations it is commonly overlooked that social and moral violations differ in more ways than just the particular rule or standard that is breached. The antecedents, correlates, and social consequences for social violations differ considerably from moral violations. One difference between social and moral norm violations that should be considered is that the likelihood of perceived devaluation from others who witness the violation may be higher for moral violations than social violations. Since moral violations tend to involve more severe transgressions that violate more fundamental standards of conduct, perceived devaluation of the self from the observing audience would be expected to be more likely to occur in response to moral transgressions. In contrast, social violations tend to involve actions that violate less important standards and rules. Thus, the likelihood of perceived devaluation for social violations may be lower. Since humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are hypothesized to be related to perceptions of a devalued self, it would be reasonable to predict that all

three of these emotions would be more likely to be experienced in response to moral violations than social violations.

However, why do studies suggest that shame is most often experienced in response to moral violations, while humiliation and embarrassment are most often experienced in response to social violations? Such evidence seems to contradict the claim that all three of these emotions are more likely to be experienced in response to events with a higher probability of perceived devaluation (e.g., moral norm violations). One of the most frequently ignored differences between social and moral norm violations is the fact that social norm violations tend to be more public events than moral violations. Indeed, a poor choice in clothing or unusual hairstyle may easily attract the attention of evaluating others. In contrast, moral norm violations usually have to be revealed to others. When one lies, cheats, or steals, these behaviors may often go unnoticed, unless someone or something exposes the violation.

Therefore, one explanation for why humiliation and embarrassment are most often experienced in response to social violations is that these emotions rely more heavily on the presence of observing others than shame. In support of this claim, several self-report studies suggest that the likelihood of experiencing humiliation and embarrassment is closely linked to the presence of an audience (Cupach & Metts, 1990; Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Harter et al., 2003a; Jackson, 2000; Parrott, Sabini, & Silver, 1988; Tangney et al., 1996). For example, Elison and Harter (2004a, 2004b) found humiliation and embarrassment to be highly rated only for vignettes that included an audience. Moreover, Harter et al. (2003a) discovered that when participants were asked, “Is it

necessary for people (other than the humiliator) to be there to observe the incident, for someone to feel humiliated?” over 80% of respondents answered “yes.”

Shame, on the other hand, does not appear to require an audience. Indeed, empirical investigations into this emotion indicate that this emotion can be experienced when one engages in a moral norm violation in the absence of observing others (Elison & Harter, 2007; Jackson, 2000; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994; Tangney et al., 1996). Thus, unlike humiliation and embarrassment, shame may have a higher probability of being experienced in response to moral norm violations that may be less likely to attract the attention of evaluating others.

This evidence suggests that social/moral differences between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame may be partially influenced by the publicity of the event. In attempt to provide further evidence that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are associated with perceived devaluation, this study looked at differences in the likelihood of experiencing these emotions in response to social and moral norm violations. It was hypothesized that, when the publicity of the event was controlled for, the reported likelihood of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame would be higher for events that involve moral norm violations than events that involve social norm violations.

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*Hypothesis 3: The reported likelihood of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, as well as perceived devaluation of the self from others, will be higher for events that involve moral norm violations than events that involve social norm violations.*

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### *Study Overview*

In summary, the theoretical literature on humiliation suggests that cognitions associated with the experience of humiliation may include: (a) attributions of blame for the emotion eliciting event and (b) perceived devaluation of the self from others. Furthermore, it has been argued that the relationship between humiliation and these particular cognitions may both distinguish and link humiliation to embarrassment and shame. Given that empirical evidence in support of these claims is lacking, this study sought to investigate the relationship between reports of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame and cognitions related to blame and perceived devaluation.

To test the hypotheses for this study, participants were recruited via flyers and Internet postings from the University of Denver, Spokane Falls Community College, and the general population from several major cities. Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of six questionnaires, administered through the Internet, in which they were instructed to read two vignettes and answer a series of questions regarding how they might feel and what they might think in these situations. A total of twelve vignettes were developed for this study that described socially-awkward situations involving either a social or moral norm violation. For each vignette, the cause of the event and the audience's knowledge of the event cause were manipulated. Participants were asked to respond to each vignette by rating the probability of experiencing humiliation, embarrassment, and shame. In addition, items were included that asked participants to indicate the degree of blame they would attribute to the self or others for the event and the likelihood of perceived devaluation of the self from the observing audience.

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample for this study consisted of 716 participants (360 female, 356 male). Participants were recruited from the University of Denver (Denver, CO), Spokane Falls Community College (Spokane, WA), the general Denver area, and other large cities via flyers, e-mails, and Internet advertisements. Course credit or an opportunity to enter a drawing for one of five \$100 gift cards was offered for participation in the study.

Two-thirds of the participants were college students. Ages ranged from 18 to 77 ( $M = 31.2$  years,  $Mdn = 27$  years). The sample was predominately non-Hispanic/Latino and White (81.1%). A smaller number of participants (12%) identified their ethnicity as non-Hispanic/Latino and their race as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Multi-Racial. Additional individuals (6.8%) identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino and race as American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, White, or Multi-Racial. The number of participants for each ethnic and racial category is presented in Table 1.

### *Design*

This study used an Event Cause (3: self-caused, other-caused, accidental)  $\times$  Audience Knowledge (2: audience doesn't know cause vs. audience knows cause)  $\times$  Type of Violation (2: social vs. moral) mixed design. Event Cause and Type of Violation were both between-subjects factors. Audience Knowledge was the only within-subjects factor.

Table 1

*Number of Participants for Each Ethnic and Racial Category*

Race	Ethnicity	
	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	12
Asian	0	19
Black or African American	1	15
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	2
White	40	581
Multi-Racial	6	38

*Materials*

The survey used in this study was designed to explore participant reports of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame in response to hypothetical norm violations that differed with regard to (a) who/what caused the event, (b) the audience's knowledge of the event cause, and (c) the type of norm violation committed in the event. Since the primary goal was to investigate potential relationships between these emotions and cognitions of blame and perceived devaluation, participants were also asked to indicate the degree of blame they would attribute to the self and others and likelihood of perceived devaluation for each of the hypothetical events. It was anticipated that

participant reports of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame in response to the vignettes would mirror participant ratings of blame and perceived devaluation.

A total of twelve vignettes were developed for this study. Each vignette described the participant in a socially-awkward situation in which he/she engages in a norm violation in front of a large audience of people. The independent variables manipulated in each of the vignettes included: event cause (self-caused, other-caused, and accidental), audience knowledge of the event cause (audience doesn't know vs. audience knows), and type of norm violation (social vs. moral). The dependent measures consisted of items that tapped participants' beliefs regarding the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame in response to the situation described in the vignette. In addition, items were included that asked participants to indicate the degree of blame they would attribute to the self and others and the likelihood of perceived devaluation from the observing audience.

#### *Independent Variable Manipulations*

*Event Cause.* The cause of the event was manipulated by altering who or what was responsible for the participant engaging in the hypothetical norm violation described in each vignette. For self-caused norm violations, participants were informed that the violation occurred as a result of their own carelessness or inappropriate behavior (e.g., spilling food after trying to carry three plates at once). For other-caused norm violations, participants were told that the violation resulted from the actions of a hostile-other (e.g., getting caught stealing sunglasses after someone puts sunglasses in the hood of the participant's jacket). Hostile intent by the perpetrator of the event was communicated to

participants by informing them that the hostile-other “made an insulting comment” to him/her prior to causing the participant to engage in the violation. Last, within the accidental condition, information was presented that indicated that neither the self nor another individual was responsible for the violation. In other words, for this last condition, events were intended to be perceived as unintentional (e.g., spilling food after tripping over an object). Vignettes that incorporate the event cause manipulation are included in Appendices B and C. The first piece of underlined information in the vignettes presented in these appendices indicates where this manipulation occurred.

*Audience Knowledge.* Audience knowledge of the event cause was manipulated by varying what the observing audience in each scenario knew about who or what caused the norm violation. In the “audience doesn’t know” condition, participants were informed that their norm incongruent behavior attracted the attention of other people. Importantly, however, participants were also told that most of the other people present were too busy with other activities prior to the event to have noticed who/what caused the norm violation. Thus, because the audience did not observe the cause, they could only infer who or what caused the behavior. An example of this condition is presented in the following phrase. This phrase occurred at the end of a vignette that described the participant spilling food in a restaurant after being pushed by someone else.

*Audience Doesn’t Know Cause:* Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. However, you know they did NOT see someone make an insulting comment and push you because they were eating or talking with others when that happened.

In the “audience knows” condition, participants were told that others happened to be looking in the participant’s direction just moments before the norm violation occurred.

Thus, within this condition, the audience witnessed both the norm violation and who/what caused the violation to occur (self-caused, other-caused, accidental). For the spilling food scenario described above, the phrase below represents the “audience knows” condition.

*Audience Knows Cause:* Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. You know they SAW someone make an insulting comment and push you because they happened to be looking in your direction just before your plate dropped.

The audience knowledge manipulation for each vignette is included in Appendices B and C. The last two pieces of underlined text for each vignette presented in these appendices identify this manipulation.

*Type of Norm Violation.* Each of the vignettes described the participant engaging in either a social or moral norm violation in front of a large audience of people. Social norm violations were defined as breaches of etiquette that go against rules that regulate behaviors in social situations (see Smetana, 1993; Turiel, 1994). Given that spilling food is commonly identified as a social norm violation, the social violation vignettes in this study described the participant in a classy restaurant in which he/she happens to spill a large amount of food. A sample scenario is presented below.

*Social Norm Violation:* You’re at a classy restaurant for a fancy brunch buffet. It’s very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don’t know. Shortly after being seated, you head over to the buffet tables and begin to fill a plate with food. While walking back to your table with your plate full of food, you spot the dessert table. Rather than make two trips, you go and get two additional plates of dessert. You make an awkward attempt to balance all three plates and your first plate of food drops. A large amount of food is now all over the floor.

Moral norm violations were defined behaviors that go against rules regarding the rights and welfare of others (see Smetana, 1993; Turiel, 1994). Although there are a number of behaviors that may be classified as moral norm violations, stealing from another is a typical example of this type of rule violation. Thus, in the current investigation, the moral violation vignettes described the participant stealing a pair of expensive designer sunglasses from a popular department store.

*Moral Norm Violation:* You're inside a popular department store. It's very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don't know. You get tired, so you decide to take a break on a bench outside. Just before you exit the store, you walk by a sunglass rack and put a pair of expensive sunglasses in the hood of your jacket. You didn't want to pay for them and you thought this would be a good place to hide them. When you open the door, a very loud alarm goes off. A security guard stops you and discovers the sunglasses in your hood. The guard takes the sunglasses and allows you to continue on your way.

#### *Dependent Measures*

*Blame Attributed to the Self and Others.* Level of blame was assessed with two questionnaire items that tapped the degree to which participants would blame the self or others for the emotion eliciting event. Participants were asked to indicate how much they would blame the self or someone else for the event (e.g., "How much would you blame yourself for spilling your food?"). Participants rated the degree of blame they would attribute to the self or someone else on a four-point Likert scale (1 = *very little*, 2 = *some*, 3 = *a fair amount*, and 4 = *a lot*). The blame questions are presented in Appendix D.

*Perceived Devaluation.* Since perceived devaluation is a social cognition that involves perceptions of negative attitudes and/or negative desires of others toward the self, items assessing perceived devaluation focused on participants' beliefs regarding (a)

negative evaluations of the self from others and (b) lack of acceptance of the self from others. Two items (averaged together) assessed beliefs regarding negative evaluations of the self from the observing audience (e.g., “I would think the other people looking at me would be thinking negative thoughts about me.”; coefficient  $\alpha = .89$ ). These items were expected to tap the likelihood of believing that the observing audience had formed a negative opinion of the self in response to the event described in the vignette.

Two additional items (averaged together) focused on perceived lack of acceptance from others. These items were included to examine participant perceptions of social rejection or avoidance from the observing audience. Thus, these items tapped beliefs regarding others’ desire or willingness to be near or interact with the self (e.g., “I would believe the people who saw the spilled food would be less willing to interact with me.”; coefficient  $\alpha = .94$ ). Participants were asked to indicate how true these statements would be of them on a four-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true*, 2 = *not very true*, 3 = *pretty true*, and 4 = *very true*). The items measuring perceived devaluation are presented in Appendix D.

*Humiliation, Embarrassment, and Shame.* Three items measured direct reports of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame. Participants were asked to respond to statements regarding the anticipated experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame for the hypothetical norm violation described in each vignette (e.g., “I would feel humiliated.”). Participants rated how true these statements would be of them on a four-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true*, 2 = *not very true*, 3 = *pretty true*, and 4 = *very true*). A complete list of the emotion items is provided in Appendix D.

### *Procedure*

The survey was administered through the Internet and participants were allowed to complete the survey at a location and time of their choosing. All flyers, e-mails, and Internet advertisements directed participants to the study website, which provided additional information about the study. On this website, participants were told that the study was designed to explore the thoughts that may be associated with particular social emotions. In addition, the website provided a brief description of the survey, which indicated that participants would read stories describing socially-awkward situations and answer questions about how they might feel and what they might think in these situations. To access the survey, participants clicked a link located at the bottom of the website.

Once participants accessed the survey and provided consent to participate, they were presented with a brief demographic information page with questions regarding their age, gender, and other related information. Next, participants were given instructions regarding the vignettes and questions that would appear on the following pages (see Appendix A). In these instructions, participants were informed that they would read two vignettes and answer questions about each vignette. It was stressed that each vignette would appear only once and that the vignettes would *not* be available while they answered the questions about the situations described in the vignettes. In addition, participants were encouraged to respond as honestly as possible and were reminded that the survey had no right or wrong answers. After reading the instructions, participants were presented with the first vignette, followed by a series of questions, and then

presented with the second vignette, followed by another series of questions. The survey concluded with a debriefing letter that provided additional information about the study and instructions on how to sign-up for course credit or enter the drawing.

There were six versions of the survey. After clicking the link on the study website to access the survey, participants were randomly directed to one of the six versions of the survey. For each version of the survey, participants were presented with two of the twelve vignettes developed for this study. The two vignettes presented to each participant differed only with regard to the audience's knowledge of the event cause. In the first vignette, participants were informed that the audience did *not* know the event cause, while, in the second vignette, participants were told that the audience *knew* the event cause. Table 2 provides a break-down of the independent variable manipulations included in the first and second vignettes for each version of the survey. After reading the vignettes, participants responded to a series of questions pertaining to the particular norm violation described in each vignette. The order and presentation of these questions/statements is presented in Appendix D.

Table 2

*Variable Manipulations Included in the First and Second*

*Vignettes for Each Version of the Survey*

Survey Version	Vignette 1	Vignette 2
Social Violation		
1	Self-Caused Audience Doesn't Know	Self-Caused Audience Knows
2	Other-Caused Audience Doesn't Know	Other-Caused Audience Knows
3	Accidental Audience Doesn't Know	Accidental Audience Knows
Moral Violation		
4	Self-Caused Audience Doesn't Know	Self-Caused Audience Knows
5	Other-Caused Audience Doesn't Know	Other-Caused Audience Knows
6	Accidental Audience Doesn't Know	Accidental Audience Knows

## Results

### *Preliminary Analyses*

To account for the potential effects of gender, age, and student status, the initial analyses for this study used an Event Cause (3) × Audience Knowledge (2) × Type of Violation (2) mixed design analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with age, gender, and student status entered as covariates. Event Cause and Type of Violation were both between-subjects factors and Audience Knowledge was the within-subjects factor. Due to the relatively low prevalence of ethnic and racial minority participants (18.9%), minority status was not included as a covariate in these analyses. Combining all minority participants into one group did not seem appropriate given the potential differences between minority groups. Moreover, there were insufficient numbers within each ethnic or racial minority group to make meaningful comparisons. The average number of participants was twenty-three across the following ethnic and racial minority groups: Hispanic/Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Multi-Racial.

When the ANCOVA analyses were conducted with age, gender, and student status as covariates, age was found to be significantly related to reports of perceived negative evaluation,  $F(1, 707) = 11.33, p = .001 (\eta_p^2 = .02)$ , humiliation,  $F(1, 707) = 13.65, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .02)$ , and shame,  $F(1, 707) = 12.56, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .02)$ . On average, younger individuals reported a higher likelihood of perceived negative

evaluation, humiliation, and shame than older individuals. Furthermore, gender was found to be related to embarrassment,  $F(1, 707) = 18.76, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .03)$ , and humiliation,  $F(1, 707) = 9.90, p = .002 (\eta_p^2 = .02)$ . On average, the reported likelihood of embarrassment and humiliation was higher among females than males.

Although age and gender were significant as covariates, the effect sizes for these relationships were relatively small (i.e.,  $\eta_p^2 < .06$ ). Moreover, the use of ANCOVA did not produce results that differed substantially from results obtained using an analysis of variance (ANOVA). As an additional check, age and gender were entered separately as additional factors into the Event Cause (3)  $\times$  Audience Knowledge (2)  $\times$  Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA. These analyses produced few significant interactions with age and gender, indicating that differences in the hypothesized effects between younger and older individuals or males and females were minimal. Thus, to avoid an unnecessary reduction in power (due to a decrease in degrees of freedom in the error term) age and gender, as well as student status, were dropped as covariates from the analyses.

With the elimination of covariates, the primary statistical procedure used to explore the hypotheses for this study was a mixed design ANOVA. The assumptions most likely to be violated with this procedure are (a) homogeneity of variances and (b) sphericity. The mixed design ANOVA analyses were likely robust to any violations of homogeneity, given that descriptive statistics revealed that the  $n$  within each cell was roughly equal. Moreover, the assumption of sphericity was only violated when Emotion (3) was included as an additional within-subjects factor, (i.e., Mauchly's test statistic was

significant,  $p < .001$ ). In such cases, it is recommended that the Greenhouse-Geisser or Huynh-Feldt corrections be used. However, these corrections produced results that were nearly identical to the values received when sphericity was assumed. Thus, to avoid unnecessary complexity in reporting the results, the sphericity assumed values were reported for all analyses.

Last, given the large sample size for this study ( $n = 716$ ) and the use of mixed design ANOVA, there was the potential for small effects to be significant at  $p < .05$ . Because these small effects are not likely to be psychologically meaningful, only effects with a moderate to large effect size were interpreted. According to Cohen (1977), effect sizes larger than .15 are considered large, while those ranging from .06 to .14 are considered moderate, and effect sizes within .01 to .05 are viewed as small. To determine effect size, partial eta-squared ( $\eta_p^2$ ) was calculated for each effect. As an added constraint, only mean differences greater than 0.4 were interpreted. This was included as an additional criterion for interpretation given the long history with 4-point scales in the Harter laboratory in which differences less than 0.4 have not been found to be psychologically meaningful.

#### *Blame to the Self and Others*

It was hypothesized that event cause would be significantly related to the degree of blame participants attributed to the self and others for the emotion eliciting event. Specifically, participants were expected to report higher levels of blame to the self when the norm violation was self-caused than when the violation was other-caused or accidental. In addition, it was anticipated that participants would report higher levels of

blame to others when the norm violation was other-caused than when the norm incongruent behavior was self-caused or accidental.

To explore these hypothesized effects, an Event Cause (3) × Audience Knowledge (2) × Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA, with Event Cause and Type of Violation as between-subjects factors and Audience Knowledge as a within-subjects factor, was performed on the measures of blame to self and blame to others. These analyses produced a significant main effect of Event Cause for blame to the self,  $F(2, 710) = 1057.32, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .75$ ), and blame to others,  $F(2, 710) = 1251.53, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .78$ ).

As illustrated in Figure 1, post hoc comparisons, using the Tukey HSD procedure, revealed that participants believed they would attribute significantly higher levels of blame to the self in response to self-caused norm violations ( $M = 3.6, SD = 0.74$ ) than other-caused ( $M = 1.2, SD = 0.54$ ) or accidental violations ( $M = 1.6, SD = 0.80$ ). In addition, participant reports of blame to the self were found to be significantly higher for accidental events ( $M = 1.6, SD = 0.80$ ) compared to other-caused events ( $M = 1.2, SD = 0.54$ ). However, Figure 1 clearly indicates that self-caused norm violations were considerably more effective in eliciting reports of self-blame.

Post hoc comparisons, using the Tukey HSD procedure, also revealed that participants perceived other-caused norm violations ( $M = 3.5, SD = 0.78$ ) as situations that would elicit significantly higher levels of blame to others than self-caused ( $M = 1.2, SD = 0.51$ ) or accidental violations ( $M = 1.3, SD = 0.68$ ). While the comparison between self-caused and accidental events was also found to be significant, the small mean

difference for this comparison was not considered to be psychologically meaningful (mean difference = 0.1).

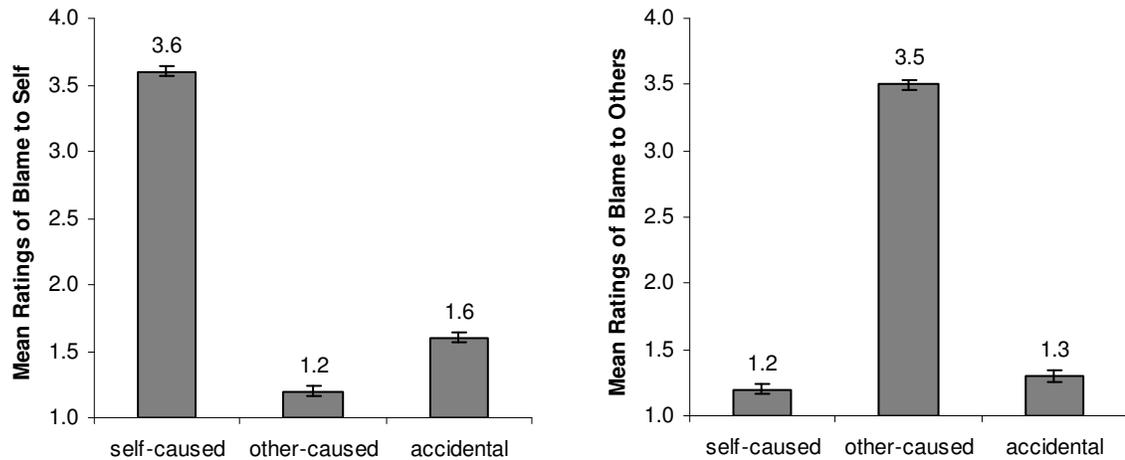


Figure 1. Mean ratings of blame to self and blame to others (+/- SE) for self-caused, other-caused, and accidental events.

### Summary

To summarize, the hypothesized effects for blame to the self and others were observed (Hypothesis 1a). Participants indicated they would attribute substantially more blame to the self when the norm violation was self-caused than when the event was other-caused or accidental. Furthermore, participant ratings revealed that the other-caused norm violations would elicit significantly higher levels of blame to others than self-caused or accidental events.

### *Perceived Devaluation of the Self by Others*

It was predicted that audience knowledge of the event cause would be significantly related to participant reports of perceived devaluation of the self from the

observing audience. This prediction was based on the idea that audience knowledge of the cause would influence participant beliefs regarding who/what the audience assumed was responsible for the event. Moreover, since moral norm violations tend to involve more severe transgressions that violate more fundamental standards of conduct, it was expected that participants would report that the likelihood of perceived devaluation would be higher for the moral norm violation than the social norm violation.

Since perceived devaluation is a social cognition that involves perceptions of negative attitudes and/or negative desires of others toward the self, items assessing perceived devaluation focused on participants' perceptions of (1) negative evaluations of the self from others and (2) lack of acceptance of the self from others. It was expected that these two measures would be highly correlated, and they were ( $r = .73, p < .01$ ). However, because perceived devaluation does not necessarily require *both* of these cognitions, separate analyses were conducted for each of these measures.

An Event Cause (3)  $\times$  Audience Knowledge (2)  $\times$  Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA, with Event Cause and Type of Violation as between-subjects factors and Audience Knowledge as a within-subjects factor, was performed on the measures of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance. These analyses produced a significant main effect of Audience Knowledge for both the measure of perceived negative evaluation,  $F(1, 710) = 321.01, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .31$ ), and the measure of perceived lack of acceptance,  $F(1, 710) = 189.37, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .21$ ). On average, participants reported that perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance would be significantly more likely to occur when the audience did *not* know the event cause

(negative evaluation,  $M = 3.0$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ; lack of acceptance,  $M = 2.5$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) than when the audience *knew* the event cause (negative evaluation,  $M = 2.5$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ; lack of acceptance,  $M = 2.1$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ).

In addition, the main effect of Event Cause was found to be significant for the measures of perceived negative evaluation,  $F(2, 710) = 103.40$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .23$ ), and perceived lack of acceptance,  $F(2, 710) = 84.47$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .19$ ). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure indicated that, on average, the reported likelihood of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance was significantly higher for self-caused events (negative evaluation,  $M = 3.3$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ; lack of acceptance,  $M = 2.8$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) than other-caused (negative evaluation,  $M = 2.5$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ; lack of acceptance,  $M = 2.2$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) or accidental events (negative evaluation,  $M = 2.5$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ; lack of acceptance,  $M = 2.0$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ).

However, the main effects for Audience Knowledge and Event Cause were also qualified by a significant Event Cause  $\times$  Audience Knowledge interaction for the measures of perceived negative evaluation,  $F(2, 710) = 109.42$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .24$ ), and perceived lack of acceptance,  $F(2, 710) = 135.17$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .28$ ). As illustrated in Figure 2, the effect of Audience Knowledge was most meaningful when the norm violation was other-caused or accidental. Simple effects ANOVAs revealed that the large effect of Audience Knowledge within the other-caused and accidental conditions was significant: negative evaluation, other-caused,  $F(1, 232) = 196.39$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .46$ ), negative evaluation, accidental,  $F(1, 239) = 236.88$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .50$ ), lack of

acceptance, other-caused,  $F(1, 232) = 173.26, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .43)$ , lack of acceptance, accidental,  $F(1, 239) = 198.02, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .45)$ .

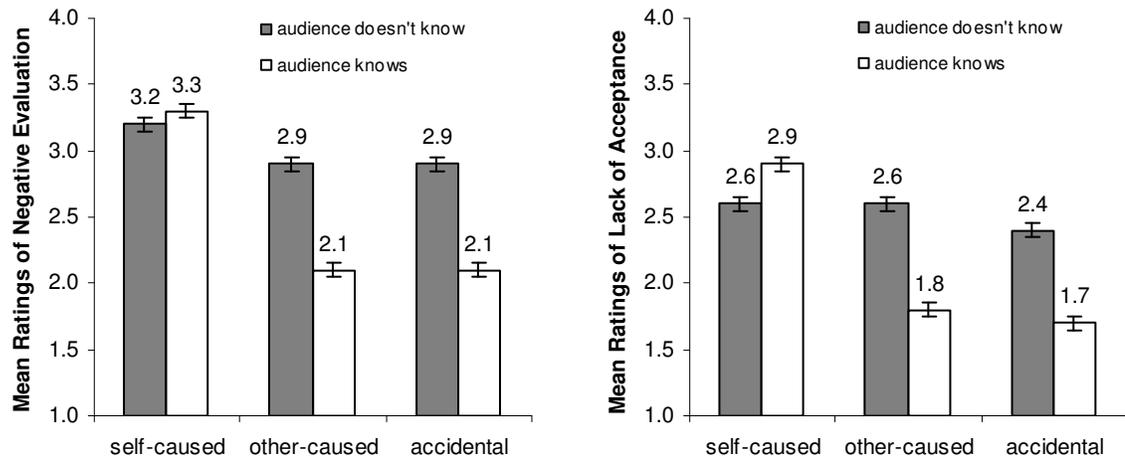


Figure 2. Mean ratings of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance (+/- SE) for the audience doesn't know and audience knows conditions for self-caused, other-caused, and accidental events.

Although the effect of Audience Knowledge for self-caused events was also found to be significant for negative evaluation,  $F(1, 239) = 5.55, p = .02 (\eta_p^2 = .02)$ , and lack of acceptance,  $F(1, 239) = 43.00, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .15)$ , the effect size and/or mean difference for these effects did not reach an acceptable level. Thus, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that, for self-caused events, audience knowledge was significantly related to perceived devaluation.

Simple effects ANOVAs were also conducted to examine differences in the effect of Event Cause between audience knows and audience doesn't know conditions. These analyses confirmed the large effect of Event Cause observed in Figure 2 within the

audience knows condition: negative evaluation,  $F(2, 710) = 186.16, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .34)$ , lack of acceptance,  $F(2, 710) = 205.66, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .37)$ . However, within the audience doesn't know condition effect sizes did not reach an acceptable level: negative evaluation,  $F(2, 710) = 15.73, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .04)$ , lack of acceptance,  $F(2, 710) = 6.90, p = .001 (\eta_p^2 = .02)$ . Thus, there was insufficient evidence to suggest a meaningful relationship between event cause and participant perceptions of negative evaluations and lack of acceptance when the audience did not know the event cause.

In addition to significant effects for Audience Knowledge and Event Cause, the Event Cause (3)  $\times$  Audience Knowledge (2)  $\times$  Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA described above also revealed that the main effect of Type of Violation was significant for the measure of perceived negative evaluation,  $F(1, 710) = 115.72, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .14)$ , and perceived lack of acceptance,  $F(1, 710) = 199.29, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .22)$ . As predicted, participants reported that perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance from others would be significantly more likely to occur in response to the moral norm violation (negative evaluation,  $M = 3.0, SD = 0.93$ ; lack of acceptance,  $M = 2.7, SD = 0.99$ ) than the social norm violation (negative evaluation,  $M = 2.5, SD = 0.88$ ; lack of acceptance,  $M = 2.0, SD = 0.88$ ). This effect is illustrated in Figure 3.

#### *Additional Effects for Perceived Lack of Acceptance*

The effects described above were found for *both* the measure of perceived negative evaluation and perceived lack of acceptance. However, one additional effect was found for the measure of perceived lack of acceptance alone. The Event Cause (3)  $\times$

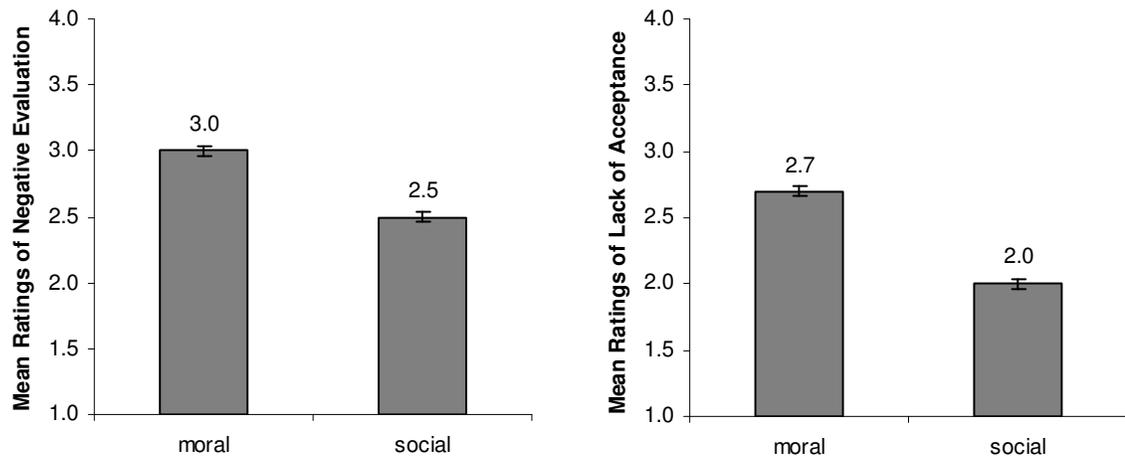


Figure 3. Mean ratings of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance (+/- SE) for moral and social norm violations.

Audience Knowledge (2) × Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA performed on the measure of lack of acceptance produced a significant Event Cause × Type of Violation interaction,  $F(2, 710) = 29.60, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .08$ ). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 4.

To explore this interaction, simple effects ANOVAs were conducted to examine the effect of Event Cause within the social and moral condition. This analysis revealed that the large effect of Event Cause observed in Figure 4 within the moral violation condition was significant,  $F(2, 356) = 120.84, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .40$ ). Post hoc comparisons, using the Tukey HSD procedure, indicated that perceived lack of acceptance was reported to be significantly more likely to occur when the event was self-caused ( $M = 3.4, SD = 0.72$ ) than when the event was other-caused ( $M = 2.3, SD = 0.93$ ) or accidental ( $M = 2.3, SD = 0.89$ ). While the effect of event cause within the social

violation condition was found to be significant,  $F(2, 354) = 9.93, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ), the effect size did not reach an acceptable level.

Simple effects ANOVAs were also conducted to examine the effect of Type of Violation within the self-caused, other-caused, and accidental condition. These analyses confirmed the large violation effect observed in Figure 4 for self-caused norm violations,  $F(1, 239) = 183.79, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .44$ ). For self-caused events, the reported likelihood of perceived lack of acceptance was found to be significantly higher for the moral violation ( $M = 3.4, SD = 0.72$ ) than the social violation ( $M = 2.2, SD = 0.89$ ). Although the effect of Type of Violation was found to be significant within the other-caused,  $F(1, 232) = 13.56, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .06$ ) and accidental conditions,  $F(2, 239) = 47.45, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .17$ ), Figure 4 indicates that the effect of Type of Violation was most meaningful when the norm violation was self-caused.

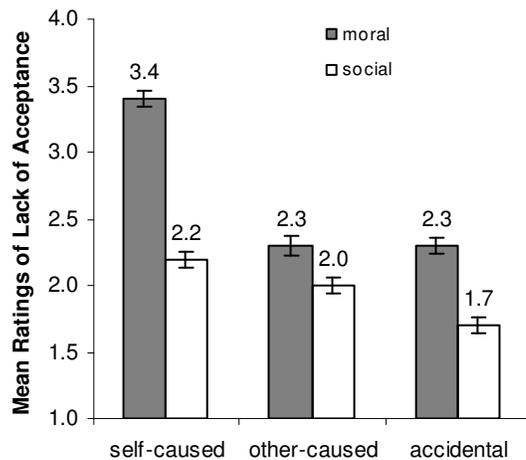


Figure 4. Mean ratings of perceived lack of acceptance (+/- SE) for moral and social violations for self-caused, other-caused, and accidental events.

### *Summary*

To summarize, the hypothesized effects for perceived devaluation were observed. As predicted (Hypothesis 2), the audience's knowledge of the event cause was found to be significantly related to participant reports of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance from the audience. When the event was caused by another or accidental, participants reported that they would be more likely to perceive negative evaluation and lack acceptance from the observing audience when the audience did *not* know the event cause than when the audience *knew* the event cause.

Analyses also revealed a significant relationship between the cause of the event and reports of perceived negative evaluations and lack of acceptance from others. Specifically, when the audience *knew* the cause of the event, participants indicated that self-caused norm violations would be considerably more likely than other-caused or accidental norm violations to elicit perceptions of negative evaluations and lack of acceptance from others.

Furthermore, type of norm violation was found to be significantly related to the reported likelihood of perceived negative evaluations and lack of acceptance. As expected (Hypothesis 3), participants reported that perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance would be significantly more likely for events that involved the moral norm violation than events that involved the social norm violation.

An additional Event Cause  $\times$  Type of Violation interaction was found for the measure of perceived lack of acceptance. This interaction revealed that that event cause had the largest impact on participant reports of lack of acceptance when the event

involved a moral violation. For the moral violation scenario, participants reported that the likelihood of perceived lack of acceptance would be substantially higher when the event was self-caused than when the event was other-caused or accidental. Moreover, this interaction revealed that social/moral differences for the measure of lack of acceptance were most pronounced for self-caused events. When the norm violation was caused by the actions of the self, participants reported that perceived lack of acceptance would be considerably more likely to occur in response to moral violations than social violations.

#### *Humiliation, Embarrassment, and Shame*

A major goal of this study was to examine links between the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, and cognitions related to blame and perceived devaluation of the self from others. Since humiliation was hypothesized to be associated with other-blame, this emotion was expected to be more likely to be experienced in response to other-caused norm violations than self-caused or accidental violations. In contrast, shame, being a high self-blame emotion, was anticipated to have a higher likelihood for self-caused norm violations. Last, embarrassment was predicted to be associated with a low level of self-blame. Thus, this emotion was expected to be more likely for other-caused and accidental norm violations than self-caused violations.

Moreover, given that all three emotions were anticipated to be related to perceived devaluation, it was predicted that the reported likelihood of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, would be higher (a) when the audience did *not* know the event cause than when the audience knew the event cause, and (b) for moral violations

than social violations. For self-caused events, the effect of audience knowledge was expected to be reversed. The experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame for self-caused events was anticipated to be more likely when the audience *knew* the event cause than when the audience did not know the event cause.

Figures 5 and 6 present the observed effects for the measures of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame. To explore the effects presented in these figures, an Emotion (3) × Event Cause (3) × Audience Knowledge (2) × Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA, with Emotion and Audience Knowledge as the within-subjects factors and Event Cause and Type of Violation as the between-subjects factors, was performed. This analysis produced a number of significant main effects and interactions. Thus, for clarity, each main effect and its relevant interactions are discussed separately in the following subsections.

#### *The Effect of Emotion*

Most apparent within Figures 5 and 6 is that differences emerged in reported likelihood between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame across causal manipulations as well as the social and moral norm violations. This observation was confirmed by a significant main effect of Emotion,  $F(2, 1420) = 747.97, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .51$ ). Post hoc comparisons, using the Bonferroni procedure, indicated that, on average, participants believed the events described in the vignettes would be significantly more likely to elicit embarrassment ( $M = 3.1, SD = 0.92$ ) than humiliation ( $M = 2.5, SD = 1.10$ ), which was rated higher in likelihood than shame ( $M = 2.1, SD = 1.15$ ).

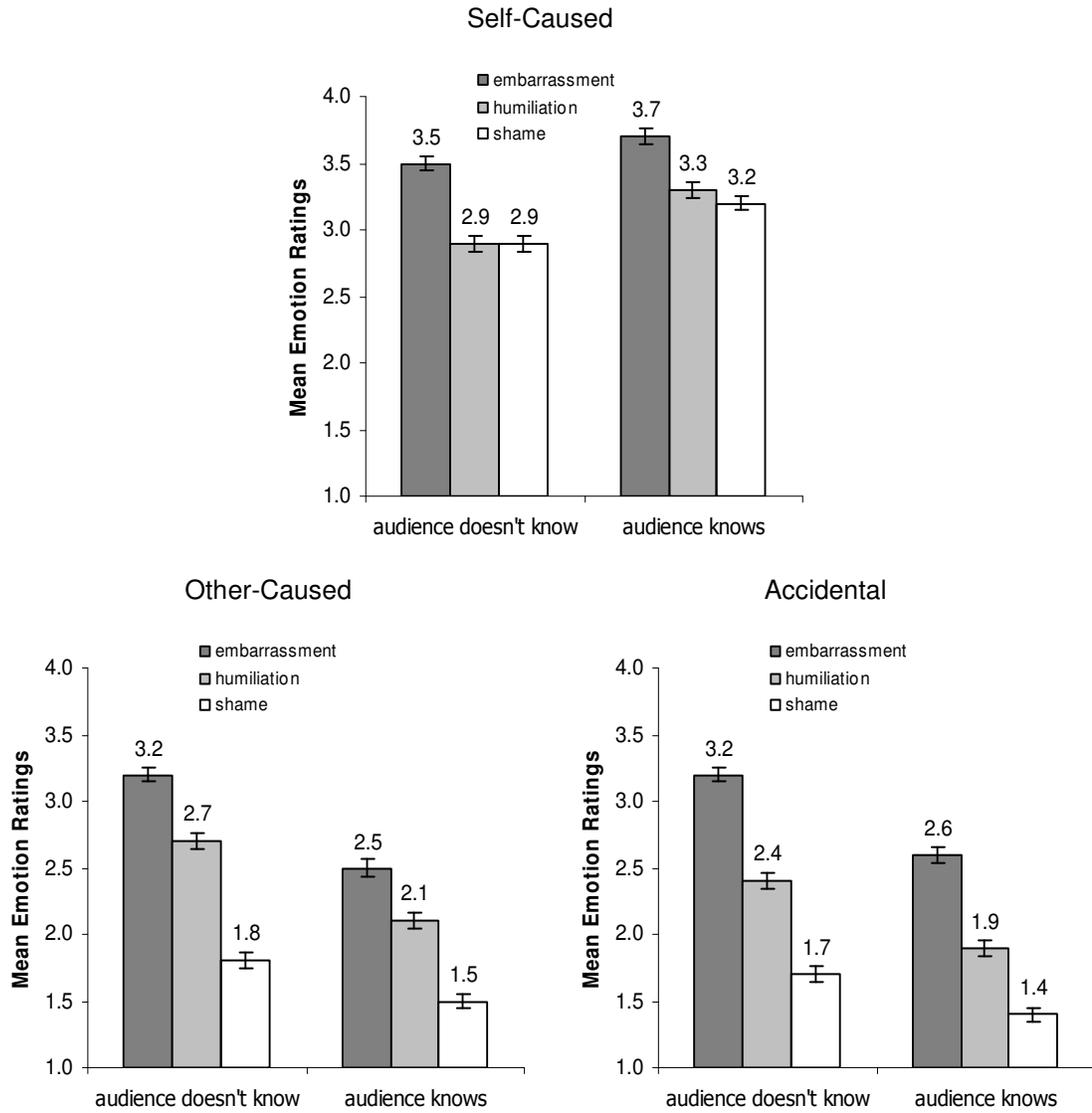


Figure 5. Mean ratings of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame (+/- SE) for the audience doesn't know and audience knows conditions for self-caused, other-caused, and accidental events.

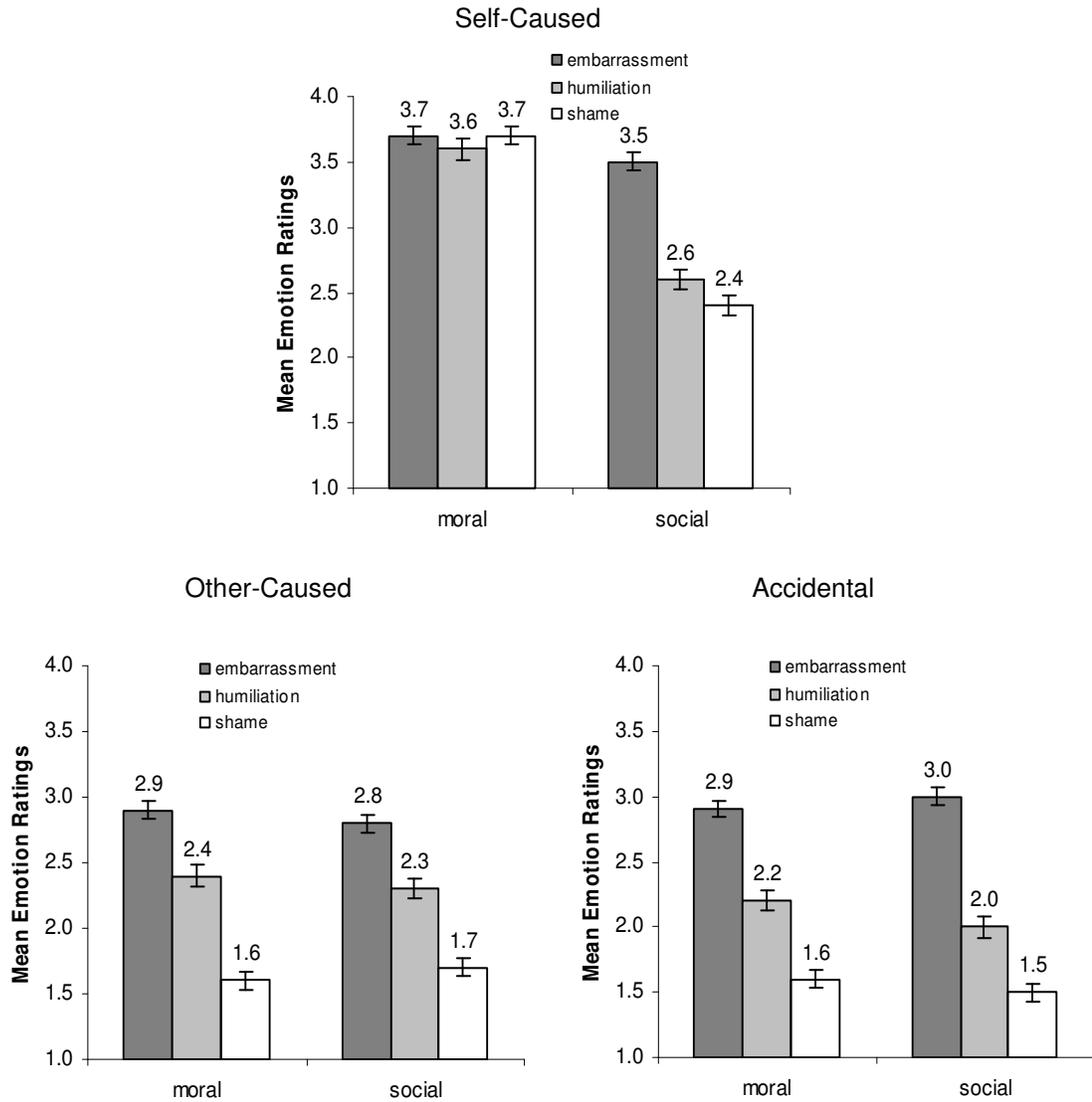


Figure 6. Mean ratings of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame (+/- SE) for the moral and social violation conditions for self-caused, other-caused, and accidental events.

However, as Figures 5 and 6 suggest, reports of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame were most similar within the self-caused condition. This was confirmed by a significant Emotion  $\times$  Event Cause interaction,  $F(4, 1420) = 46.10, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .12)$ . Simple effects ANOVAs exploring the effect of Emotion within the self-caused condition revealed that the effect of Emotion was significant for self-caused events,  $F(2, 478) = 132.36, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .36)$ . However, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni procedure indicated that, while embarrassment ( $M = 3.6, SD = 0.61$ ) was rated higher in likelihood than humiliation ( $M = 3.1, SD = 0.99$ ) and shame ( $M = 3.0, SD = 1.06$ ), the comparison between humiliation and shame was non-significant ( $p = .07$ ).

In addition, Figure 6 indicates that the greatest similarity among the three emotions was observed for self-caused events that involved a *moral* violation. Indeed, the Emotion  $\times$  Event Cause  $\times$  Type of Violation interaction was found to be significant,  $F(4, 1420) = 25.80, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .07)$ . Moreover, a simple interaction ANOVA conducted within the self-caused condition indicated that the Emotion  $\times$  Type of Violation interaction was significant within the self-caused condition,  $F(2, 478) = 106.7, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .31)$ .

To explore the Emotion  $\times$  Type of Violation interaction within the self-caused condition, additional simple effects analyses examined the effect of Emotion for the social and moral violation. For the self-caused social violation, the effect of Emotion was significant,  $F(2, 238) = 146.80, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .55)$ . However, mean differences between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame for the self-caused moral violation did not reach an acceptable level (*mean differences* = .01),  $F(2, 240) = 7.25, p = .001 (\eta_p^2 = .06)$ .

In addition to the effects described above, the main effect of Emotion was also found to be qualified by a significant Emotion  $\times$  Audience Knowledge interaction,  $F(2, 1420) = 47.58, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .06)$ . However, simple effects ANOVAs, looking at the effect of Emotion within the audience doesn't know and the audience knows conditions, produced a similar pattern of results. This interaction appears to have resulted from differences in the reported likelihood between embarrassment, humiliation, and shame being more pronounced when the audience did *not* know the event cause than when the audience *knew* the event cause.

#### *The Effect of Event Cause*

*Similarities between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame.* The Emotion (3)  $\times$  Event Cause (3)  $\times$  Audience Knowledge (2)  $\times$  Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA described above, also produced a significant main effect for Event Cause,  $F(2, 710) = 186.39, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .34)$ . As illustrated in Figures 5 and 6, post hoc comparisons, using the Bonferroni procedure, revealed that participants believed that embarrassment, humiliation, and shame would be significantly more likely to be experienced in response to self-caused norm violations ( $M = 3.2, SD = 0.94$ ) than other-caused ( $M = 2.3, SD = 1.09$ ) or accidental norm violations ( $M = 2.2, SD = 1.07$ ).

This main effect of Event Cause was also found to be qualified by a significant Event Cause  $\times$  Audience Knowledge interaction,  $F(2, 710) = 123.70, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .26)$ . Simple effects ANOVAs conducted to explore the effect of Event Cause within the audience knows condition confirmed the large effect of Event Cause observed in Figure 5 when the audience *knew* the cause,  $F(2, 710) = 295.25, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .45)$ . Post hoc

comparisons, using the Bonferroni procedure indicated that, when the audience knew the event cause, the reported likelihood of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame was significantly higher for self-caused norm violations ( $M = 3.4, SD = 0.90$ ), than other-caused ( $M = 2.1, SD = 1.05$ ) or accidental norm violations ( $M = 2.0, SD = 1.00$ ). Although the effect of Event Cause was also found to be significant when the audience did *not* know the event cause,  $F(2, 710) = 59.17, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .14$ ), Figure 5 clearly indicates that the effect of Event Cause was most meaningful when the audience knew the cause.

In addition to a significant Event Cause  $\times$  Audience Knowledge interaction, the main effect of Event Cause was also qualified by a significant Event Cause  $\times$  Type of Violation interaction,  $F(2, 710) = 27.53, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .07$ ). Simple effects ANOVAs exploring the effect of Event Cause within the moral condition confirmed that the large effect of Event Cause observed in Figure 6 for the moral violation was significant,  $F(2, 356) = 207.91, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .54$ ). Post hoc comparisons, using the Bonferroni procedure, indicated that, when the event involved a moral violation, participants reported that all three emotions would be significantly more likely to be experienced in response to self-caused norm violations, ( $M = 3.7, SD = 0.63$ ), than other-caused ( $M = 2.3, SD = 1.08$ ), or accidental norm violations ( $M = 2.2, SD = 1.09$ ). While the effect of Event Cause was also found to be significant for the social violation,  $F(2, 354) = 31.16, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .15$ ), Figure 6 indicates that differences between self-caused, other-caused, and accidental events were most meaningful when the event involved a moral violation.

*Differences between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame.* In addition to the effects described above, a significant Emotion  $\times$  Event Cause interaction,  $F(4, 1420) = 46.10, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .12)$ , revealed that the effect Event Cause *differed* between the three emotions. Simple effects ANOVAs, looking at the effect of Event Cause for embarrassment, humiliation, and shame, indicated that the effect of Event Cause was significant for all three emotions: embarrassment,  $F(2, 710) = 85.55, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .19)$ , humiliation,  $F(2, 710) = 85.22, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .19)$ , shame,  $F(2, 710) = 285.17, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .45)$ . However, as demonstrated in Figures 5 and 6, the effect of Event Cause was considerably more pronounced for the measure of shame than embarrassment or humiliation.

Moreover, within the audience doesn't know condition, simple effects ANOVAs looking at the effect of Event Cause revealed that the effect of Event Cause remained meaningful *only* for the measure of shame,  $F(2, 710) = 126.05, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .26)$ . For humiliation and embarrassment, the effect sizes did not reach an acceptable level: humiliation,  $F(2, 710) = 19.58, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .05)$ , embarrassment,  $F(2, 710) = 17.97, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .05)$ . Thus, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that Event Cause had a meaningful effect on reports of humiliation and embarrassment when the audience did *not* know the cause.

Last, a significant Emotion  $\times$  Event Cause  $\times$  Type of Violation interaction,  $F(4, 1420) = 25.80, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .07)$ , revealed that differences in the effect of Event Cause between the social and moral norm violations varied by emotion. To explore this interaction, simple interactions ANOVAs were conducted that examined the Event Cause

× Type of Violation interaction for the measures of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame.

These analyses indicated that the Event Cause × Type of Violation interaction was significant for the measure of humiliation,  $F(2, 710) = 18.09, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .05)$ , and shame,  $F(2, 710) = 62.06, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .15)$ . However, for the measure of embarrassment, the Event Cause × Type of Violation interaction was non-significant,  $F(2, 710) = 2.15, p = .12 (\eta_p^2 = .006)$ . Thus, unlike humiliation and shame, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that the effect of Event Cause differed between the social and moral conditions for the measure of embarrassment.

#### *The Effect of Audience Knowledge*

*Similarities between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame.* The Emotion (3) × Event Cause (3) × Audience Knowledge (2) × Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA revealed that the main effect of Audience Knowledge was significant,  $F(1, 710) = 102.30, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .13)$ . On average, participants reported that embarrassment, humiliation, and shame would be more likely to be experienced in response to events in which the audience did not know *not* the event cause ( $M = 2.7, SD = 1.09$ ) than the events in which the audience *knew* the event cause ( $M = 2.5, SD = 1.18$ ).

However, this effect was qualified by a significant Event Cause × Audience Knowledge interaction,  $F(2, 710) = 123.70, p < .001 (\eta_p^2 = .26)$ . Simple effects ANOVAs were conducted that looked at the effect of Audience Knowledge within the self-caused, other-caused, and accidental conditions. These analyses revealed that the large effect of Audience Knowledge within the other-caused and accidental conditions

observed in Figure 5 was significant: other-caused,  $F(1, 232) = 127.44, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .34$ ), accidental,  $F(1, 239) = 141.18, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .37$ ). As predicted, the reported likelihood of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame was significantly higher when the audience did *not* know the event cause (other-caused,  $M = 2.6, SD = 1.08$ ; accidental,  $M = 2.4, SD = 1.10$ ) than when the audience *knew* the event cause (other-caused,  $M = 2.1, SD = 1.05$ ; accidental,  $M = 2.0, SD = 1.00$ ).

For self-caused norm violations, the effect of Audience Knowledge was also found to be significant,  $F(1, 239) = 63.13, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .21$ ). However, the mean difference for this effect did not reach an acceptable level (*mean difference* = 0.3). Thus, evidence in support of the hypothesized audience effects for the measures of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame within the self-caused condition was not found.

*Differences between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame.* While these results above suggest that the effect of Audience Knowledge was similar for the measures of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame, a significant Emotion  $\times$  Audience Knowledge interaction,  $F(2, 1420) = 47.58, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .06$ ), revealed that the effect of Audience Knowledge *differed* between the three emotions. Simple effects ANOVAs looking at the effect of Audience Knowledge for embarrassment, humiliation, and shame, indicated that the effect of Audience Knowledge was significant for all three emotions: embarrassment,  $F(1, 710) = 182.32, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .20$ ), humiliation,  $F(1, 710) = 67.34, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .09$ ), shame,  $F(1, 710) = 6.55, p = .01$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .009$ ). However, the effect size for the measure of shame did not reach an acceptable level. Thus, there was insufficient

evidence to suggest a meaningful relationship between Audience Knowledge and participant reports of shame.

### *The Effect of Type of Violation*

*Similarities between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame.* The Emotion (3) × Event Cause (3) × Audience Knowledge (2) × Type of Violation (2) mixed design ANOVA also revealed that the effect of Type of Violation was significant,  $F(1, 710) = 38.29, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ). On average, participants reported that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame would be significantly more likely to be experienced in response to the moral violation ( $M = 2.7, SD = 0.94$ ) than the social violation ( $M = 2.3, SD = 1.10$ ).

However, a significant Event Cause × Type of Violation interaction,  $F(2, 710) = 27.53, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .07$ ), revealed that the effect of Type of Violation varied significantly depending on who or what caused the event. Simple effects ANOVAs were conducted to look at the effect of Type of Violation within the self-caused, other-caused, and accidental events. These analyses confirmed the large effect of Type of Violation observed in Figure 6 for self-caused events,  $F(1, 239) = 116.65, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .33$ ). On average, for self-caused norm violations, the reported likelihood of these emotions was higher for the moral norm violation ( $M = 3.7, SD = 0.63$ ) than the social norm violation ( $M = 2.8, SD = 1.02$ ). No significant effects of Type of Violation were found within the other-caused,  $F(1, 232) = 0.13, p = .72$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .001$ ), or accidental conditions,  $F(1, 239) = 0.51, p = .48$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .002$ ).

*Differences between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame.* Although the results above suggest that the effect of Type of Violation was similar between these emotions, an additional Emotion  $\times$  Event Cause  $\times$  Type of Violation interaction,  $F(4, 1420) = 25.80, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .07$ ), revealed that the effect of Type of Violation *differed* between the three emotions. Simple effects ANOVAs looking at the effect of Type of Violation within the self-caused condition produced a significant effect for humiliation,  $F(1, 239) = 87.41, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .27$ ), and shame,  $F(1, 239) = 199.74, p < .001$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .46$ ). However, the effect of Type of Violation for the measure of embarrassment did not reach an acceptable effect size,  $F(1, 239) = 8.04, p = .005$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ). Thus, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that Type of Violation had a meaningful effect on reports of embarrassment.

### *Summary*

On average, participants believed the events described in the vignettes would be significantly more likely to elicit embarrassment than humiliation, which was rated higher in likelihood than shame. The exception, however, appears to be self-caused events in which a greater degree of similarity was observed in reports of these emotions, particularly for moral violations.

Participant reports of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame were also found to be significantly related to the event cause. Overall, participants reported that self-caused events would be more likely to elicit all three emotions than other-caused or accidental events. Moreover, differences between self-caused and other-caused/accidental events

were largest when the audience *knew* the event cause and when the event involved a *moral* violation.

In addition, the effect of event cause varied between the three emotions. First, on average, differences between self-caused and other-caused/accidental events were considerably larger for shame than for humiliation or embarrassment. Second, when the audience did *not* know the event cause, differences between the self-caused and other-caused/accidental events were meaningful for shame, but not for humiliation or embarrassment. Last, unlike humiliation and shame, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that the effect of event cause differed significantly between the social and moral conditions for embarrassment.

As for audience knowledge of the event cause, differences between the audience doesn't know and the audience knows conditions were observed within the other-caused and the accidental condition for the measures of embarrassment and humiliation. As predicted (Hypothesis 2), when the event was other-caused or accidental, participants reported that embarrassment and humiliation would be more likely to be experienced when the audience did *not* know the event cause than when the audience *knew* the event cause.

Last, a significant relationship between reports of these emotions and type of norm violation occurred for the measures of humiliation and shame within the self-caused condition. As predicted (Hypothesis 3), the reported likelihood of humiliation and shame was higher for self-caused events involving the moral norm violation than the self-caused events involving the social norm violation.

## Discussion

The primary goal of the current investigation was to extend our knowledge of the cognitions associated with the experience of humiliation. Moreover, this study sought to place humiliation in the context of other closely related emotions by investigating how the cognitions related to humiliation may be both distinct and similar to those associated with embarrassment and shame. Since empirical evidence suggests that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are most often experienced in response to norm violations (Harter et al., 2003a; Keltner & Buswell, 1996; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994; Sharkey & Stafford, 1990; Tangney, 1992), emotion-cognition relationships for these emotions are likely to be more meaningful in the context of norm violations. Thus, reports of these emotions were examined in response to hypothetical events that described the participant engaging in a social or moral norm violation. Blame for the emotion eliciting event was manipulated by varying who/what caused the norm violation. In addition, perceived devaluation was manipulated by varying what the observing audience knew about who/what caused the norm violation. Table 3 presents a summary of the major similarities and differences observed for humiliation, embarrassment, and shame.

### *Humiliation is Similar to Embarrassment and Shame*

#### *Blame Attributed to the Self and Others*

Contrary to the hypothesized emotion-blame relationships for humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, the results of this study suggest that all three of these

Table 3

*Summary of Major Similarities and Differences Observed for Humiliation, Embarrassment, and Shame*

Event-Related Factor	Similarities	Differences
Event Cause	<p>Emotions were most similar in likelihood when the norm violation was <i>self-caused</i>.</p> <p>Each emotion was more likely for <i>self-caused</i> norm violations than both other-caused and accidental norm violations.</p> <p>For each emotion, differences in likelihood between self-caused and both other-caused and accidental norm violations were <i>largest</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. when the <i>audience knew</i> the cause than when the audience did not know the cause</li> <li>2. for the <i>moral</i> violation than the social violation.</li> </ol>	<p>When the norm violation was either other-caused or accidental, embarrassment was more likely than humiliation, which was more likely than shame.</p> <p>Differences in likelihood of emotional response between self-caused and both other-caused and accidental norm violations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. larger for <i>shame</i> than for humiliation or embarrassment</li> <li>2. found across all conditions for shame, but were not found for <i>humiliation</i> and <i>embarrassment</i> when the audience did not know the cause.</li> </ol>
Audience Knowledge of the Event Cause	<p>When the event was other-caused or accidental, humiliation and embarrassment were more likely when the <i>audience did not know</i> the cause than when the audience knew the cause.</p>	<p>Differences in likelihood of emotional response between the audience knows and the audience doesn't know conditions were found for humiliation and embarrassment, but not for <i>shame</i>.</p>
Type of Norm Violation	<p>When the event was self-caused, humiliation and shame were more likely for the <i>moral</i> norm violation than the social norm violation.</p>	<p>Differences in likelihood of emotional response between the moral and social violation conditions were found for humiliation and shame, but not for <i>embarrassment</i>.</p>

emotions may be associated with blame attributed to the self for engaging in a norm violation. This was evidenced in the fact that participant ratings for all three emotions were at or above the midpoint on the scale for self-caused events, indicating that self-caused norm violations may be quite effective in eliciting humiliation, embarrassment, and shame. Moreover, participant ratings for all three emotions were significantly higher for self-caused norm violations than other-caused or accidental violations. Given that self-caused violations were *also* found to elicit significantly higher levels of blame attributed to the self than other-caused or accidental events, this evidence points to the fact that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame may be more likely to be experienced when blame is attributed to the self for violating a social norm.

Importantly, however, differences in reports of these emotions between self-caused and other-caused/accidental events were most evident when the observing audience *knew* the cause of the norm violation or when the event involved a *moral* norm violation. This suggests that emotion-blame relationships may be influenced by what the audience knows about who/what caused the norm violation and by the particular rule or standard that is breached. As a possible interpretation for this enhanced relationship, perceptions of devaluation were also found to vary with event cause when the audience knew the cause and when the event involved a moral norm violation. Specifically, participants reported that perceived negative evaluations and lack of acceptance from the observing audience would be more likely to occur for self-caused violations than other-caused or accidental violations. Thus, it is possible that relationships between these

emotions and self-blame may be significantly enhanced when differences in blame are also accompanied by differences in perceived devaluation.

### *Perceived Devaluation of the Self from Others*

As well as exploring potential relationships with blame, this study also sought to find additional support for the argument that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are related to perceived devaluation of the self from others. This was accomplished by observing reports of these emotions in response to norm violations in which the audience's knowledge of the event cause varied. While there are likely several event-related factors that may influence perceived devaluation, it was hypothesized that audience knowledge of the event cause may be one of the primary event details that affect perceptions of negative evaluation and lack of acceptance from others. This prediction was based on the idea that the audience's knowledge of the event cause may affect who or what the victim of the norm violation believes the audience blames for the violation. The more the victim believes the audience attributes responsibility to the self for the violation, the more he/she is likely to believe the audience has formed a negative opinion of the self.

As predicted, when the event was caused by another or accidental, participants reported that humiliation and embarrassment would be considerably more likely to occur when the audience did *not* know the cause of the norm violation than when the audience *knew* the cause. Also as expected, participants reported that the likelihood of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance would be higher when the audience did *not* know the event cause than when the audience *knew* the cause. Together, this evidence

suggests that humiliation and embarrassment are more likely to be experienced in response to events that have a high probability of perceived devaluation.

Although evidence in support of the hypothesized audience effects for humiliation, embarrassment, and shame was not found for self-caused norm violations, this should not be taken to mean that emotion-devaluation relationships are less likely to occur for self-caused events. Since audience knowledge was not found to have a meaningful effect on perceived devaluation when the event was self-caused, this may offer a potential explanation as to why a relationship between audience knowledge and the experience of these emotions was not observed for self-caused norm violations.

#### *Social and Moral Norm Violations*

As an additional point of interest, this study explored the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame in response to social and moral norm violations. It was hypothesized that all three emotions would be more likely to be elicited when one engages in a moral violation than a social violation. As a potential explanation for this relationship, it was expected that participants would report that moral violations would be more likely to elicit perceived devaluation than social violations. However, given that differences in publicity between social and moral norm violations may account for the tendency for humiliation and embarrassment to be experienced in response to social violations, reports of these emotions were examined in response to social and moral norm violations that *both* occurred in the presence of an audience.

As predicted, when both social and moral violations were witnessed by a large group of observing others, humiliation and shame were reported to be more likely to be

experienced in response to events involving a moral norm violation than events involving a social norm violation. Moreover, the reported likelihood of perceived negative evaluation and lack of acceptance from others was higher for the moral violation vignettes than the social violation vignettes. Such evidence provides additional support for the argument that humiliation and shame are more likely to be elicited in response to events with a high probability of perceived devaluation.

However, the relationship between emotional experience and moral violations was found only when the norm violation was self-caused. To account for this, it is possible that the link between perceived devaluation and emotional experience is considerably enhanced when the self is responsible for engaging in a norm violation. Indeed, when the victim does *not* blame the self for the norm violation, he/she may consider the devaluation from others to be temporary or easily remedied with a simple explanation or account of the event. As a result, the negative thoughts and opinions of others may be more easily discounted when the self is not responsible than when the self is responsible. Therefore, humiliation and shame may be less likely to be affected by the type of norm violated when the event is other-caused or accidental, given that one's concern for the thoughts and opinions of others may be minimized.

*Humiliation is Distinct from Embarrassment and Shame*

*Emotion-Blame Relationships are Most Meaningful for Shame*

Although there was evidence to suggest that all three emotions may be associated with self-blame, the link between emotional experience and blame attributed to the self may be most meaningful for shame. This was evident in the fact that differences between

self-caused and other-caused/accidental events were substantially larger for shame than for humiliation and embarrassment. Moreover, the reported likelihood of shame was found to be consistently higher in response to self-caused events than other-caused or accidental events. In contrast, meaningful differences in reports of humiliation and embarrassment between self-caused and other-caused/accidental norm violations were not observed when the audience *knew* the cause of the norm violation.

Most importantly, however, the results of this study suggest that the experience of shame may be limited to high self-blame events. While all three emotions were found to have a moderate to high probability of being experienced in response to self-caused events (high self-blame events), when the norm violation was presented as other-caused or accidental (low self-blame events), participant ratings of shame were near the lowest point on the scale. Such low ratings suggest that, in the absence of self-blame, the probability of experiencing shame may be minimal.

In contrast, for other-caused and accidental norm violations, participant ratings of embarrassment and humiliation were more moderate. Thus, unlike shame, humiliation and embarrassment do not appear to be limited to high self-blame events. Moreover, the fact that embarrassment was consistently rated higher than humiliation and shame within the other-caused and accidental conditions indicates that embarrassment may be the least restricted emotional response of the three emotions.

#### *Emotion-Devaluation Relationships are Most Meaningful for Humiliation*

As an additional difference between these emotions, the relationship between perceived devaluation and emotional experience appears to be most meaningful for

humiliation. This was evident in the fact that, *only* humiliation was found to be related to both audience knowledge of the event cause and type of norm violation. For shame, there was insufficient evidence to suggest a meaningful relationship with audience knowledge of the event cause. Moreover, reports of embarrassment were not found to be significantly related to the type of norm violated.

However, this should not be taken as evidence that embarrassment and shame are not related to perceived devaluation. As mentioned previously, the experience of shame may be limited to high self-blame events. Thus, emotion-devaluation relationships for shame are likely to be observed when the norm violation is self-caused. Given that audience knowledge was not found to have a meaningful effect on perceived devaluation when the event was self-caused, this may account for why a relationship between audience knowledge and the experience of shame was not observed.

Moreover, a lack of relationship between embarrassment and type of violation may be interpreted by the fact that the link between embarrassment and perceived devaluation is relatively weak. It is possible that the high publicity of the social and moral norm violation events was sufficient to elicit embarrassment. Thus, for norm violations witnessed by a large audience, embarrassment may not *always* be associated with perceived devaluation.

#### *Understanding the Similarities between Humiliation, Embarrassment, and Shame*

Overall, the results of this study suggest that humiliation may be similar to embarrassment and shame in that all three of these emotions are related to (a) self-blame for engaging in a norm violation and (b) perceived devaluation of the self from others.

Such similarities in the cognitive correlates for these emotions are not surprising, given that these emotions are thought to be members of the same emotion family (Elison, 2005; Elison & Harter, 2007; Gruenewald et al., 2004; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 2003; Tangney et al., 1996). Thus, these emotions are expected to share similar characteristics, including cognitions.

As part of the general theme shared among humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, most researchers agree that these emotions are associated with perceived devaluation of the self from others (Elison, 2005; Elison & Harter, 2007; Gruenewald et al., 2004; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 2003; Tangney et al., 1996). Therefore, the results of this study were successful in offering additional support for this argument. However, when speaking about the similarities between these emotions, attributions of blame to the self are rarely mentioned as a common characteristic. A possible explanation for this overlooked similarity is that relationships with self-blame are often masked by other situational details.

Indeed, the fact that humiliation was found to be associated with self-blame appears to be inconsistent with both theoretical and empirical evidence suggesting that humiliation is experienced in response to norm violations that elicit laughter, teasing, harassment, and bullying from hostile-others. How does self-blame fit within this prototypical humiliating event? What is frequently neglected when examining humiliating events, is that norm violations that attract negative responses from other are often *self*-caused violations.

This was especially evident in the histories of the high profile school shooters who reported experiencing humiliation on a daily basis. Many of these individuals were described by their peers as lacking appropriate social skills, having a less than desirable physical appearance, deficient in their athletic ability, and lacking in appreciation for sports and other valued school activities. Because the shooters failed to meet peer standards in these self-related areas, these individuals were constantly teased, mocked, and harassed, primarily by the jocks who epitomized these standards (Harter *et al.*, 2003b). Thus, it is possible that part of the “formula” for humiliation is self-blame for a violation of a social norm.

What about embarrassment? Like humiliation, this emotion was also found to be associated with blame attributed to the self. This evidence appears to contradict previous studies that have found embarrassment to be experienced in response to accidents that violate social norms. However, it is possible that accidents may often elicit moderate to high levels of blame to the self, rather than low levels of self-blame. Thus, the accident scenario developed for this study may not have been representative of accidental norm violations that occur in everyday life.

Indeed, the initial pilot results for this study found that when participants were asked to imagine themselves *tripping* and spilling food in a fancy restaurant, most reported that they would blame the self for being careless and inattentive to their surroundings. Moreover, Cupach and Metts (1992) and Sharkey and Stafford (1990) found that individuals tend to attribute responsibility to the self for seemingly accidental events, such as awkward acts, botched role performance, forgetfulness, and other such

events. Thus, given that accidental norm violations may often involve moderate to high levels of self-blame, the results of this study appear to be consistent with previous investigations into the experience of embarrassment.

#### *Understanding the Differences between Humiliation, Embarrassment, and Shame*

In addition to similarities, this study also revealed several potential differences between the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame. Such differences are consistent with the concept of emotion families in which “each emotion family can be considered to constitute a theme and variations” (Ekman, 1992, p. 173). While the theme refers to a set of core characteristics shared by all members of an emotion family, variations can be thought of as the differences between the members that may be related to any aspect of the emotional experience (e.g., behavioral expressions, eliciting events, cognitive appraisals, physiological activities, subjective experiences, etc.). Thus, while these emotions are expected to be similar in some respects, they are also anticipated to have unique, defining elements that serve to distinguish one emotional state from the other.

#### *Shame and Self-Blame*

Of the three emotions examined in this study, shame may be the most restrictive. Unlike humiliation or embarrassment, the experience of shame was found to be limited to norm violations that elicited a high level of self-blame. Thus, a strong dependence on self-blame may be a key element that distinguishes shame from humiliation and embarrassment. Such findings are consistent with previous studies that have found shame to be closely linked to attributions of blame and personal responsibility for the

emotion eliciting event (Manstead & Tetlock, 1989; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994; Mosher & White, 1981; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Tangney et al., 1996).

Furthermore, this evidence provides support for several theoretical claims which state that cognitive appraisals of self-blame are critical to the shame experience (Gilbert & Miles, 2000; M. Lewis, 1992; Scherer, 1993; Tangney, 1995). Indeed, as noted by Gilbert and Miles (2000), “the shame literature has long stressed the role of self-blame and responsibility for failure” (p. 768).

#### *Humiliation and Perceived Devaluation*

While the relationship with self-blame may be most meaningful for shame, the results of this study offer a new perspective on theoretical arguments suggesting humiliation, embarrassment, and shame are related to perceived devaluation. For the most part, researchers and theorists have implied that this link is similar for all three emotions (Elison, 2005; Elison & Harter, 2007; Gruenewald et al., 2004; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 2003; Tangney et al., 1996). However, the findings from this study indicate that the relationship between emotional experience and perceived devaluation may actually *differ* between these emotions.

In general, this study revealed that humiliation may be more sensitive to variations in perceived devaluation than shame or embarrassment. Unlike shame, the relationship between humiliation and perceived devaluation was not limited to self-blame events. Thus, humiliation may be more likely to be experienced in response to events that elicit perceived devaluation than shame. This broader relationship with perceived

devaluation may be an additional factor that sets humiliation apart from shame, allowing humiliation to be experienced more often than shame.

In contrast, humiliation's sensitivity to devaluation may cause this emotion to be experienced *less* often than embarrassment. Indeed, embarrassment remained relatively high across all conditions and was less likely to be affected by perceptions of a devalued self than humiliation. This suggests that embarrassment may be more easily elicited than humiliation, as well as less dependent on perceived devaluation. Thus, humiliation may be distinct from embarrassment in that its relationship with devaluation may be one factor that limits this emotion from being experienced as often as embarrassment.

Such findings provide new insight into potential factors that may distinguish humiliation from shame and embarrassment. While humiliation is commonly recognized as an emotion that involves thoughts of social rejection and loss of acceptance it is less often suggested that humiliation may be *more* sensitive to these cognitions than shame or embarrassment. Tantam (1998) has hinted at this by suggesting that humiliation necessarily involves negative judgments by others, while embarrassment does not require the perception that others find fault with the self. Thus, the results of this study provide additional support for this argument and indicate that humiliation may be unique in having a stronger link with perceived devaluation than embarrassment or shame.

#### *Embarrassment and Public Exposure*

In comparison to humiliation and shame, embarrassment may be the least restrictive emotional response to public norm violations. As mentioned previously, embarrassment was unique in that the probability of experiencing this emotion remained

relatively high across all conditions. Moreover, links with self-blame and perceived devaluation were less often observed for embarrassment than for shame or humiliation. These observations coincide with several studies that have found embarrassment to be elicited to a variety of different types of events that happen to draw unwanted attention to the self (Cupach & Metts, 1992; Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Keltner & Buswell, 1996; R. S. Miller, 1995a; Sharkey & Stafford, 1990). Moreover, several theorists and researchers have argued that embarrassment is a more generalized emotional response elicited in response to mere public exposure or suddenly becoming the center of others' attention (M. Lewis, 1995; R. S. Miller, 1995a; Sabini, Siepmann, Stein, & Meyerowitz, 2000; Seidner, Stipek, & Feshbach, 1988). Thus, results from this study are consistent with both theoretical and empirical arguments suggesting that unwanted public attention may be sufficient to elicit embarrassment. In addition, this study offers additional support for Elison and Harter's (2007) claim that, "embarrassment implies little more than the presence of an audience witnessing our weak moments, making it the least restrictive of these emotion[s]" (p. 323).

#### *Summary and Conclusion*

Overall, this study has added to our knowledge of humiliation by revealing that this emotion may be similar to embarrassment and shame in that all three emotions are associated with self-blame and perceived devaluation of the self from others. However, the *degree* of relationship with these cognitions may distinguish humiliation from embarrassment and shame. Specifically, the link with self-blame appears to be most meaningful for shame, with this emotion being limited to high self-blame events. In

addition, humiliation may be more sensitive to variations in perceived devaluation, allowing for humiliation to be experienced more often than shame, but less frequently than embarrassment. Last, embarrassment appears to be the least sensitive to variations in blame or perceived devaluation and may be more easily elicited in response to mere public exposure than humiliation or shame.

Thus, the similarities observed in the current investigation indicate that humiliation is appropriately placed alongside embarrassment and shame within the same emotion family. However, the observed differences suggest that, while sharing some overlap, humiliation may also be fundamentally distinct from embarrassment and shame. The findings from this study add to the pioneering work conducted by Harter and colleagues, which has been instrumental in bringing humiliation to the forefront of current investigations into self-conscious emotions. While other self-conscious emotions, such as pride, shame, and embarrassment, have enjoyed a considerable amount of attention in the empirical literature, humiliation has remained largely unexplored, until recently. With each new exploration, the mystery of this emotion is uncovered and an additional piece of the humiliation puzzle is revealed. Continued investigation into the situational antecedents and correlates of humiliation may aid in constructing a more comprehensive understanding of fundamental elements that define this emotion and the factors that may contribute to the characteristic “flavor” of this emotional experience.

#### *Limitations and Directions for Future Study*

While the current investigation revealed a number of interesting similarities and differences between humiliation and its close emotion relatives of embarrassment and

shame, our work in understanding the emotion of humiliation and its distinct characteristics is far from complete. The results of this study, along with potential limitations, offer possible avenues for future exploration into the experience of humiliation.

#### *Humiliation and the Presence of Hostile-Others*

Because humiliation was found to be rated relatively high for self-caused norm violations, this raises the question of whether a norm violation is sufficient to elicit humiliation. However, several studies conducted by Harter and colleagues (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b; Elison & Harter, 2007; Harter et al., 2003a) indicate that, unlike embarrassment or shame, overt demonstrations of rejection from others (e.g., laughter, demeaning looks, derogatory comments, etc.) may be more common or necessary to elicit the emotion of humiliation. Given that this study did not assess participant beliefs regarding the audience's response to the norm violation, it is possible that participant ratings of humiliation were related to *perceived* negative responses from the observing audience. Thus, future studies using the vignette methodology will need to directly assess participant beliefs regarding the active role of others in the emotion eliciting event.

In addition to overt reactions from the audience, humiliation may also be elicited in response to more direct attacks on the self by others (e.g., bullying, harassment, cruel practical jokes). This study attempted to capture this unique element of humiliation by postulating that humiliation would be more likely to be experienced in response to other-caused norm violations. However, it appears that simply having another instigate a

violation of a social norm may not be sufficiently related to the experience of humiliation.

One possibility is that humiliation is associated with a sense of powerlessness. While the other-caused scenarios for this study may have involved some loss of power or self-control on the part of the victim, an important feature that was not emphasized in these scenarios was the presence of individuals who are currently within the victim's immediate social network (e.g., co-workers, classmates, neighbors, etc.) that both *cause* and *witness* the public domination. Such familiar others may play a key role in creating a more meaningful loss of power that could have long term consequences for the self. Future studies using the vignette methodology should specify whether the perpetrator and observing audience are from the victim's social network, and/or control for this variable by having a second condition of strangers.

In addition to powerlessness, a sense of chronic victimization may also need to accompany the presence of hostile-others. Single, isolated instances of ridicule, bullying, or mockery, as portrayed in the other-caused scenario for this study, may be easily dismissed as unusual or uncharacteristic events. However, repeated insult may be essential in communicating a fundamental sense of rejection of the self by others. Indeed, the histories of the high profile school shooters indicate that these individuals were *chronically* humiliated by others who frequently teased and harassed the self in front of others. Thus, an important direction for future research will be to explore chronic victimization, as well as powerlessness, as potential factors that may distinguish humiliation from embarrassment and shame.

### *Cultural Differences in the Experience of Humiliation*

Given that the sample for this study was relatively homogeneous with regard to ethnicity and race (i.e., predominately non-Hispanic/Latino and White), the results of this study may be limited in the ability to generalize to individuals of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. While some (e.g., Ekman, 1999; Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 2000) have argued that basic emotions (e.g., fear, anger, happiness) are more universal in nature, complex emotions, such as pride, shame, humiliation, and embarrassment, may be more culturally sensitive. Indeed, Shaver, Wu, and Schwartz (1992) have identified considerable differences in the conceptualization and experience of shame between Chinese, Italian, and American individuals. Given that studies have yet to look at cultural variations in the experience of humiliation, a fruitful avenue for further study will be to investigate possible cross-cultural difference in the emotion-cognition relationships observed in this study for humiliation. In addition, studies exploring differences among various subcultures within the United States, including those who have immigrated to the United States, should be conducted, with adequate numbers of participants.

### *Studying Emotion-Cognition Relationships via Emotion Prototypes*

To explore the hypothesized emotion-cognition relationships, this study employed the vignette method, in which individuals were presented with various hypothetical scenarios and asked to indicate what they might feel and what they might think for the given situation. When using this approach, it is important to recognize that participant reports are primarily based on cognitive processes. That is, when participants read the vignette and rate the likelihood of a particular emotional response, this is most likely

accomplished by determining the degree to which the details in the vignettes are consistent with their stored emotion prototypes, schemas, or concepts. To the extent to which individual emotion prototypes accurately reflect real-life experiences, they can provide valuable insight into the potential cognitive correlates that may often accompany these emotions. Indeed, Robinson and Clore (2001) found a considerable amount of convergence between real-life and simulated accounts of emotions, indicating that individual theories of emotions may be consistent with real emotional reactions.

The advantage of the vignette method is that it avoids serious ethical issues related to eliciting negative and uncomfortable emotional responses in individuals. However, an important direction for future research will be to extend the findings of this study with the use of additional research methodologies. Real-time studies may be particularly helpful in exploring emotion-cognition relationships as they unfold in real-life events. Moreover, diary studies may be effective in capturing many of the defining elements of these emotions as they occur in response to daily life events.

Importantly, however, investigations aimed at identifying the unique physical or biological responses related to the experience of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame would be valuable in expanding our current research methodologies. Knowledge of the physical correlates of these emotions would not only provide additional insight into the unique features of these emotional experiences, but may also allow researchers to identify the emotions that may accompany verbal labels. This may be particularly useful for observational techniques, in which humiliation, embarrassment, and shame may be observed in the “real world,” without the ability to directly interview the individual.

While studies have begun this difficult task for embarrassment and shame by identifying distinct facial expressions and body postures for these emotions (Gilbert, 1997; Keltner, 1995; Keltner & Buswell, 1997), attention will also need to be directed toward humiliation and the unique expressive and/or biological signature of this emotional state. In addition, lab simulation studies that assess the relevant physiological reactions of humiliation should also be included among future explorations into this emotion.

*The Development of Humiliation in Relation to Embarrassment and Shame*

As an additional point of interest, future studies may want to investigate the development of humiliation in relation to embarrassment and shame. A major question that has yet to be addressed in the empirical literature on humiliation is the age at which this emotion emerges. In addressing this question, two critical facets of emotional emergence must be recognized. First, at what age is humiliation *experienced* and physically expressed? Secondly, when do children have the ability to conceptually *understand* and label humiliation?

With regard to the question of experience, several theorists and researchers have argued that certain cognitive prerequisites must be in place for self-conscious emotions, such as humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, to be experienced. These cognitive abilities include: (a) self-awareness, (b) knowledge of social standards, and (c) the ability to engage in self-evaluative processes (Izard, Ackerman, & Schultz, 1999; Saarni, Mumme, & Campos, 1998; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Given that embarrassment has been argued to simply require self-awareness (i.e., the recognition that one has become the object of unwanted attention), it has been proposed that this emotion may be the first to

emerge, sometime around the middle of the second year (M. Lewis, 1990b; M. Lewis, Sullivan, Stanger, & Weiss, 1989). Shame, on the other hand, may develop later, with the ability to make causal attributions to the self for the violation of a social rule or standard.

The last of these three emotions to be experienced is likely to be humiliation. The strong link between humiliation and perceived devaluation observed in this study suggests that this emotion may require complex self-evaluative skills that extend beyond those necessary to experience embarrassment or shame. According to Selman (1980) the ability to engage in self-evaluative processes emerges between seven and twelve years of age, at which point children begin to step mentally outside of themselves and take a second-person perspective on their own thoughts and actions. Thus, it is possible that humiliation may be experienced sometime within the ages of seven and twelve.

To *understand* self-conscious emotions, Harter (1999) has suggested that parental socialization may play a key role in the formation of emotion representations. With regard to moral violations, Harter (1999) discovered that children begin to use the term “shame” around five or six, but only with reference to *others* (primarily parents) being ashamed of them (e.g., “Mom would be ashamed of me if I did something bad or got into trouble.”). By ages six or seven, children reported being ashamed of *themselves*, but the presence of observing others was still necessary. Only around the age of seven or eight, did children begin to realize they can be ashamed of themselves in the absence of others. It was inferred that children must first experience others as models who are ashamed of the self in order to internalize these functions for themselves. Similar research will need

to be conducted to identify the underlying processes involved in the understanding of humiliation. Initial pilot results from the Harter lab indicate that children as young as nine years old may have a general understanding of humiliation as a negative emotion, but their knowledge may not extend beyond this.

In summary, future research will first need to be conducted to examine the factors related to the emergence and physical expression of humiliation. Secondly, research should explore the age at which children begin to verbalize their understanding of humiliation. More specifically, questions related to the age at which children come to understand the cognitive components of humiliation identified in the current investigation (i.e., norm violations, self-blame, devaluation by others, the role of the audience, etc.) needs to be investigated. Thus, there is a considerable amount of knowledge to be gained with regard to the developmental trajectory of humiliation.

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## Appendix A

In the next part of the survey, you will read *two* stories and answer questions about each story. Each story will appear only once and you will **NOT** be able to go back and review the stories after you click the “Next” button. Please read each story carefully **BEFORE** you click the “Next” button and answer the questions.

It is important that you respond as honestly as possible to all of the questions. There is no right or wrong answer and different people will give different answers to these questions. We are interested in what *you* think.

## Appendix B

### *Social Norm Violation Vignettes*

#### *Self-Caused*

You're at a classy restaurant for a fancy brunch buffet. It's very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don't know. Shortly after being seated, you head over to the buffet tables and begin to fill a plate with food. While walking back to your table with your plate full of food, you spot the dessert table. **Rather than make two trips, you go and get two additional plates of dessert. You make an awkward attempt to balance all three plates and your first plate of food drops.** A large amount of food is now all over the floor.

*Audience Doesn't Know Cause.* Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. **However, you know they did NOT see you trying to carry three plates at once because they were eating or talking with others when that happened.**

*Audience Knows Cause.* Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. **You know they SAW you trying to carry three plates at once because they happened to be looking in your direction just before your plate dropped.**

#### *Other-Caused*

You're at a classy restaurant for a fancy brunch buffet. It's very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don't know. Shortly after being seated, you head over to the buffet tables and begin to fill a plate with food. While walking back to your table with your plate full of food, **someone behind you makes an insulting comment to you and pushes you.** Your plate drops and a large amount of food is now all over the floor.

*Audience Doesn't Know Cause.* Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. **However, you know they did NOT see someone make an insulting comment and push you because they were eating or talking with others when that happened.**

*Audience Knows Cause.* Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. **You know they SAW someone make an insulting comment and push you because they happened to be looking in your direction just before your plate dropped.**

*Accidental*

You're at a classy restaurant for a fancy brunch buffet. It's very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don't know. Shortly after being seated, you head over to the buffet tables and begin to fill a plate with food. While walking back to your table with your plate full of food, **a strong gust of wind from an open window knocks a decorative ornament off a tree behind you. The ornament quickly rolls up behind you and suddenly trips you.** Your plate drops and a large amount of food is now all over the floor.

*Ending for "Audience Doesn't Know Cause" Condition*

Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. **However, you know they did NOT see the ornament roll up behind you and trip you because they were eating or talking with others when that happened.**

*Ending for "Audience Knows Cause" Condition*

Most everyone in the restaurant heard the plate drop and they are now looking at you. **You know they SAW the ornament roll up behind you and trip you because they happened to be looking in your direction just before your plate dropped. Nobody could have warned you about the ornament because everything happened so quickly.**

## Appendix C

### *Moral Norm Violation Vignettes*

#### *Self-Caused*

You're inside a popular department store. It's very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don't know. You get tired, so you decide to take a break on a bench outside. Just before you exit the store, **you walk by a sunglass rack and put a pair of expensive sunglasses in the hood of your jacket. You didn't want to pay for them and you thought this would be a good place to hide them.** When you open the door, a very loud alarm goes off. A security guard stops you and discovers the sunglasses in your hood. The guard takes the sunglasses and allows you to continue on your way.

*Audience Doesn't Know Cause.* Most everyone in the store saw you get stopped by the security guard and they are now looking at you. **However, you know they did NOT see you put the sunglasses in your hood because they were busy shopping when that happened.**

*Audience Knows Cause.* Most everyone in the store saw you get stopped by the security guard and they are now looking at you. **You know they SAW you put the sunglasses in your hood because they happened to be looking in your direction as you did this just before you opened the door.**

#### *Other-Caused*

You're inside a popular department store. It's very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don't know. You get tired, so you decide to take a break on a bench outside. Just before you exit the store, **someone behind you makes an insulting comment to you and drops a pair of expensive sunglasses in the hood of your jacket without you knowing it.** When you open the door, a very loud alarm goes off. A security guard stops you and discovers the sunglasses in your hood. You realize the person who made the comment put the sunglasses in your hood. The guard takes the sunglasses and allows you to continue on your way.

*Audience Doesn't Know Cause.* Most everyone in the store saw you get stopped by the security guard and they are now looking at you. **However, you know they did NOT see someone make an insulting comment and put the sunglasses in your hood because they were busy shopping when that happened.**

*Audience Knows Cause.* Most everyone in the store saw you get stopped by the security guard and they are now looking at you. **You know they SAW someone make an insulting comment and put the sunglasses in your hood because they happened to be looking in your direction just before you opened the door. Nobody could have warned you about the sunglasses because everything happened so quickly.**

*Accidental*

You're inside a popular department store. It's very busy, so there are many people there, including some you know and others you don't know. You get tired, so you decide to take a break on a bench outside. Just before you exit the store, **you walk by a sunglass rack and a pair of expensive sunglasses accidentally slips off a hook and into the hood of your jacket without you knowing it.** When you open the door, a very loud alarm goes off. A security guard stops you and discovers the sunglasses in your hood. You realize the glasses must have accidentally fallen when you walked by the rack. The guard takes the sunglasses and allows you to continue on your way.

*Audience Doesn't Know Cause.* Most everyone in the store saw you get stopped by the security guard and they are now looking at you. **However, you know they did NOT see the sunglasses accidentally slip off the hook and into your hood because they were busy shopping when that happened.**

*Audience Knows Cause.* Most everyone in the store saw you get stopped by the security guard and they are now looking at you. **You know they SAW the sunglasses accidentally slip off the hook and into your hood because they happened to be looking in your direction just before you opened the door. Nobody could have warned you about the sunglasses because everything happened so quickly.**

## Appendix D

*Note:* The following questions were presented with the social norm violation vignettes. Phrases or words varied slightly for the questions presented with the moral norm violation vignettes.

### *Emotions*

1. In this situation, I would feel...

#### Embarrassed

Not at all true	Not very true	Pretty true	Very true
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#### Humiliated

Not at all true	Not very true	Pretty true	Very true
-----------------	---------------	-------------	-----------

#### Ashamed

Not at all true	Not very true	Pretty true	Very true
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### *Blame Attributed to Self or Other*

2. How much would you blame yourself for you spilling your food?

Very Little	Some	A Fair Amount	A Lot
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Why?

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3. How much would you blame someone else for you spilling your food?

Very Little	Some	A Fair Amount	A Lot
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Why?

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*Perceived Devaluation: Negative Evaluation of Self from Others*

4. I would think spilling my food made me to look bad in front of the other people in the restaurant.

Not at all true	Not very true	Pretty true	Very true
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5. I would think the other people looking at me would be thinking negative thoughts about me.

Not at all true	Not very true	Pretty true	Very true
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*Perceived Devaluation: Lack of Acceptance of Self from Others*

6. Imagine that shortly after you spilled your food, you make a second trip through the long buffet line. How true would the following be of you?

I would believe the people in line who saw the spilled food would be...

..... less willing to interact with me.

Not at all true	Not very true	Pretty true	Very true
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..... more inclined to distance themselves from me.

Not at all true	Not very true	Pretty true	Very true
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