

Turning Shame Inside-Out: “Humiliated Fury” in Young Adolescents

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The term “humiliated fury” refers to the anger people can experience when they are shamed. In Study 1, participants were randomly exposed to a prototypical shameful event or control event, and their self-reported feelings of anger were measured. In Study 2, participants reported each school day, for 2 weeks, the shameful events they experienced. They also nominated classmates who got angry each day. Narcissism was treated as a potential moderator in both studies. As predicted, shameful events made children angry, especially more narcissistic children. Boys with high narcissism scores were especially likely to express their anger after being shamed. These results corroborate clinical theory holding that shameful events can initiate instances of humiliated fury.

Keywords: shame, anger, humiliation, narcissism, adolescents

We were playing soccer. I accidentally kicked the ball into the wrong goal. The guys in the other team were making fun of me, and my own team-mates were very unhappy with me. I was so ashamed of myself. But I was also annoyed by how the others treated me. It was stupid that they made me feel so bad. In my dreams, I would take the ball, kick it in someone else’s face, and then proudly walk away. (Quoted from a 12-year-old boy who was asked to talk about a recent event that made him feel ashamed—Thomaes, 2007)

Shame is among the most painful and devastating of human emotions (Lewis, 1971; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Ashamed people feel strongly devalued, inferior, and exposed—feelings that interfere with the fundamental human motive to feel good about oneself (Reimer, 1996; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Theorists and clinicians have long noted that, perhaps precisely because shame is so painful, it is often repressed or trumped by less self-threatening forms of negative emotion, especially anger. The emotional state of shame-based anger is called “humiliated fury” (Lansky, 1987; Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991). This theory implicates that unflattering social events that typically elicit shame may also initiate anger and fury. Empirical evidence, however, is limited. The present investigation tests the hypothesis that shameful events can trigger anger (i.e., humiliated fury) in early adolescence, a time

when vulnerability to shame reaches a developmental high. In addition, it examines whether narcissism moderates children’s predispositions to become angry when shamed.

Shame and Anger in Early Adolescence

Early adolescence is a developmental period marked by increased self-consciousness and concern about how one is viewed by others (e.g., Harter, 2006; Reimer, 1996). As children grow into adolescence, they acquire more behavioral standards and become better able to evaluate themselves against those standards, so that negative social events more frequently cause feelings of shame (Mills, 2005). Peer harassment among older children is often aimed at causing shame by damaging others’ status and esteem (Adler & Adler, 1998; Nishina & Juvonen, 2005). Early adolescence is also the time that children have become able to make global negative self-evaluations (i.e., “I am entirely worthless as a person”) that are responsible for the “pain of shame” (Ferguson, Stegge, & Damhuis, 1991). Thus, young adolescents are prone to experience shame, and they are also highly vulnerable to its aversive psychological impact.

Because of their vulnerability to experiencing shame, young adolescents may be relatively likely to repress shame and to become angry when faced with shameful events. Theorists have proposed that people who experience humiliated fury reappraise shameful events as externally caused, replacing self-blame (e.g., “What a terrible person *I am* for doing this”) with other-blame (e.g., “What a terrible person *you are* for doing this to me”). Such cognitive reappraisals are thought to co-occur with an affective shift from feelings of self-directed shame to feelings of other-directed anger and hostility (Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Scheff, 1987; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991).

Despite ample theory about humiliated fury, empirical research is scarce. Two studies (Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow,

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1996) found a positive link between individuals' predispositions to experience shame and anger (i.e., people who report they are prone to experience shame also tend to report they are prone to experience anger). The authors explained this positive link by suggesting that shameful events often initiate subsequent angry feelings, which would be indicative of humiliated fury. However, they provided no data to support that explanation. A later study did find that shameful events may often lead to subsequent increases in angry feelings (Ferguson, Eyre, & Ashbaker, 2000). However, this study relied on participants' anticipated emotional responses following scenarios of hypothetical events. Anticipated emotional responses may be quite different from actual emotional responses (Robinson & Clore, 2002). The present research tests whether actual, in vivo shameful events can initiate anger.

Narcissism, Shame, and Anger

To be sure, anger is considered a possible but not a necessary or ubiquitous response to shameful events. One way to identify child characteristics that may potentially moderate shame-based angry responses is to consider the function that such responses serve. Shame-based angry responses may be attempts to regulate feelings of shame and minimize damage to self-esteem (Lewis, 1971; Robins, Tracy, & Shaver, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). By placing blame outside of the self, ashamed people may try to end self-condemnation. In addition, by directing anger against others, ashamed people may try to get out of their submissive interpersonal position and gain a sense of control again.

If so, children who are motivated most to preserve self-esteem should be strongly inclined to become angry in response to shameful events. These conceptions of an enhanced motive to preserve self-esteem are relevant to the trait of narcissism. In its extreme form, narcissism is a personality disorder that involves grandiose self-views, an inflated sense of entitlement, and exploitative attitudes toward others (*DSM-IV*; American Psychiatric Association, 1994). In its less extreme form, narcissism is a personality trait on which children and adults in the general population vary (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008). Narcissists are vulnerable to experiencing shame, because shame directly challenges the grandiose public image they want to create, and because they lose self-esteem quickly when they are negatively evaluated by others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Thomaes et al., 2010; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Given their vulnerability to shame, narcissistic children should be predisposed to become angry in response to shameful events.

Overview of Studies

The present research uses both experimental methods (Study 1) and diary methods (Study 2) to test the hypothesis that shameful events can initiate anger, especially in narcissistic children. We investigate both self-reported feelings of anger (Study 1) and peer-reported public expressions of anger (Study 2). Throughout development, children learn to inhibit or conceal angry expressions if they need to, and especially among girls, feelings of anger do not necessarily translate into publicly observable expressions of anger (Brody & Hall, 2000; Kerr & Schneider, 2008; Underwood, Hurlley, Johanson, & Mosley, 1999). Participants were 10 to 13 years old. We studied children this age because shame is frequently

experienced and highly aversive in early adolescence (Ferguson et al., 1991; Nishina & Juvonen, 2005; Reimer, 1996).

Study 1: Laboratory Experiment

The primary advantage of experimental studies is that they can be used to establish cause-effect relationships. In Study 1, we tested whether an experimentally manipulated shameful event causes feelings of anger. If narcissists are strongly driven to protect their self-esteem, and anger may function to protect self-esteem following the sting of shame, then the manipulated shameful event should cause especially high levels of anger among narcissistic children. We used an easy task failure paradigm to manipulate shame because easy task failure is considered a prototypical situational antecedent of shame (e.g., Lewis, Alessandri, & Sullivan, 1992; Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, & Olthof, 2008).

Method

Participants. Participants were 175 students (47% boys, 53% girls) from five randomly selected schools in the Netherlands. Participants ranged in age from 10 to 13 years ($M = 11.7$, $SD = 0.8$). Almost all were ethnic Dutch (94%), 6% had other (e.g., Dutch Antillean, Turkish), or mixed ethnical or cultural origins. To participate, students received parental consent (81% of parents consented) and gave their own assent (99% of students assented). Participants received a small gift (e.g., mechanical pens) in exchange for their voluntary participation.

Procedure. Two weeks before the experiment, students completed the 10-item Childhood Narcissism Scale (Thomaes, Stegge, et al., 2008) in their classes. The Childhood Narcissism Scale assesses grandiose self-views, and inflated feelings of superiority and entitlement in children. Sample items include: "Without me, our class would be much less fun", "Kids like me deserve something extra," and "I often succeed in getting admiration." Items are rated along a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all true*) to 3 (*completely true*). Responses were summed and averaged, with higher scores indicating higher levels of narcissism (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).

In the experiment proper, participants were tested individually in a quiet room at their school. They were told they would be playing a competitive reaction time game on the Internet against an opponent of the same sex and age from a different school. In reality, there was no opponent; the game was controlled by the computer. First, students completed a baseline (Time 1) measure of their mood state, which contained three anger adjectives (*angry*, *annoyed*, *mad*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$), five shame adjectives (*stupid*, *ashamed*, *ridiculous*, *humiliated*, *foolish*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$), and several filler adjectives (e.g., *happy*, *surprised*). Participants reported how they felt "right now, at the present time" on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 6 (*extremely*). Responses were summed and averaged.

Next, students were asked to take a photo of themselves with a digital camera to send to their opponent via the Internet. They were told that they could take as many photos as they liked, and that they could select one photo to send to their opponent (mean number of photos = 2; range = 1–6). Participants were then randomly assigned to the shame or no shame control conditions. In the shame condition, participants were told they were lucky to

compete against one of the worst contestants tested so far. The experimenter showed the opponent's name at the bottom of the ranking list, and said, "This means you should easily win!" After competing with the opponent on the game, a message appeared on screen that said, "Sorry (participant's name), you lost!" Then, new rankings shown on the "very popular" fictitious webpage of the game showed the participant's name at the bottom of the list, beneath the opponent's name. The Internet rankings highlighted public exposure, which should enhance feelings of shame (Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002). In the no shame condition, participants also lost but they received no information about their opponent's abilities and saw no webpage rankings before or after the game. After the game, mood state was measured once again using the same form (Time 2; Cronbach's α 's = .80 and .83 for anger and shame, respectively). Finally, participants were thoroughly debriefed.

Results

Preliminary analyses.

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics for Study 1 are presented in Table 1. ANOVA's showed that participants' shame and anger at Time 1, narcissism levels, sex, and age, did not significantly differ in the shame and no shame conditions, indicating that random assignment to conditions was effective.

Sex and age differences. Girls tended to report more shame than boys—an effect that was significant at Time 1 ($p < .01$) and marginally significant at Time 2 ($p < .09$). Accordingly, sex was included as a factor in subsequent analyses. Age was not significantly related to any of the study variables, and was therefore excluded from subsequent analyses.

Shame manipulation check. An ANCOVA with Time 1 shame as a covariate showed that participants in the shame condition experienced significantly more shame than did participants in the control condition, $F(1, 172) = 34.18, p < .001, d = 0.74$ (see means and SDs in Table 1). Thus, the shame manipulation was effective.

Narcissism and number of photos. The higher the level of narcissism, the greater the number of photos students took of themselves, $r = .18, p < .02$. Reminiscent of the classical Narcissus who was wrapped-up with the reflection of his own image in the water, more narcissistic children in our study seemed to be wrapped-up with their own images in the photos.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics in the Shame and No Shame Control Conditions (Study 1)

Variable	Range	Shame	No Shame Control
		($N = 88, 42$ boys)	($N = 87, 41$ boys)
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Time 1 shame	0.00–4.60	0.65 (0.80)	0.58 (0.78)
Time 1 anger	0.00–6.00	0.34 (0.79)	0.39 (0.68)
Time 2 shame	0.00–4.80	1.37 (1.20)	0.63 (0.74)
Time 2 anger	0.00–6.00	1.05 (1.31)	0.69 (0.91)
Narcissism	0.00–2.10	0.86 (0.49)	0.74 (0.42)
Age (months)	120–160	140 (9)	140 (9)

Primary analyses. The data were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Anger at Time 1 was entered as a covariate in Step 1, the main effects for Shame Condition, Narcissism, and Sex were entered in Step 2, the two-way interactions involving these variables were entered in Step 3, and the three-way interaction was entered in Step 4. Anger measured at Time 2 was the dependent variable.

As predicted, there was a significant main effect for the shame manipulation, indicating that participants in the shame condition experienced a greater increase in angry feelings than did participants in the no shame condition, $t(170) = 2.21, p < .03, b = 0.28, \beta = .14$. There was also a significant positive relationship between narcissism and increased anger, $t(170) = 2.75, p < .01, b = 0.18, \beta = .18$. These main effects, however, were qualified by the predicted Shame Condition \times Narcissism interaction, $t(167) = 3.04, p < .01, b = 0.38, \beta = .29$ (see Figure 1). In the shame condition, narcissism was positively related to increased angry feelings, $t(84) = 3.67, p < .001, b = 0.07, \beta = .32$. In the no shame condition, narcissism was not related to increased angry feelings, $t(83) = -0.20, p > .84, b = 0.00, \beta = -.02$. Thus, children with high levels of narcissism do not become angry after any kind of frustration or disappointment, but they do become angry in response to shame. The three-way Shame Condition \times Narcissism \times Sex interaction was not significant, $t(166) = 0.25, p > .80, b = 0.01, \beta = .03$, indicating that shame increased anger in high narcissistic boys and girls.

Discussion

Consistent with theory and interpretations of prior correlational findings, Study 1 showed that prototypical shameful events can cause children to feel anger. Although all participants failed at the task by losing against their opponent, participants who had been shamed became angrier afterward than did those who were not shamed. These findings challenge the possible alternative explanation that it is simply frustration from losing a game, rather than shame per se, that increases anger. Study 1 also extended previous work by identifying narcissism as a moderator of shame-based anger. The angriest participants were children with high levels of narcissism who had been shamed.

Study 2: Diary Study

In Study 2, relationships between shameful events and anger were examined in a naturalistic setting using a daily diary. Students reported the shameful events they experienced each school day for 2 weeks, and they nominated classmates who got angry that day. We predicted that students would be perceived by peers as angrier on days they encountered a shameful event (relative to days they encountered no shameful event). We also predicted that this effect would be especially strong for narcissistic children.

Method

Participants. Participants were 383 students (48% boys, 52% girls) from eight randomly selected schools in the Netherlands. Participants ranged in age from 10 to 13 years ($M = 11.2, SD = 0.7$). Most were ethnic Dutch (86%), 14% had other, or mixed ethnical or cultural origins. To participate, students received pa-

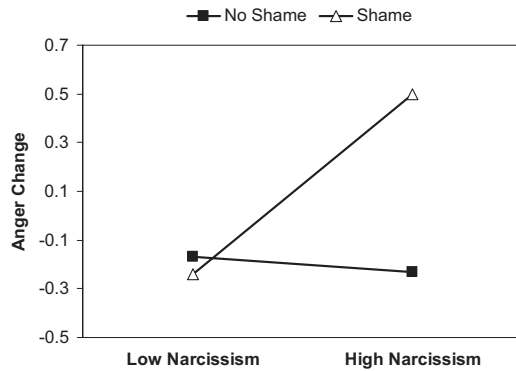


Figure 1. Relationship between narcissism and anger change for participants in the shame and the no shame control conditions (Study 1). Low narcissism is 1 *SD* below the mean; high narcissism is 1 *SD* above the mean.

rental consent (85% of parents consented) and gave their own assent (98% of students assented).

Procedure. A pilot study ($N = 63$; 53% boys, 47% girls; M age = 11.6, SD age = 0.8) was conducted to develop the daily shame event checklist that was used in Study 2. Students were individually interviewed by a research assistant to determine the type of shameful events children this age commonly encounter in their day-to-day lives at school. Each child was asked to describe the most recent shameful event he or she had encountered at school. Reported events were categorized as (1) personal failure, (2) awkward, unusual behavior, (3) disappointment from others, (4) disregard from others, (5) ridicule from others, or (6) having a secret revealed.

Two raters independently coded students' transcribed responses. All shameful events were reliably coded into one of the six categories ($\kappa = .89$). Thus, these event categories provided a strong basis for creating an ecologically valid shame event checklist, tapping a comprehensive range of negative events that children themselves consider "shameful." The final checklist contained one item for each shame category (see Appendix).

As in Study 1, students completed the Childhood Narcissism Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$). About 1 week later, they completed a survey in their classes at the end of each school day for 10 consecutive school days (i.e., two school weeks). The survey included the shame event checklist developed in the pilot study: students reported whether or not they had experienced each of the six events during the day. They also nominated classmates who "got angry or furious" during that day. They circled the names of all classmates for whom the item applied on the class roster (the order of names was randomized). These nominations were summed to yield a daily index of peer-perceived anger. The survey took less than 5 min to complete each day.

Results

The data collected in Study 2 constituted what is usually called a "hierarchically nested" or multilevel data set. To account for the dependencies among the observations, the data were analyzed with a series of multilevel models in which occasions (days) were treated as nested within students and students were treated as

nested within classes (see Nezlek, 2001, for discussions of how to analyze such data structures). The analyses were conducted using HLM-6 (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004).

Preliminary analyses. Descriptive statistics for Study 2 are presented in Table 2. Inspection of the data revealed that the primary measures of the study were highly skewed. Across all participants and all days, at least one type of shameful event occurred on 14% of days. Shameful events involving "personal failure" occurred on 4% of days, "awkward, unusual behavior" occurred on 3% of days, "disappointment from others" occurred on 4% of days, "disregard from others" occurred on 5% of days, "ridicule from others" occurred on 8% of days, and "having a secret revealed" occurred on 1% of days. For peer nominations, the absolute number of nominations for being angered was low, with students receiving at least one nomination on 16% of all days. Note that these preliminary descriptive analyses, unlike those reported below, did not take into account the multilevel structure of the data. In light of these skewed distributions, the two primary measures were transformed into binomials (i.e., shame vs. no shame event reported on a day, and nominated or not for being angry that day).

Primary analyses. Multilevel analyses of binomial outcomes rely upon logistical regression, and our initial, unconditional analyses of the data used the following model, which estimated a log-odds. In these models there were i observations for j students in each of k classrooms.

$$\text{Within-persons (Level 1): } \text{Prob}(y_{ijk} = 1 | \pi_{ojk}) = \phi \left[\frac{\log(\phi / (1-\phi))}{\pi_{ojk}} \right]$$

$$\text{Between-persons (Level 2): } \pi_{ojk} = \beta_{00k} + r_{ojk}$$

$$\text{Between classes (Level 3): } \beta_{00k} = \gamma_{000} + u_{00k}$$

When reporting the results we transformed the log-odds into probabilities, and we used unit-specific estimates instead of population-average estimates. Across all the results we report, although the point estimates provided by the two types of estimates differed somewhat, the pattern of results and significance tests (including relationships with the student level variables of narcissism and sex) were very similar (see Raudenbush et al., 2004, for a discussion of when to use unit-specific and population-average estimates).

These analyses estimated that on average (across all days for all students in all classrooms) at least one shameful event occurred on 11% of days (Level 2 variance = 1.04; Level 3 variance = 0.17). The corresponding figure for peer nominations for being angry was 11% (1.23; 0.13).

We wanted to examine relationships between shameful events and anger, and potential moderating effects of narcissism. As in

Table 2
Multilevel Descriptive Statistics (Study 2)

Variable	%	Mean	Person-level	Class-level
Shameful events	11.8	-2.01	1.04	0.17
Anger nominations	11.1	-2.10	1.23	0.12

Note. Column labeled "Mean" contains the mean logit score. Level 1 (day-level) variances cannot be estimated for nonlinear outcomes.

Study 1, potential moderating effects of participant sex were also considered. We first estimated how often students were nominated by their peers on days when they experienced a shameful event (relative to days when they did not experience a shameful event). We did this using a model that had two dummy coded variables: one for which “shame days” were coded 1 and “no shame days” were coded 0, and another for which no shame days were coded 1 and shame days were coded 0. The intercept was dropped from the Level 1 (within-student) model, which meant that the coefficients represented the expected values for shame and no shame days, respectively. The Level 1 model is shown below. In these initial analyses, there were no predictors at Levels 2 or 3. Such models (called no or zero intercept models) are discussed in Nezlek (2007), and significance tests of these effects were done at Level 3.

$$\text{Prob}(y_{ijk} = 1|\pi_{0jk}) = \phi$$

$$\log(\phi/(1-\phi)) = \pi_{1jk} (\text{Shame}) + \pi_{2jk} (\text{No Shame})$$

$$\text{Shame days: } \pi_{1jk} = \beta_{10k} + r_{1jk}.$$

$$\text{No Shame days: } \pi_{2jk} = \beta_{20k} + r_{2jk}.$$

$$\text{Mean percent for Shame days: } \beta_{10k} = \gamma_{100} + u_{10k}.$$

$$\text{Mean percent for No Shame days: } \beta_{20k} = \gamma_{200} + u_{20k}.$$

As expected, these analyses (that included tests of the equality of the two means) indicated that students were angrier on days when they encountered a shameful event. On days they were shamed, students were nominated as being angry 19.7% of the time, whereas on days they were not shamed students were nominated as being angry only 9.9% of the time, $\chi^2(1) = 25.9, p < .001$.¹

We also examined potential moderating effects of narcissism and sex on the relationships between shame and anger. This was done at Level 2 (the student level) by including narcissism (standardized before analysis), a contrast coded variable to represent student sex (1 = girls, -1 = boys), and a term representing the interaction of sex and narcissism. These models are given below.

$$\text{Shame days: } \pi_{1jk} = \beta_{10k} + \beta_{11k} (\text{Narcissism}) + \beta_{12k} (\text{Sex}) + \beta_{13k} (\text{Narcissism-Sex}) + r_{1jk}.$$

$$\text{No Shame days: } \pi_{2jk} = \beta_{20k} + \beta_{21k} (\text{Narcissism}) + \beta_{22k} (\text{Sex}) + \beta_{23k} (\text{Narcissism-Sex}) + r_{2jk}.$$

Significance tests of these effects were done at Level 3 as exemplified below:

$$\text{Narcissism effect for Shame days: } \beta_{11k} = \gamma_{120} + u_{12k}.$$

The primary focus of our hypotheses was the coefficients for shame days. The analyses of being angered on shame days found an interaction of narcissism and sex ($\gamma_{130} = -.42, t = 2.69, p < .01$) and a marginally significant effect for sex ($\gamma_{110} = -.27, t = 1.76, p < .10$). Predicted values for boys ± 1 SD on narcissism revealed a positive relationship between narcissism and being angry. Boys who were +1 SD on narcissism were nominated as being angry on 35.6% of the days when they were shamed, whereas boys who were -1 SD on narcissism were nominated as

being angry on only 15.0% of the days when they were shamed. For girls there was no relationship between narcissism and being angry. Girls who were +1 SD on narcissism were nominated as angry on 11.7% of the days when they were shamed, whereas girls who were -1 SD on narcissism were nominated as angry on 19.4% of the days when they were shamed. Simple effects analyses found that the moderating relationship for boys was significant, $t = 2.37, p < .05$, whereas the moderating relationship for girls was not, $t = 1.33, p > .15$.

Although our hypotheses did not concern relationships between narcissism and anger in the absence of a shameful event, we examined them nevertheless. These analyses found a main effect for sex for being nominated as angry when no shame event occurred, $\gamma_{210} = -.21, t = 2.49, p = .01$, indicating that boys were more often nominated than girls as being angry in the absence of shame, but no other significant effects.

Discussion

Study 2 examined relationships between shameful events and anger outside of the laboratory, in a naturalistic setting. As predicted, children were viewed by their peers as angrier on days that they experienced a shameful event than on days they experienced no shameful event. Notably, in this study we obtained peer reports of anger, which rules out a possibility that the link between shameful events and anger can be simply accounted for by shared method variance. Among boys, we replicated the finding that narcissism increases the link between shame and anger. Among girls, no moderating effect of narcissism was found. Thus, although both boys and girls with high narcissism scores felt angry following shame (Study 1), only boys with high narcissism scores expressed anger outwardly on days they experienced shame (Study 2).

General Discussion

Across two studies that were conducted in different settings (i.e., in the laboratory and in children's daily life at school), convergent findings showed that shame and anger are intricately linked. In Study 1, shameful events caused children to feel anger. In Study 2, children were observed by peers to be angrier on days they experienced a shameful event than on days they did not. These findings corroborate theoretical notions and clinical observations that when people are faced with shame they can experience a sense of humiliated fury (Lansky, 1987; Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991). It is often believed that shamed people uniquely feel small, devalued, and worthless. The present study

¹ To provide some insight into causal relationships between our diary measures of shame and anger, lagged analyses were conducted. In the first analysis, which tests whether shame increases anger, anger on day *i* was modeled as a function of shame event and anger on day *i*-1. In the second analysis, which tests whether people encounter shame after expressing their anger, “shame event” on day *i* was modeled as a function of shame event and anger on day *i*-1. These analyses suggested a causal relationship from shame to anger but not the reverse causal relationship from anger to shame. In the first analysis, the coefficient for shame event on the previous day was positive and significant for anger ($\gamma_{100} = .32, t = 2.23, p < .05$). In the second analysis, the coefficient for anger on the previous day was not significant for shame ($p > .15$).

findings suggest that shamed people can experience anger. Such anger is not a ruminative kind of anger that is bottled-up inside, but is readily expressed and observable to others (Study 2).

Study 1 found that shame-based angry feelings are especially common among children high in narcissism. This finding is consistent with the theoretical notion that anger may function to downplay ego-threatening feelings of shame and to protect fragile self-esteem. Narcissists are highly concerned about possible blows to their egos (e.g., experiencing shame), and they respond to imminent changes in self-esteem by engaging in regulatory strategies to maintain worth (Horvath & Morf, 2009; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). By experiencing anger, narcissists may deflect shame-induced self-condemnation and uphold their inflated self-esteem.

Interestingly, Study 2 found a sex-difference in narcissists' expressions of anger on days they experienced shame. Narcissistic boys, but not narcissistic girls, were angrier than their less narcissistic counterparts. One possible explanation is that expressions of anger may be differentially effective for narcissistic boys and girls at regulating shame and maintaining worth. Western cultural stereotypes hold that it is more appropriate for boys than for girls to express anger (Brody & Hall, 2000; Chaplin, Cole, & Zahn-Waxler, 2005). Peers tend to reject or ridicule children who show sex role inconsistent expressions of emotion (Brody, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2000). Accordingly, expressing anger may be less effective for narcissistic girls than for narcissistic boys to uphold self-esteem in the face of shame. In fact, for girls, expressing anger may even backfire if it threatens their public image. One other possible explanation is that narcissistic girls do express anger, but in a more concealed or subtle fashion than do boys. Precisely because overt anger expressions are inconsistent with girls' sex-roles, girls may resort to more covert means of expressing their anger, such as by ostracizing others or acting cold and detached (Kerr & Schneider, 2008; similar arguments have been made for how girls' aggressive behavior is typically different from boys' aggressive behavior, Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). To be sure, it would be premature to draw these conclusions based on our findings, but establishing and explaining sex-specific manifestations of narcissists' shame-based expressed anger will be an important direction for future research.

The present research contributes in several ways to the existing literature. Thus far, the influential clinical theory that shame can initiate anger lacked rigorous empirical support. The few pioneering empirical studies that were conducted (Ferguson et al., 2000; Tangney et al., 1992, 1996) are methodologically limited when judged against present-day methodological standards (i.e., these studies used correlational designs and measured anticipated rather than actual emotional responses). This research is the first to provide rigorous and causal empirical support for the humiliated fury hypothesis, and also goes one step further by showing that narcissism moderates humiliated fury. Another contribution of this research is that it combines experimental methods and diary methods, a methodological approach that is rarely used in emotion research. We obtained largely similar findings in a controlled laboratory setting and in children's daily lives, which adds to the robustness and generalizability of the results. Finally, this research is among the first to examine the emotional consequences of shame in early adolescence, a time marked by profound vulnerability to shame.

Limitations and Future Research

A number of limitations warrant mention. The diary data of Study 2 are correlational. Although we did establish temporal precedence in the predicted direction (i.e., shame events predicted next-day anger, but not the reverse), future experimental work is needed to establish a causal link between shame and expressed anger.

Study 2 found that narcissism moderates boys' but not girls' expressions of anger on days they experienced shame. In our previous work, that focused on narcissism and aggressive behavior, we never found that the effects of narcissism were qualified by sex (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman et al., 2009; Thomaes, Bushman, Orobio de Castro, Cohen, & Denissen, 2009; Thomaes, Bushman, et al., 2008). This underscores the importance of distinguishing between expressed anger (which is emotion-laden, and not primarily intended to harm another person) and aggressive behavior (which is not necessarily emotion-laden, but is primarily intended to harm another person; Bushman & Thomaes, 2007; Hubbard et al., 2002). Thus, the present findings on narcissists' expressed anger should not be generalized to actual narcissistic aggression. Future research will need to disentangle the differential motivations that may underlie narcissistic boys' and girls' episodes of expressed anger and aggressive behavior. Such research should include measurement techniques that adequately tap both overt and more covert forms of expressed anger and aggressive behavior (e.g., angry facial expressions, gestures, and aggressive movements or remarks as well as more covert acts of ostracism, rumor spreading, and being mean behind another's back).

Consistent with humiliated fury theory, our research focused rather narrowly on relationships between shame and anger. We cannot exclude the possibility, however, that shame can initiate other negative emotional responses as well. For example, besides anger, shame may possibly initiate related but distinct emotional responses such as embitterment, disgust, or alienation. Future research is needed to test the emotional specificity of our findings.

Conclusion

Early adolescence is a time of profound vulnerability to experiencing shame (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005; Reimer, 1996). This research found that unflattering interpersonal events that lead many children to feel ashamed (e.g., failing an easy task in public; experiencing disregard or ridicule from others) can also lead children to experience and express a very different kind of emotion—anger. This finding is consistent with long-held theoretical notions that shame can trigger humiliated fury; angry and hostile affect directed against others. In particular, narcissism is a trait that influences shamed children to feel anger and, among boys, to express anger outwardly.

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Appendix

Shame Event Checklist (Study 2)

1. Did you do something wrong or bad today, or did you make a mistake while other people were watching?
2. Did you accidentally do something awkward or unusual today while other people were watching?
3. Did other people show today that they were unsatisfied or disappointed with you, or did you feel that they were unsatisfied or disappointed with you?
4. Did other people show today that they found you strange or stupid, or did you feel that they thought about you in such a way?
5. Did other people ridicule or made fun of you today?
6. Did other people hear or see something about you today that you wanted to remain secret?

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