

The Self in Self-Conscious Emotions

A Cognitive Appraisal Approach

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When Jeff Skilling, former CEO of Enron, applied to Harvard Business School at the age of 26, he had trouble coming across positively to the admissions officer. He had spent most of his college years gambling (and losing) thousands of dollars in the stock market rather than focusing on schoolwork, and this was evident from his transcript. At some point during the interview the admissions officer finally lost his patience with the young man, and asked Skilling, point blank, “Jeff, are you smart?” To which Skilling replied, without missing a beat, “I’m f*cking smart” (Clark, 2006).

Although this kind of unabashed hubristic pride may have won Skilling a place in the Harvard Business School’s class of 1979, it also may have been a cause of Skilling’s impulsive risk taking, his willingness to exaggerate his successes, and his development of reckless policies that eventually led to the downfall of Enron and Skilling’s criminal indictment for fraud. As psychologists who seek to understand the affective roots of Skilling’s behavior, we cannot be satisfied by simply blaming it on a pattern of high positive or negative affect, or high or low activation. Skilling’s actions and personality can only be fully understood by invoking the discrete self-conscious emotions of pride and shame, which likely motivated much of his behavior throughout his life.

In fact, self-conscious emotions play a central role in motivating and regulating almost all of people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Campos, 1995; Fischer & Tangney, 1995). Most people spend a great deal of time avoiding social approbation, a strong elicitor of shame and embarrassment. We worry about losing social status in the eyes of others and, as Goffman (1955) noted, our every social act is influenced by even the slight chance of public shame or loss of “face.” In fact, according to the “Cooley–Scheff conjecture,” we are “virtually always in a state of either pride or shame” (Scheff, 1988, p. 399).

Researchers have linked self-conscious emotions to a wide array of empirical out-

comes, many of which are reviewed in this volume. Embarrassment, guilt, pride, and shame drive people to work hard in achievement and task domains (Stipek, 1995; Weiner, 1985), and to behave in moral, socially appropriate ways in their social interactions and intimate relationships (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Retzinger, 1987). To take just a few specific examples, guilt is a central part of reparative and prosocial behaviors such as empathy, altruism, and caregiving (e.g., Batson, 1987; Baumeister et al., 1994; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, Chapter 2, this volume). Shame mediates the negative emotional and physical health consequences of social stigma. Victims of physical abuse (Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 2002) and HIV-positive males (Gruenewald, Dickerson, & Kemeny, Chapter 5, this volume) suffer poorer emotional and physical health if they feel ashamed of their stigma. Shame is also associated with depression and chronic anger (Harder, 1995; H. B. Lewis, 1971), and is a core component of the narcissistic, antisocial, and borderline personality disorders (Harder, 1995).

Yet, despite their centrality to psychological functioning, the self-conscious emotions have received considerably less attention from emotion researchers than the so-called basic emotions such as joy, fear, and sadness (Campos, 1995; Fischer & Tangney, 1995). Overall, the field of emotion research has expanded dramatically in recent years, yet this increase is only beginning to be matched by a corresponding increase in research on self-conscious emotions. Instead, emotion researchers have focused on emotions that are biologically based, shared with other animals, panculturally experienced, and identifiable via discrete, universally recognized facial expressions—in other words, emotions that can be studied without reliance on verbal reports of internal experience. From this perspective, only a small subset of emotions represented in the natural language—anger, fear, disgust, sadness, happiness, and surprise—are considered important (Ekman, 1992; Izard, 1971). These six have been labeled “basic” emotions because of their biological basis, evolved origins, universality, and location (in most cases) at the basic level in hierarchical classifications of emotion terms (Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O’Connor, 1987). Self-conscious emotions, in contrast, show weaker evidence of universality: their antecedents, subjective experience, and consequences may differ across cultures (Eid & Diener, 2001; Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995; Menon & Shweder, 1994; Wong & Tsai, Chapter 12, this volume; Li & Fischer, Chapter 13, this volume; but see Breugelmans & Poortinga, 2006), and researchers have only recently identified cross-culturally recognized nonverbal expressions (Haidt & Keltner, 1999; Tracy & Robins, 2006a). Moreover, self-conscious emotions are subsumed by basic emotions in linguistic hierarchical classifications (e.g., sadness subsumes shame, joy subsumes pride; Shaver et al., 1987; Edelstein & Shaver, Chapter 11, this volume).

Methodological roadblocks have also hindered research on the self-conscious emotions, which in some cases may be more difficult to elicit in the laboratory than basic emotions such as fear, disgust, and joy. Experimental procedures used to elicit basic emotions (e.g., photographs, film clips) seem less effective in eliciting self-conscious emotions. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine an ethical manipulation that would generate shame in all individuals, partly because self-conscious emotions require more psychologically complex and individualized elicitors. Furthermore, even if self-conscious emotions could be effectively elicited, it may be more difficult to reliably assess the resultant experiences. There are several reliable self-report measures of self-conscious emotional dispositions, but standardized procedures for assessing online self-conscious emotions from nonverbal behaviors are only beginning to be developed (Robins, Nofhle, & Tracy, Chapter 24, this

volume). In contrast, there are a variety of coding schemes for assessing basic emotions through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors, such as the Emotion–Facial Action Coding System (EM-FACS) for coding facial expressions (Ekman & Rosenberg, 1997).

Although the historical emphasis on basic emotions is understandable, we believe the time is ripe to devote greater attention to self-conscious emotions. The theoretical and methodological lessons learned from the study of basic emotions can be applied to research on the more psychologically complex self-conscious emotions. Regardless of whether self-conscious emotions are universal and have clear-cut neurobiological bases, if an individual subjectively feels ashamed, guilty, embarrassed, or proud, then that, in itself, is an important psychological event with implications for the individual's future behavior, decisions, and mental and physical health. Moreover, the methodological impediments to the study of self-conscious emotions are not intractable. Similar issues were raised several decades ago when many psychologists argued that emotions in general could not be studied scientifically. A handful of emotion researchers questioned this claim and struggled against the zeitgeist to develop the field of affective science. We believe it is time to approach the study of self-conscious emotions in the same systematic and comprehensive manner.

In our view, self-conscious emotions should be treated as a special class of emotions. As “cognition-dependent” emotions (Izard, Ackerman, & Schultz, 1999), self-conscious emotions require a distinct theoretical model specifying their antecedent cognitions. In fact, the absence of such a model may have impeded self-conscious emotion research and contributed to their relative neglect.

In this chapter, we briefly describe the unique features that distinguish self-conscious from basic emotions, and explain why these features prevent generally accepted models of emotions from adequately capturing the self-conscious emotion process. We next present an appraisal-based process model of self-conscious emotions. This model was first formulated in Tracy and Robins (2004a), but has since been amended in response to thoughtful commentaries (*Psychological Inquiry*, 2004, vol. 15, pp. 126–170) and recent empirical research (Tracy & Robins, 2006b; Tracy & Robins, 2007a). We conclude by discussing the model's broader implications for research on self and emotion.

THE NEED FOR A THEORETICAL MODEL

Distinct Features of Self-Conscious Emotions

Below, we briefly describe five major features of self-conscious emotions that distinguish them from non-self-conscious emotions (for greater detail, see Tracy & Robins, 2004a). In our view, a comprehensive model of self-conscious emotions must account for each of these features.

1. *Self-conscious emotions require self-awareness and self-representations.* First and foremost, self-conscious emotions differ from basic emotions because they require self-awareness and self-representations. Although basic emotions like fear and sadness *can* and often do involve self-evaluative processes, only self-conscious emotions *must* involve these processes (Buss, 2001; Lewis, Sullivan, Stangor, & Weiss, 1989; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). A sense of self as conceived by theorists since William James (1890) includes both an ongoing sense of self-awareness (the “I” self) and the capacity for complex self-representations (the “me” self, or the mental representations that constitute one's

identity). Together, these self processes make it possible for self-evaluations, and therefore self-conscious emotions, to occur.

Importantly, by self-representations, we do not mean simply the cognitive contents of the personal self, but also relational, social, and collective self-representations. We are social creatures, so our self-representations reflect how we see ourselves vis-à-vis close others (e.g., as a romantic partner), social groups (e.g., as a professor), and broader cultural collectives (e.g., as a woman, as an American).

2. *Self-conscious emotions emerge later in childhood than basic emotions.* A second distinctive feature of self-conscious emotions is that they develop later than basic emotions (Izard, 1971). Most basic emotions emerge within the first 9 months of life (e.g., Campos, Barrett, Lamb, Goldsmith, & Stenberg, 1983); in fact, the primacy of these emotions in ontogeny is one reason for their classification as “basic” (Izard, 1992). In contrast, even generalized feelings of self-consciousness (sometimes considered an early form of embarrassment) do not develop until around 18–24 months (M. Lewis, 2000). More complex self-conscious emotions, such as shame, guilt, and pride, emerge even later, possibly by the end of the child’s third year of life (Izard et al., 1999; Lagattuta & Thompson, Chapter 6, this volume; Lewis, Alessandri, & Sullivan, 1992; Stipek, 1995).

3. *Self-conscious emotions facilitate the attainment of complex social goals.* Emotions are assumed to have evolved through natural selection to facilitate survival and reproductive goals (which we will refer to as “survival goals”). It is easy to understand how a basic emotion might promote survival goals—for example, fear may cause an individual to run away from a predator, thereby enhancing his or her chances for survival in the face of threat. In contrast, we believe that self-conscious emotions evolved primarily to promote the attainment of specifically *social* goals, such as the maintenance or enhancement of status, or the prevention of group rejection (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Tracy & Robins, 2004b). Humans evolved to navigate within a social structure that has complex layers of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes nontransitive social hierarchies (e.g., the highest status hunters were not always the highest status warriors). Survival, in our evolutionary history, depended on our capacity to overcome numerous complicated social problems, including “dyadic, triadic, or group-level cooperation; smooth group functioning; cheating; detection of cheaters; intragroup (and, particularly, intrasexual) competition, and intergroup competition” (Sedikides & Skowronski, 1997, p. 92). These dynamics may have promoted the evolution of a special set of emotions geared toward facilitating the achievement of social goals alone. Consistent with this account, self-conscious emotions seem to be present only in humans and other species (e.g., great apes) with highly complex and frequently shifting social hierarchies (de Waal, 1989; Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Leary, Chapter 3, this volume).

Collectively, the self-conscious emotions are assumed to promote behaviors that increase the stability of social hierarchies and affirm status roles (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). More specifically, shame and embarrassment may promote appeasement and avoidance behaviors after a social transgression, guilt may promote apology and confession after a social trespass, and pride may promote boastfulness and other approach-oriented behaviors after a socially valued success (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Nofle & Robins, 2006; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tracy & Robins, in press). These social goals, in turn, facilitate survival and reproduction—for example, the social goal of befriending an ally can be seen as an intermediary step toward the survival goal of finding food.

4. *Self-conscious emotions do not have discrete, universally recognized facial expressions.* Each of the six basic emotions has a discrete, universally recognized facial

expression (Ekman, 2003). In contrast, researchers have failed to identify distinct facial expressions for any self-conscious emotion. They have, however, found distinct expressions that include bodily posture or head movement combined with facial expression for embarrassment, pride, and shame (Izard, 1971; Keltner, 1995; Tracy & Robins, 2004b). Furthermore, recent research conducted among isolated tribal villagers in Burkina Faso suggests that at least two of these expressions—pride and shame—may be universally recognized (Tracy & Robins, 2006a).

There are several possible explanations for the absence of discrete face-only expressions in self-conscious emotions. First, the more complex postural or bodily signals associated with embarrassment, pride, and shame may better fit the more complex messages likely sent by these emotions. A quick facial expression may be adequate for telling conspecifics “Run!,” but a more complex bodily expression may better convey the more complicated message “I just did something that makes me deserve high status.” Second, self-conscious emotions may be expressed more frequently through language than through nonverbal expressions. Although facial expressions have the advantage of being automatic and immediate, self-conscious emotions communicate messages that are typically less urgent, perhaps allowing for more deliberate processing and the production of verbal language. For example, conveying one’s guilt over a social transgression is important, but it is important over a longer time frame than conveying one’s fear about the presence of a predator.

Third, the expression of self-conscious emotions may, at times, be maladaptive, making it more important that these expressions be regulated. Facial expressions are more difficult to regulate than body movements and posture because many of the facial muscle contractions involved are involuntary (Eibl-Eisenfeldt, 1989). Although in contemporary society we may wish we could control the expression of all of our emotions, in our evolutionary history it was clearly more adaptive that our (basic) emotions be automatically expressed. The expression of self-conscious emotions, in contrast, may be detrimental to fitness. For example, in many cultures it is not acceptable to openly display pride, and such displays may lower likeability (Eid & Diener, 2001; Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2000; Paulhus, 1998; Zammuner, 1996).

5. *Self-conscious emotions are cognitively complex.* A fifth distinctive feature of self-conscious emotions is that they are more cognitively complex than basic emotions (Izard et al., 1999; M. Lewis, 2000). In order to experience fear, individuals need very few cognitive capacities; they must simply appraise an event as threatening their survival goals (e.g., Lazarus, 1991). To experience shame, however, an individual must have the capacity to form stable self-representations and to consciously self-reflect (i.e., direct attentional focus toward those representations). These two capacities allow the individual to engage in a host of complex self-evaluative processes that elicit self-conscious emotions, as we explain below. Basic emotions can involve these complex processes, but, unlike self-conscious emotions, they also can (and often do) occur with much simpler appraisals (e.g., LeDoux, 1996).

Importance of the Distinction

As these five distinctive features make clear, the self-conscious emotions are a unique class of emotions that cannot be simplistically grouped with other emotions that do not critically involve the self. This does not mean, however, that the self-conscious emotions have nothing in common with the basic emotions. Kemeny, Gruenewald, and Dickerson

(2004) have argued that emotions can be viewed as varying on a continuum from basic to self-conscious rather than as existing in one of two discrete classes. In our view, basic and self-conscious emotions are best conceptualized as “fuzzy” categories, with each emotion varying in the extent to which it is a good or bad exemplar of each category. From this perspective, shame and pride are particularly good exemplars of the self-conscious emotion category because they require self-representations and self-awareness, emerge later in development, do not have nonverbal expressions that can be recognized from the face alone, and are cognitively complex. Yet, if these two emotions are also universal, adaptive, and accompanied by functional physiological or endocrine responses, as accumulating evidence seems to suggest (Gruenewald et al., Chapter 5, this volume; Tracy & Robins, 2006a), then they may also meet the criteria for good exemplars of the basic emotion category.

In contrast, guilt seems to lack any kind of recognizable nonverbal expression, shows little evidence of universality (Haidt & Keltner, 1999), and is unlikely to have discrete physiological correlates. Thus, guilt may be a worse exemplar of the basic emotion category. However, guilt is cognitively complex, requires the capacity to self-reflect and make causal attributions (a prerequisite for self-conscious emotions, explained below), and serves important social functions. For these reasons, guilt is a very good exemplar of the self-conscious emotion category.

The important point, for the purposes of this chapter (and this book as a whole), is that distinguishing between these two categories is important and meaningful, and will provide a valuable framework for research on the similarities and differences between emotions within and across categories. For example, despite recent evidence that at least one self-conscious emotion expression (pride) shows the basic emotion characteristics of brief duration, high recognizability, and recognition even among children (Tracy, 2005; Tracy & Robins, 2004b; Tracy, Robins, & Lagatutta, 2005), the question remains: Why are basic emotions expressed in the face, whereas self-conscious emotions clearly require nonfacial elements? This is a noteworthy distinction, and examining it further may help clarify how and why the self-conscious emotions evolved. By conceptualizing the two classes as fuzzy rather than as discrete categories, we can avoid debates about whether a particular emotion is basic or self-conscious, and begin to explore the phylogenetic reasons these categories exist. Perhaps the degree to which an emotion is a good exemplar of each category reveals something important about when and why it came to be a part of the human behavioral repertoire.

Furthermore, this distinction provides the basis for the development of a process model delineating the cognitive antecedents of self-conscious emotions. Such a model can help move the field beyond intuitive definitions of self-conscious emotions—which are ubiquitous in the literature—by defining them in terms of underlying (and presumably universal) processes. If emotions are defined in terms of processes, questions about individual and cultural differences need not be about whether the emotion is the same or different, experienced or not experienced, or important or not important in different individuals or cultures, but rather whether (and how) the underlying process varies. This framework would promote a more explanatory and less descriptive approach.

Limitations of Extant Models of Emotion

According to most emotion theorists, emotions are initiated by the perception of a stimulus, which is evaluated (appraised) either consciously or unconsciously, setting off an “affect

program” (e.g., Ekman, 1992). This program is assumed to be a discrete neural pattern that produces a coordinated set of responses, including action readiness and associated behaviors, physiological changes, a discrete facial expression, and a subjective feeling state. This model assumes a very simple appraisal process, which may not be accurate for the self-conscious emotions. Although appraisal theories of emotion have revised and extended the generic model by suggesting potentially relevant appraisal dimensions (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2001; Scherer, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), they do not provide a clear, consensual picture of the precise set of appraisals that generate self-conscious emotions.

Another limitation of extant models, as applied to the self-conscious emotions, is that they do not fully incorporate self-evaluative processes. There is typically little discussion of complex self processes such as self-focused attention, the activation of stable self-representations, and reflection upon discrepancies between a current self-state and some evaluative standard relevant to one’s identity (e.g., an ideal self-representation). A complete process model of self-conscious emotions requires the inclusion of these elements, which constitute a large part of what differentiates self-conscious from non-self-conscious emotions.

A THEORETICAL PROCESS MODEL OF SELF-CONSCIOUS EMOTIONS

Figure 1.1 shows our model of the self-conscious emotion process (Tracy & Robins, 2004a). The model builds on previous theory and research on causal attributions and emotions (e.g., Covington & Omelich, 1981; Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984; Weiner, 1985); cognitive appraisals and emotions (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2001; Roseman, 2001; Ellsworth & Smith, 1988); the cognitive antecedents of shame, guilt, and pride (e.g., M. Lewis, 2000; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Tangney, 1991); and self-evaluative processes (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998; Cooley, 1902; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Higgins, 1987).

Survival-Goal Relevance: Is the Event Relevant to Survival and Reproduction?

As shown in Figure 1.1, the first appraisal in the model is an evaluation of whether the eliciting event is relevant to survival and reproduction (e.g., Lazarus, 1991).¹ Events appraised as relevant to an individual’s survival goals will lead to one of the basic emotions, according to appraisal and functionalist theories of the basic emotion process (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Nesse, 1990; Roseman, 2001; Scherer, 2001). If an event is appraised as irrelevant to survival goals, it will elicit no emotion—unless it is appraised as relevant to identity goals (see below).²

Attentional Focus on the Self: Activation of Self-Representations

The next cognitive process in the model involves attentional focus (the “I” self) directed toward one’s self-representations (the “me” self), resulting in a state that has been labeled “objective self-awareness” (Duval & Wicklund, 1972) or “self-focused attention” (Carver & Scheier, 1998). This state and its corresponding activated self-representations allow individuals to make reflexive self-evaluations.

The self-representations activated in this process include actual or current self-representations (“I am independent”), ideal or hoped-for self-representations (“I want to

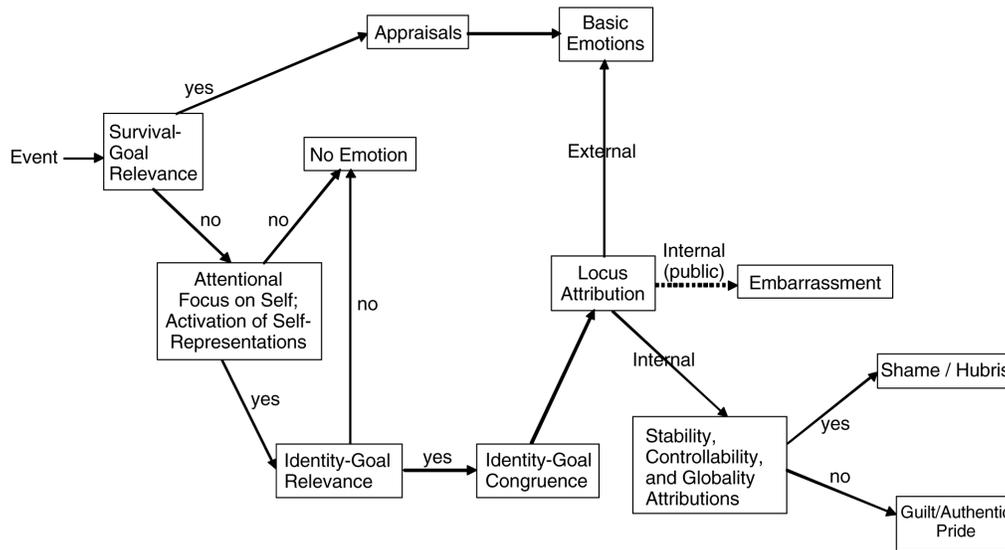


FIGURE 1.1. Process model of self-conscious emotions. The dotted arrow connecting “Locus Attribution” and “Embarrassment” indicates that a public self-representation must be activated in order for embarrassment to occur. From Tracy and Robins (2004a). Copyright 2004 by Jessica L. Tracy. Reprinted by permission.

become more independent”), and ought self-representations about fulfilling important obligations and duties (“My parents think I should become more independent”; Higgins, 1987). These self-representations may concern past, present, and future selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Wilson & Ross, 2001), and may refer to private (personal) and public (relational, social, and collective) aspects of the self (Robins, Norem, & Cheek, 1999). Collectively, these various representations constitute a person’s identity.

According to our theoretical model, self-representations must be activated (either explicitly or implicitly) in order for self-conscious emotions to occur; only through self-focused attention can the individual make comparisons between self-representations and the external emotion-eliciting event. In fact, recent research suggests that self-focused attention is a necessary precursor for the occurrence of several distinct emotions in response to self-discrepancies (Phillips & Silvia, 2005).

Identity-Goal Relevance: Does It Matter for Who I Am?

Once attentional focus is directed toward self-representations, events can be appraised for their relevance to identity goals (e.g., “Does it matter for who I am or would like to be?”). According to our model, any event that relates to an important self-representation is likely to be appraised as relevant to an identity goal and, assuming that additional appraisals (described below) occur, will generate a self-conscious emotion. In contrast, an event that is relevant only to an individual’s proximal adaptive fitness (and thus to the more simplistic, biological self that is shared with even single-cell organisms) will be appraised as survival-goal relevant. Importantly, events appraised as relevant to identity goals can also generate basic emotions (see below).

Several researchers have argued that the key goals at stake for self-conscious emotion elicitation are not about identity concerns, broadly defined, but rather about a more specific range of identity concerns involving interpersonal, social, or public evaluation (Baldwin & Baccus, 2004; Kemeny et al., 2004; Leary, Chapter 3, this volume). From our perspective, self-conscious emotions are experienced when a person's identity is threatened or elevated—which can occur in public or private, and in interpersonal or task contexts, as long as the eliciting event is relevant to the aspirations and ideals (as well as the fears) of the self. In fact, social evaluations will not elicit self-conscious emotions if the evaluated individual does not make the corresponding self-evaluative appraisals. For example, the public praise of others will not produce pride in individuals who discount the evaluations (e.g., if they have low self-esteem; Brown, 1998), and negative evaluations will not produce shame if they pertain to non-self-relevant domains, as James (1890) noted: “I, who for the time have staked my all on being a psychologist, am mortified if others know much more psychology than I. But I am contented to wallow in the grossest ignorance of Greek” (p. 310).

Thus, based on decades of research on the self, we argue that negative social evaluations elicit shame *because* they activate a host of self-evaluative processes, which are described by our model. These self-evaluative processes necessarily mediate the relation between social evaluation and self-conscious emotions. By emphasizing a broader range of identity processes than social evaluation, our model allows for the potentially private nature of these emotions—the fact that they can occur in response to events of which only the self is aware—and places social evaluation at the origins of the self-concept (i.e., our identities are created through early socialization), and not of the emotions that are triggered by it.

Identity-Goal Congruence: Is This Event Congruent with My Goals for Who I Am and Who I Want to Be?

Once an event has been appraised as relevant to identity goals, the next step is for it to be appraised as congruent or incongruent with these goals (see Figure 1.1). This appraisal determines the valence of the outcome emotion: positive or pleasurable emotions are elicited by goal-congruent events, and negative or displeasurable emotions are elicited by goal-incongruent events (Lazarus, 1991).³

How do individuals decide whether an event is congruent or incongruent with identity goals? Current self-representations, activated by the emotion-eliciting event (e.g., failure on an exam), are compared with stable, long-term self-representations, including actual (“I am a successful student”) and ideal self-representations (“I want to be a successful student”; Higgins, 1987). Individuals may notice a discrepancy between current, actual, and ideal self-representations, and appraise the event as identity-goal incongruent. As shown in Figure 1.1, this appraisal would eventually elicit a negative self-conscious emotion such as shame or guilt.

Our emphasis on the role of discrepancies between current self-representations and more stable self-representations is based on conceptualizations of self and emotions first articulated by Cooley (1902) and James (1890). More recently, Carver and Scheier (1998) proposed that positive and negative affect are the output of a cybernetic self-regulation process, such that awareness of a discrepancy between a current self-state and some evaluative standard (e.g., an ideal self-representation) generates negative affect, whereas reduction of such a discrepancy generates positive affect. Our model builds on this view

by specifying the distinct types of negative and positive emotions that are generated by these discrepancies.

Internality Attributions: Did the Event Occur Because of Something about Me?

Once an event has been appraised as either congruent or incongruent with identity goals, the next step is to determine its cause. This decision involves a set of appraisals, the most important of which concerns causal locus: Is the event due to an internal (within the individual) or an external (outside the individual) cause? The attribution of causal locus (Heider, 1958) has been studied by previous appraisal theorists, who refer to it as “credit or blame to oneself” (Lazarus, 1991), “accountability” (Smith & Lazarus, 1993), “agency” (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Roseman, 1991), “responsibility” (Frijda, 1987), or “causal attribution check” (Scherer, 2001).

Of note, we do not conceptualize this appraisal in the narrow sense of attribution theory (e.g., “Did I cause the event?”), but rather in the more general sense of “Is something about me or related to me the cause of the event?,” where “me” is broadly defined to include all aspects of one’s identity. This distinction is particularly important in the case of embarrassment, where internal appraisals are often made about events for which one had no responsibility or intentionality (e.g., being the recipient of spilled soup). This broader sense of internalization is also relevant for situations where individuals feel shame or pride about the actions of someone else—such as a family member, close friend, or even a stranger who represents a shared collective identity (e.g., an Olympic athlete from one’s country). In such cases, the self-conscious emotion may be experienced “vicariously” (Lickel, Schmader, & Spanovic, Chapter 19, this volume) or more directly, if the individual responsible for the emotion’s elicitation represents a shared identity with the individual experiencing the emotion. In other words, we may be aware of and empathic toward someone else’s embarrassment without feeling it ourselves (e.g., the vicarious embarrassment that occurs when we watch an actor in a play forget his lines), but if we identify with the individual such that his or her mishap feels like our own, where “our own” is defined in the broader, collective sense, then the embarrassment we feel is likely to be direct, and not vicarious (e.g., if our romantic partner commits a social faux pas). Self-conscious emotions may be unique in this regard, due to the particular importance of self-evaluations in their elicitation, and the fact that the self can, and often does, include collective self-representations.

As shown in Figure 1.1, self-conscious emotions occur when individuals attribute the eliciting event to internal causes (M. Lewis, 2000; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Weiner, 1985). Supporting this claim, studies have shown that internal attributions for failure tend to produce guilt and shame, and internal attributions for success tend to produce pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007a; Weiner, 1985; Weiner, Graham, & Chandler, 1982). Similarly, the appraisal dimensions of “agency” and “self-accountability” have been found to predict self-conscious emotions (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Roseman, 1991; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). In contrast, attributing events to external causes typically leads to basic emotions (Russell & McAuley, 1986), even when the event is identity-goal relevant. In fact, in contemporary society, this causal pathway may be the most typical route for the elicitation of basic emotions, given that threats to survival are less frequent than threats to identity. When people feel angry or afraid, their feelings were more likely to have been triggered by an external attribution for an identity (or “ego”) threat, such as an insult from a coworker, than by a direct threat to their survival.

Stability, Globality, and Controllability Attributions: Is It Something I Always Do and Can't Control? Is It Something about Who I Am?

Besides locus, three other causal attributions are important for the elicitation of self-conscious emotions, and especially for differentiating among self-conscious emotions. These attributions concern the *stability*, *controllability*, and *globality* of causes. Central to the attribution process, these causal factors have been empirically linked to various emotional states (e.g., Brown & Weiner, 1984; Covington & Omelich, 1981; Niedenthal, Tangney, & Gavanski, 1994; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992; Tracy & Robins, 2006b, 2007a; Weiner et al., 1982; Weiner & Kukla, 1970). Although theoretically independent, controllability and stability are highly correlated; stable causes are more likely to be global and uncontrollable, and unstable causes are more likely to be specific and controllable (Peterson, 1991). Nonetheless, others have argued that controllability contributes additional variance to emotion outcomes beyond other dimensions (Weiner, 1991). As described below, we believe that globality, stability, and controllability attributions influence which particular self-conscious emotion is elicited after events are internalized.

Shame and Guilt

Several emotion theorists have argued that shame involves negative feelings about the stable, global self, whereas guilt involves negative feelings about a specific behavior or action taken by the self (H. B. Lewis, 1971; M. Lewis, 2000; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Following this theoretical conception, our model specifies that internal, stable, uncontrollable, and global attributions (“I’m a dumb person”) lead to shame, whereas internal, unstable, controllable, and specific attributions (“I didn’t try hard enough”) lead to guilt. Supporting this distinction, studies have shown that individuals who blame poor performances on ability (an internal, stable, uncontrollable factor) are more likely to feel shame, whereas those who blame poor performance on effort (an internal, unstable, controllable factor) are more likely to feel guilt (Brown & Weiner, 1984; Covington & Omelich, 1981; Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984; Tracy & Robins, 2006b). Furthermore, individuals who tend to make internal, unstable, controllable attributions tend to be prone to guilt, whereas those who tend to make internal, stable, uncontrollable attributions tend to be prone to shame (Tangney et al., 1992; Tracy & Robins, 2006b). In addition, Niedenthal et al. (1994) found that counterfactual statements about changing a stable, global aspect of the self-concept (e.g., “if only I were a better friend”) lead to greater shame and less guilt than do counterfactuals changing a specific behavior (e.g., “if only I had not flirted with his date”).

Embarrassment

Like shame and guilt, embarrassment requires an appraisal of identity-goal relevance and identity-goal incongruence, and attributions to internal causes. However, unlike shame and guilt, embarrassment does not seem to require any further attributions, and, as conceptualized in our model, can occur only when attentional focus is directed toward the *public self*, activating corresponding public self-representations (Miller, Chapter 14, this volume). That is, an individual can become embarrassed by events caused by internal, stable, uncontrollable, and global aspects of the public self, such as repeatedly being publicly exposed as incompetent; or by events caused by internal, unstable, controllable, and

specific aspects of the public self, such as spilling soup on one's boss. Importantly, activation of the public self does not require a public context. Rather, the public self is always present because it reflects the way we see ourselves through the (real or imagined) eyes of others. Thus, with regard to whether embarrassment is likely to occur, the crucial question is whether the public self has been activated, not whether the action occurred in a public context.

This account implies that embarrassment is less cognition-dependent than shame or guilt, both of which seem to depend on additional appraisal dimensions (i.e., stability, controllability, and globality). Supporting this claim, embarrassment emerges earlier in childhood than shame or guilt (Lewis et al., 1989), and, as a result, several researchers have placed it within a "first class" of self-conscious emotions, in contrast to the "second class" of guilt, shame, and pride, which require greater cognitive capacity (Izard et al., 1999; Lewis et al., 1989).⁴

Authentic and Hubristic Pride

According to our model, there are two facets of pride that parallel shame and guilt. Global pride in the self ("I'm proud of who I am"), referred to as "hubris" by M. Lewis (2000) and as "alpha pride" by Tangney et al. (1992), may result from attributions to internal, stable, uncontrollable, and global causes. Conversely, a feeling of pride that we refer to as "authentic" based on specific achievements ("I'm proud of what I did") may result from attributions to internal, unstable, controllable, and specific causes.

Recent research provides empirical support for this distinction (Tracy & Robins, 2007a, and Chapter 15, this volume). Two distinct facets of pride emerge from analyses of the semantic meaning of pride-related words, the dispositional tendency to experience pride, and the feelings associated with an actual pride experience. The content of these facets fits with the theoretical distinction between "authentic" and "hubristic" pride; specifically, authentic pride is associated with concepts and feelings like "accomplished," "confident," and "self-worth," whereas hubristic pride is more associated with such concepts as "arrogant," "egotistical," and "pompous." Moreover, the findings from several studies support our claim that authentic pride is more likely to result from internal, unstable, and controllable attributions for a positive event, whereas hubristic pride is more likely to result from internal, stable, and uncontrollable attributions for the same event (Tracy & Robins, 2007a, and Chapter 15, this volume).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical model presented in this chapter uses an appraisal-based approach to integrate two prominent areas of research in social-personality psychology: the self and emotions. The resulting synthesis has the potential to provide insights into extant findings in both literatures and to suggest important directions for future research.

Specifically, to better understand the functions and outcomes of the emotions that mediate self processes (e.g., self-esteem, self-enhancement), self researchers can utilize our theoretical model to specify the exact emotions that may be involved. If, for example, self-enhancement increases positive affect, researchers can test whether it causes people to feel joy, authentic pride, hubristic pride, or some combination of these. From a discrete emotions perspective, each of these will produce divergent behaviors, thoughts, and feel-

ings, so differentiating among them will facilitate our understanding of the larger process and our ability to make predictions. If we can focus on the particular emotion that accounts for the relation between two variables, the resultant correlation will be stronger than one found using a composite of different emotions, some relevant and some not.

To take a more specific example, our model has implications for the large body of experimental research on reactions to feedback. Numerous studies have shown that, following an ego threat, low self-esteem individuals tend to experience negative affect and withdraw from the task (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989; Brown & Dutton, 1995). From a discrete emotions perspective, this withdrawal can be interpreted as a behavioral outcome of shame (H. B. Lewis, 1971; Lindsay-Hartz, 1984). Thus, the negative affect reported may more specifically reflect feelings of shame, and the outcome behaviors may be part of a coordinated functional response associated with the emotion. If failure represents a stable, global shortcoming of the self, the adaptive solution *is* to withdraw and avoid repeated attempts at success or social contact, which could further reveal the self's inadequacies.

In contrast, individuals high in narcissism do not respond to ego threats with withdrawal; instead, they typically become angry and aggressive (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). This pattern may characterize Jeff Skilling's response to having his intelligence questioned by a Harvard admissions officer or to being indicted for fraud. One explanation for this alternate response to failure is that narcissists invoke a defensive process, using anger and aggression to avoid feeling shame (Scheff, 1998; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Our model points to the specific cognitive pathways that may make this process possible. Narcissists may make external attributions for ego threats, blaming others for their failures. This regulatory strategy would promote a basic emotion, like anger, and would allow for the circumvention of conscious shame. This account suggests testable hypotheses—for example, individuals with genuine, nonnarcissistic, high self-esteem should respond to ego threats by taking responsibility and making internal, unstable, specific attributions; they thus should feel guilt rather than shame or anger.

To take another prominent example from the self literature, our model has implications for affective self-regulation. As was mentioned above, Carver and Scheier (1998) have argued that awareness of a discrepancy between a current self-state and a goal state results in negative affect. We have built on their model to argue that discrepancies between current and ideal states more specifically generate shame or guilt; this reinterpretation may improve our understanding of the behavioral outcomes associated with these discrepancies. In the Carver–Scheier (1998) model, discrepancies motivate behaviors that produce faster progress toward a goal state (i.e., increased effort to achieve goals). When we view the negative affect that is generated by the discrepancy as guilt, we can integrate functionalist theories of emotions into our interpretation and explain the progress-oriented behaviors: guilt functions to promote reparative action and increased future efforts (Barrett, 1995; Lindsay-Hartz, 1984; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Furthermore, when discrepancies motivate withdrawal and avoidance rather than increased effort toward reducing the discrepancy, we can make predictions about why this might be the case. From a functionalist perspective, we need not assume that the overarching Carver–Scheier model is wrong; instead, we can hypothesize that shame, rather than guilt (and rather than overly broad negative affect), is the mediating emotion in such cases.

In conclusion, the literature on self-conscious emotions is still in its infancy, and needs an overarching, integrative model to provide structure and direction to the field. The model presented here may serve as one potential starting point, and we hope that,

with reformulations and extensions from the growing body of empirical research on the topic (much of which is described in subsequent chapters in this volume), the field will progress toward a consensual model that can provide the foundation for a cumulative science of self-conscious emotions.

NOTES

1. Figure 1.1 implies a clear order and a serial, step-by-step sequence of conscious appraisals. However, the actual process presumably includes numerous feedback loops and may work bidirectionally and in parallel. Moreover, many of the appraisal processes are likely to occur implicitly. Nonetheless, to simplify explanation of the model, we discuss the emotion process described in Figure 1.1 as if it occurred in a simple serial order. Appraisal theorists have argued that representational models such as this usefully elucidate appraisal theories of emotions (Kappas, 2001), and several theorists have proposed models that seem to work in a clear sequential order (e.g., Scherer, 2001). Furthermore, even if the processes described in Figure 1.1 actually occur simultaneously or in parallel, our model can elucidate the mental algorithms through which these processes determine which particular self-conscious emotion is produced.
2. It is possible, however, that there exists a small class of eliciting events that can produce emotions without appraisals of goal relevance. For example, viewing a work of art or a beautiful landscape might elicit joy or awe with no cognitive mediation.
3. Although not shown in Figure 1.1, the appraisal of goal congruency would lead to two separate paths, depending on congruency or incongruency. The subsequent series of appraisals are identical, but the outcome emotions are either positive or negative. To simplify the figure, we combine the two paths and show the specific positive and negative emotions at the end of the model.
4. However, it is possible that a low-level, pre-“first-class” self-conscious emotion—“generalized self-consciousness”—can occur in response to the activation of self-representations but prior to any further appraisals. Lewis (2000) labeled this state “embarrassment as exposure,” and noted that it occurs in response to praise or public attention and does not require any negative evaluation of self. Most researchers distinguish this state from the later developing, more cognitively complex form of embarrassment, which results from additional appraisals in our model (M. Lewis, 2000; Miller, 1995).

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