

TOWARDS A MATURE SHAME CULTURE:

**THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL GROWTH**

by
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Declaration:

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Tony Webb

Dated 30, April 2003

Abstract

Towards a mature shame culture seeks to identify new tools for social change through a deeper understanding of the social psychology of shame and guilt.

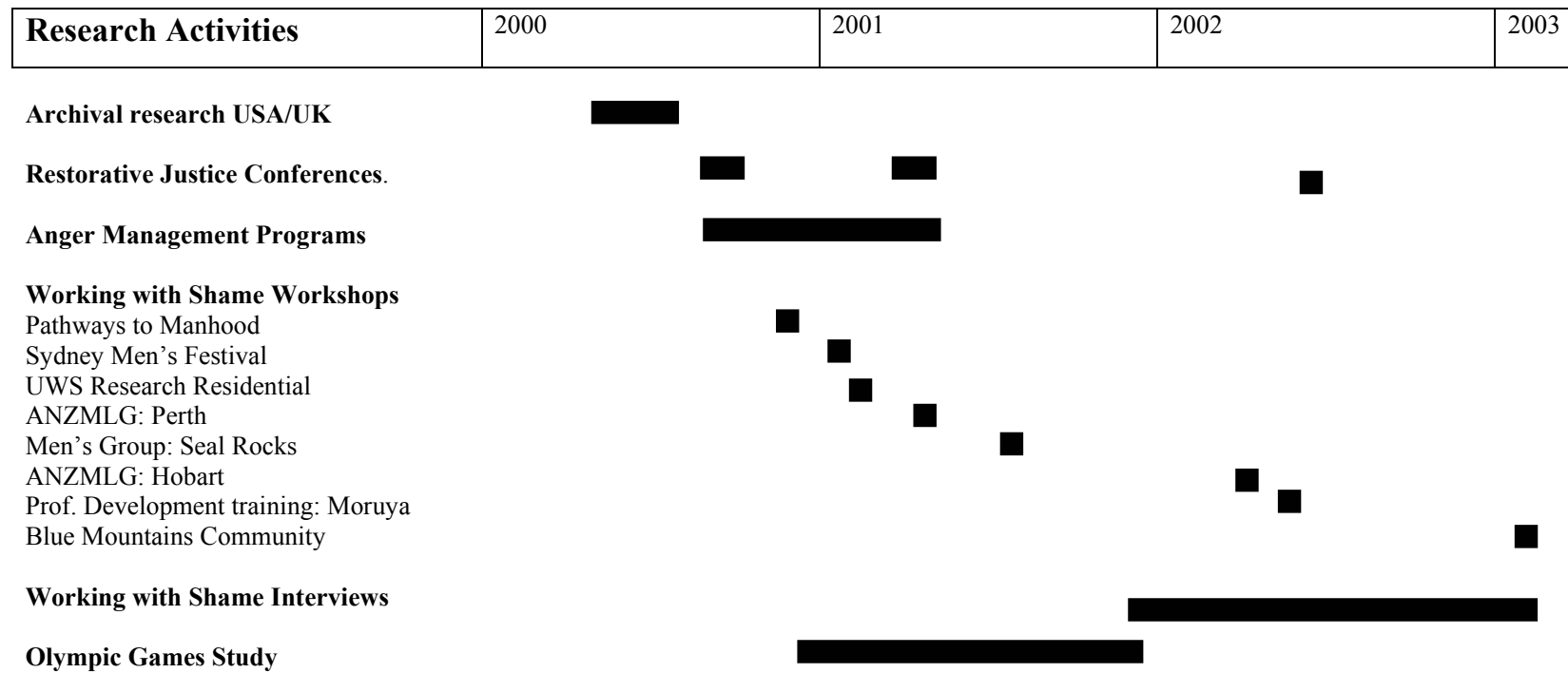
The study takes as its starting point a suggestion by Richard Hauser and Hephzibah Menhuin-Hauser that many personal and social crises can be interpreted through the lens of a late 20th Century transition from a guilt culture to an ‘infantile’ shame culture. Implicit in this is the need to develop more socially mature forms.

This idea is placed in the context of praxis for personal/social growth drawing on previously unpublished material from the Hauser’s archive. The study then explores a theoretical framework for understanding the social psychology of emotions in general, and shame in particular. It draws on affect psychology, micro-sociology and social attachment theory. Shame is located primarily as a **social** emotion, with a normative function of monitoring social bonds between people - rather than, as it is usually framed, as a ‘self-conscious’, ‘negative’ and ‘pathological’ emotion. This reframing of the experience highlights the ‘salutogenic’ function of shame in building and strengthening relationships. In this frame much of what is commonly thought of as ‘shame’ can be seen to be the result of unacknowledged shame, where other emotions are bound to the sense of shame and carried as ‘toxic’ memories of unresolved shame experiences. This pattern of unresolved shame can be seen at the root of the personal and social pathologies of violence and alienation.

The study charts how attempts to communicate this salutogenic perspective on shame led to an experiential education workshop **Working with Shame**. It draws on the experience of participants in this workshop in a variety of settings (including anger management programs, workshops at men’s gatherings, and community professional development training, and other group work). Interview data is used to illustrate how the masking of the physiological expression of shame, principally with anger and/or fear, interrupts the affective-emotional signals between people that would normally result in empathic responses and salutogenic outcomes.

Finally, the study explores how this perspective on shame might inform social crisis-intervention programs at community level; and how it might be applied to the larger, and longer-term challenge of bringing about cultural change. It suggests key features that mark the transition from ‘infantile’ to ‘juvenile’ forms of shame and some of the factors limiting further growth towards shame-maturity.

Timeline of the major elements of the study



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For Richard

CONTENTS

Abstract.	iii
Timeline of the major elements of the study	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Preface.	xiii
Chapter 1. Introduction – a new look at an old devil.	
Why shame?	1
Ancient and modern shame cultures.	3
A Personal starting point.	5
From guilt to shame culture?	9
The shadow of shame.	12
Truth or usefulness?	14
The structure of this study.	15
The key questions.	15
Exploring the questions.	16
Chapter 2. Tools for personal and social change?	
A man and his work.	20
Social tools for a world in crisis.	23
Asking questions – barefoot action research.	24
How to make a social action survey.	27
Groups and leaders.	32
Personal and social age.	33
Violence and apathy.	37
A road map for exploring emotional and social change?	41
Catharsis.	42
Shame and guilt.	45
Rights and responsibilities.	51
Towards a more mature shame culture?	53

Chapter 3. A mirror for our emotions.

Seeing feelings.	57
Feeling and doing – emotions in social action.	58
Thinking about feelings.	60
Pulling faces – and naming them.	61
The evolution of feeling as a response to environment.	63
A framework for a theory of emotions.	64
Affect theory - seeing the expression of emotions.	66
The body language of feeling thought and action.	72
A universal language of feeling?	73
Affect as amplifier.	75
Affects, feelings, emotions and scripts.	81
Languages for talking about feelings.	85
A roadmap for emotional experience.	93
The basic affect-emotions.	95

Chapter 4. A window on shame

What is shame?	100
Feeling ‘shame’.	101
The language of shame.	103
A spectrum or family of shame feelings.	108
A compass of shame-avoiding behaviours.	110
Shame – consciousness of ‘self’ or of an ‘other’?	113
Shame - the social emotion?	114
Shame: emotional bridges and social bonds.	116
Shame in society – from micro to macro sociology.	118
Shame and ‘catharsis’.	121
Shame and ‘empathy’.	124
Feeling ‘guilty’ - a mask against shame?	127

Fear of shame.	130
The last refuge from feeling shame.	135
From guilt to shame culture?	138
Closing the window on shame theory.	139

Chapter 5. Working with shame – reframing the experience.

A communication challenge.	143
Reframing shame as a salutogenic experience.	144
The moment of shame.	145
Communicating Shame: theory and practice.	146
Starts, steps and stumbles.	147
The Restorative justice experience.	148
Case study 1:	
I didn't teach you to deal drugs in School – did I?	150
Case study 2:	
He doesn't show his emotions – just like his dad!	151
Men's group work.	154
In the deep end - anger management programs.	154
Men and boys – who's afraid of shame?	157
The spotlight of attention.	159
The body language of alienation, shame and empathy.	161

Chapter 6. The Working *with* Shame workshops.

A closer look at shame.	165
Research methodology.	165
An experiential education workshop.	167
Practicalities.	170
Introduction to the workshop.	171
The workshop exercises.	173

Exercise # 1: Superiority, inferiority and equality.	173
Exercise # 2: Pride and shame.	179
Exercise # 3: Sharing shame experiences.	186
Exercise # 4: A compass of shame.	196
Exercise # 5: Unmasking shame - the empathic response.	207
Debriefing the workshop.	225
A 'take-home' message?	227

Chapter 7: Shame, guilt and empathy.

Healing shame?	232
Personal, social and cultural shame.	232
Shame-pathology: the residues of unresolved shame.	234
The shame recovery movement.	235
A different approach to shame therapy?	241
Unmasking shame.	242
Shame: or anger, disgust, grief and fear?	243
Shame-grief: flooding the face.	244
Case study: Sorrow & forgiveness - a mask for shame?	247
Shame-fear.	250
Restimulated scripts.	254
Shame and empathy.	255
Reconnecting with shame.	258
Cognitive-behavioural and narrative approaches.	259
Affective work with shame.	262
Observing and noticing	267

Chapter 8: Towards a mature shame culture?

Where do we go from here?	270
Starting points for social change.	271

Men’s health and wellbeing - a community-based approach.	272
Stopping violence – gender and power or gender and shame?	274
Restorative shame – repairing relationship violence?	278
Shame and masculinity.	280
Shame-aware stopping-violence programs.	283
Shame culture.	285
Shame, human rights and social ecology.	291
A culture change - from guilt to shame?	292
A more mature shame culture?	298
A personal starting point.	300
Infantile, Juvenile, and adult shame.	301
The infantile to juvenile shame transition.	303
From Juvenile to adult shame.	305
Challenges on the path to shame-maturity.	309
Example 1: Social Capital - building trust via shame?	310
Example 2: A war against terror – or against shame?	311
Example3: Human rights institutions shame-based?	312
Example 4: Restorative or transformative justice?	313
Example 5: From shame to pride: the Sydney	
2000 Olympic Games.	315
A long way to go.	320
Conclusion.	322
 Bibliography.	 328
 Appendix: The Hauser archive.	 342

Table of figures

Fig 2.1. Personal and Social Age.	35
Fig 2.2. Violence and Apathy.	38
Fig 2.3. Social age of guilt and shame.	48
Fig 3.1. Table of suggested categories for primary affects by author and date.	74
Fig 3.2. Distress and Anger.	76
Fig 3.3. Interest, Fear and Surprise.	77
Fig 3.4. Enjoyment/joy and Laughter.	78
Fig 3.5. Affects feelings emotions and scripts.	83
Fig 4.1. A compass of shame-avoiding behaviours.	112
Fig 6.1. Responses to pride and shame .	181
Fig 6.2. Responses to pride and shame – positive and negative.	181
Fig 6.3. The floor compass of shame.	197
Fig 6.4. A shame-pride mandala?	214
Fig 8.1. Gender, power and powerlessness.	276
Fig 8.2. The shell of masculinity.	281
Fig 8.3. I didn't seek help for my violence because . . .	283
Fig 8.4. Three A's of 'Love': Attachment, Attunement and Attraction?	307

Preface

I wish I had said more about shame but I'll be chary of the word as it is often applied to mere branches of etiquette; when the moral sense does not strictly come into play; yet as I have often remarked there is but a fine distinction between the two cases . . .

I am glad that you lay so much stress on praise and blame, for I feared that I had made too much of this . . . in 99 cases out of 100 cases the praise and blame of our fellows determines . . . which line of conduct be followed . . . The value we set on public opinion depending . . . on the enduring social instincts which include sympathy.

What an awfully complex subject it is. I suppose that no two persons would ever quite agree and I expect hardly any one will agree with me. But as yet I nail my colours to the mast.

*With cordial thanks for all your trouble
Yours affectionately C.R. Darwin.¹*

This is a study about shame – perhaps our most difficult emotion in everyday life and still an area where academics often disagree. I compound the difficulty by recruiting shame as the emotional pivot around which we face a stark choice: either a wide range of current human, ecological crises escalate to breakdown; or we grow up! In the immature way that our increasingly global culture handles shame (or to be precise, fails to handle it) we can see the roots of both personal and social pathology. We face a cultural crisis - a challenge and an opportunity. From this broad geopolitical perspective I will progressively narrow the focus until we are exploring what happens in that moment when shame is unmasked on the human face - the effects this has on the one who is ‘shamefaced’, and on those who witness it. Then I will explore how our understanding of this moment might be applied in the world of human interaction, community and society – steps towards a more mature shame-aware culture.

The study began a long time ago. What is written here is but a small and the latest part of what I suspect is a life’s work. In writing it I have consciously chosen to write it as far as possible using the personal pronoun “I”. I am a part of this study not an independent ‘objective’ observer. Though I attempt to maintain ‘objectivity’ in the way I view the data, the focus of the study is the inter-subjective experience of shame and I am a part of that experience. I have therefore tried to present those parts that are about me in a way that they can be identified – and in this way allow the reader to see and keep a distance from that which is my personal experience. I have also deliberately, in many instances illustrated aspects of what may be a general experience in terms of the language of ‘I’ and ‘me’ rather than ‘you’ or ‘one’. If I can’t ‘own it’, as part of my experience, I am on shaky ground attributing it to another. Part of this comes out of the tradition in ‘men’s

¹ Darwin, 1871.

work’ and, as you will see, a large part of the empirical data for this study is derived from work with people active in the men’s movement. The language therefore honours the culture of this movement. Fortunately there is a growing academic tradition that finds a place for introspection as a research tool; one that is particularly relevant to this area of study.

In dealing with emotions – especially shame which, as this thesis will suggest, is pre-eminently the social emotion – I am dealing with relationships. This study will trace the relationship between my thoughts, feelings and actions and the thoughts, feelings and actions of others - many of whom, rather than being ‘researched’, have to a very large extent collaborated with me over the past three years. As well as my voice, I want the voices of these others to be heard. In some sections I have chosen to present these voices unedited and with little commentary. I have, after all, already exercised control over which voices will be used, where, to illustrate what point etc. I hope that these voices can speak for themselves and for some of the others who have walked with me on this journey who are not quoted here.

Where I use the concepts or ideas of others I have tried to give these a voice by use of words in single inverted commas ‘xxxx’. On occasions I have taken the liberty of presenting ideas ‘as if spoken’, in which case single commas are again used. Where words are a direct quote taken verbatim from text or an interview they are shown in double inverted commas and italics viz: “xxxx xxxxx xx”. Where I quote my own words these are shown in inverted commas without italics. I hope in this way to allow a clearer separation of the different contributions. In keeping with tradition, omissions are indicated by . . . in the quotes from both text and interview. The same convention is also used to indicate where one voice speaks over or interrupts another. Where, on occasions, words are unspoken but implied these are shown as {xxx xxxxxx}. Since an essential part of the thesis presented here is that emotions are triggered by ‘affect’ – the physiological response that is visible in terms of facial and ‘body language’ - some of the accompanying affective responses to the spoken words are shown in square brackets [xxxx].

I have chosen, as far as possible, to avoid referring to other academics and authorities in the body of the written text. I acknowledge the extensive work of others that has informed, guided and helped illustrate the work of this study with footnotes giving direction to the bibliography of sources. I also use footnotes to elaborate on some points where to do so in the text would impede the flow of the main argument.

There will, of necessity, be some repetition. The process of exploration – both my own in this study and, as I hope, by others as we move towards a more mature shame culture – involves

peeling off layers; gradually uncovering more of what is hidden and bringing it into the light. What I have tried to do is indicate some of the process of de-layering, revisiting some issues several times from different perspectives to reveal another piece of the puzzle that makes up an emerging picture of shame. Please bear with me in this. Mapping this field is not easily done as a linear process – especially as there are many layers and dimensions to exploring emotions in a cultural and social change context.

I come from an activist and action research tradition. My mentor Richard Hauser,² who you will meet in the pages that follow, was perhaps even more provocative than I have been so far. He would argue that in order to see what is really going on (and have some fun in the process) it is necessary to attack people's sacred cows. My thesis challenges much of what is regarded as accepted wisdom about shame in both academia and public discourse. Richard's, and my starting point is that the current situation is far from ideal and that the task is to try to make it better. Rather than limit analysis to what is, it is therefore more interesting to observe and try to make sense of what happens when we try to change it. This has now achieved some academic recognition in qualitative research where it has been suggested that we do not fully understand the inner structure of a social system until we try to change it – but this is not to say that we always succeed in changing it the way we hope!³ The result is a contribution to social change theory that is normative rather than just explanatory. About the way the world might **become** rather than how it **is** but with, I hope, enough grounding in practical work to indicate that such change is a feasible option.

Finally, what is presented here is a work in progress. Shortly after commencing the formal study on which this writing is based, I suggested that the current guilt-shame culture was the product of over two millennia of human social evolution. Changing it for the better – towards a more mature shame culture – is perhaps a two hundred year project; and I have perhaps twenty years left to work on this. What is written here is a report on progress in the first three.

Tony Webb. April 2003.

² The ideas of Richard Hauser provide a thread that links much of what follows in this study. For convenience (and as a reflection of the relationship) I will often refer to him as 'Richard' where the context permits this familiar use of his first name without ambiguity. In simply referring to 'Richard's' work I am conscious falling into the trap, as many have done, of placing his wife Hephzibah Menhuin-Hauser in his shadow. She was intimately involved in the process of generating and honing many of the ideas and I am as indebted to Hephzibah as to Richard for my understanding of these.

³ See Greenwood and Levin 1998 p 149.

Chapter 1. Introduction – a new look at an old devil.

*“How could the promptings of a brave heart, and truly manly breeding help him now? Nevertheless he has a further resource, **a sense of shame** that reigns supreme over all his ways. His deeds were free of all that deserves the name of falseness, since a sense of shame is rewarded in the end by esteem and, when all is said and done, is the soul’s crowning glory and a virtue to be practiced above all others”.*

Parzival – the Grail Legend.¹

Why shame?

Shame gets a lot of bad press these days. This was not always the case. Shame once had an honoured place in my culture.

For example: written in the early 13th Century, Von Eschenbach’s story of Parzival draws together the strands of a much older story through which many key aspects of the collective wisdom of the Anglo-Celtic and European cultures were handed from one generation to the next. The context is that Parzival, the young innocent destined to be the greatest Knight of the mythical realm of King Arthur, has stumbled into the Grail Castle where his host the Fisher King lies wounded and impotent (reflecting the wasteland that his kingdom has become). Parzival is shown four sacred mythical objects representing the natural-spiritual world but fails, from modesty, embarrassment (shame), politeness and conformity to advice he has been given on ‘correct behaviour’ to ask what all this means – the asking of which would have healed the king and kingdom. He wakes to find himself alone and leaves the Castle to spend the rest of his life trying to return to make good his mistake. Along the way (as mythical knights are wont to do) he achieves various conquests, always in the name of Arthur his king. Arriving unexpectedly at Arthur’s court he is welcomed, admired and acknowledged as among the greatest Knights ever. But then, at the height of this adulation he is abruptly brought down to earth by the arrival of Cundrie an old, ugly and outspoken woman – described as *‘sour yet proud’*. She publicly shames him (the words used are that she *‘has mortified’* him) for his failure to ask the question in the Grail Castle. And yet, the wisdom handed down through the centuries of the telling of this story is that of shame as a gift – *‘the soul’s crowning glory and a virtue . . . above all others’*

¹ Von Eschenbach, 1980, p 168

How far have we come from this! Today shame is, for most people, the emotion that dare not speak its name. Try suggesting that a person is feeling shame. The common reaction will be to suggest that it is anything but. Any other word is preferable. The reaction to the word '*Shame*' is, in this my culture today and in many others, almost universally negative. We find it hard to accept shame. We try hard to avoid it – sometimes at any cost. Consider how men in war will put themselves in the path of sometimes certain death rather than face the shame of being seen as a coward in the eyes of their mates. We push shame into the shadows – from where it often comes back to bite us in the rear. Consider how we lie . . . – I'm sorry, was that too shameful for you? Consider how often we massage the truth about reality to present ourselves and our actions in the best, or at least in a favourable light. And yet, what if we knew that presenting our deeds, like Parzival, '*free of all that deserves the name of falseness*' would bring us immediate and tangible benefits – not just virtue in the after life or the next but here and now. Do I hear you say 'What if!' 'In your dreams!'

Yet, perhaps in our dreams . . . ? In the language of Jungian psychology, it is common for those aspects of our personality that we find unacceptable to be pushed into the 'shadow' – from where they emerge in dreams or else in our waking lives to subtly influence our behaviour in ways we are often 'unconscious' of. This concept of the unconscious shadow has been applied not just to personal psychology but also to whole communities, societies, nations and cultures.

It is this interplay between the personal and the political, between psychology and sociology, that I am interested in – the social psychology of shame. What I want to show is that understanding how shame works (as a vital, essential, healthy part of the way we negotiate our way through our personal and social worlds) is critical to our growth and survival as a human species. If we can only see shame as something unpleasant, unhealthy or 'toxic', then all we can know is the pathology of shame. What I want to explore is the 'salutogenic'² rather than the pathogenic functions of shame. How shame operates (or can be encouraged to operate) as a normal, human emotion with the special function of monitoring and reinforcing the social relationships between myself, and others. This is easier to grasp in the body than in the mind; indeed I suggest that it cannot be fully grasped until it is experienced; grounded in the body. How this might be done is the subject of Chapters Five and Six and the workshop I have called 'Working *with* Shame'.

² 'Salutogenic' is a term coined by Antonovsky, 1987; who explores the conditions for 'wellbeing' under which people live long and healthy lives, rather than the conditions that lead to 'disease'. Throughout this study 'salutogenic' stands in contrast to the common framing of the shame experience as 'negative' 'unhealthy' 'toxic' or 'pathogenic'.

The current human condition can be viewed with a mixture of optimism and despair; in terms of social growth, or decline. We may draw solace from Eastern philosophies that see crisis as challenge and opportunity. However, seizing these opportunities will require human endeavour informed by our best understanding of both the nature of the challenge, and the social change processes by which people can be mobilised to achieve changes through democratic means. I believe our aim must be to achieve a fairer, more personally, socially, economically and ecologically sustainable world order. Understanding the contribution and potential for human emotions to contribute to, or impede such social change is an important part of this endeavour.

Given the nature of the crises facing humanity on planet earth, if we do not grow, and grow with (albeit among other things) a more mature understanding of shame, then I doubt that we will survive. Why? Because, despite our belief in the human capacity for actions based on rational thought, we are forced to acknowledge that most human behaviour owes as much to our emotions as to our thoughts. Emotions are not some residue of the past³ – an obstacle to rational thought. They are, I suggest, fundamental to what makes us human. At the very least it is important to understand the emotional component that is inevitably present, even if unrecognised or unacknowledged, in most so-called rational decisions. Shame is one, perhaps the most important, of the emotions which regulate our social behaviour. It is this aspect of social regulation that we need to understand and master if many of the social, economic, political and ecological problems we face are to be resolved. It is also, as indicated above, the emotion that is most often avoided, unacknowledged, and thus repressed and pushed into the personal or collective unconscious; or, perhaps worse, projected onto others with the result that they become the scapegoats for what we can least face in ourselves. I will be arguing that shame, or to be precise ‘unacknowledged shame’ is at the root of many psychological, interpersonal, social, geopolitical and, indeed, cultural and values-based crises of today.

Ancient and modern shame cultures

Somewhere between 1200 and today, the understanding of shame that was handed down by written and oral tradition changed. I have come to see that this change was both necessary in its time; and is potentially disastrous for ours. Shame has ceased to be a social virtue and become something more commonly seen as a crippling personal burden. In part the origins of this change can be traced further back through the history of Western/European cultures with

³ Emotions are associated with the part of the brain that is sometimes referred to as ‘reptilian’ – suggesting an earlier ‘more primitive’ evolutionary origin.

religion, philosophy science, and politics having roles in the process. For example, in ancient Greece ‘shame’ (*Aidos*) was closely linked to three other ideas: ‘honour’; ‘hubris’ (vaunting pride); which so often precedes ‘nemesis’, our downfall. In this early ‘democratic’ culture, expression of honour was important – an indication of a (male) citizen’s standing in the community and sense of personal integrity. But the expression of this honour was a cause for dishonour or shame the moment the way it was done dishonoured or shamed another man. Shame thus provided a social function; acting as a brake on the otherwise unfettered power of the aristocracy⁴. As such it was an essential component of the emerging city-state democracies.

Before we rush to reclaim this as an ideal for the present day, we need to recognise that this democracy was limited to citizens who were male. Women and slaves were excluded. And the norms that defined personal and social honour were far from being universally accepted even between adjacent city-states. Shame operated as much to maintain idiosyncratic and highly localised norms of behaviour as it did to promote personal standards of ethics. These values were (like much of the code of knighthood that came later) often highly questionable from a modern standpoint. Driven largely by the monotheistic religions, guilt emerged as the self-conscious emotion of transgression against what might be seen as more universal standards of behaviour. What is important as a starting point for this study is to note that shame itself can be seen to have passed from the social foreground to psychological background or ‘shadow’ over the course of several centuries.⁵

Today we can see shame operating differently in different cultures around the world. It is clearly a stronger, or at least more openly acknowledged, element of some Eastern cultures (e.g. Japanese) than in ‘Western’ cultures spread throughout the globe by English colonialism, (e.g. the USA, Canada, Australia or New Zealand). While it is not necessary to go so far as to label this distinction in terms of ‘shame’ and ‘guilt’ cultures, there is clearly a difference in the conspicuousness of shame⁶ and the balance between the privilege given to the collective and the individual in different cultures.⁷ The development of the, as yet unresolved, global debate about universal norms for personal and political morality in terms of human rights, as well as the development of objective rational thought, scientific inquiry and the current norms for what constitutes (Western) ‘democratic’ systems of government, have followed a shift

⁴ Cairns, 1993.

⁵ In Chapter Eight, we will explore in more detail the history of changes in cultural awareness of shame that can be traced through, for example, social etiquette and literature.

⁶ Peristiany, 1966.

⁷ Benedict, 1946.

towards the valuing of individual identity over collective identification. We often talk about human rights without acknowledging that these are viewed, first and foremost, as rights of the individual and only secondarily extended to collective cultural or social rights.⁸ We rarely balance the idea of rights and responsibilities, and still less distinguish between responsibilities and duties.

For all the ‘virtue’ of shame in the ‘middle-ages’ and earlier, a return to this past glory is not the answer. While it has features that we might learn from and chose to reclaim, we have a long way to go in learning how shame can be made to function today, not as a curse to be avoided, but as a normal healthy human emotion, and how it could contribute to personal and social growth in the future.

This exploration of what a ‘mature’ shame culture looks like is a long-term project. Others will perhaps take it far beyond where I can go. What I plan to present here will chart the process by which I have explored what is being done and what I believe needs to be done if we are to understand and use shame in the context of the wider spectrum of human emotions to build a more personally, socially and globally aware culture.

A personal starting point

I’ve lost count of the times I’ve been asked –why shame? What on earth made you want to explore that? I have some short answers – about having spent 30 years working for social change through: teaching, community work, short-life housing, homelessness, and unemployment issues; environmental campaigning on resources, energy and in the anti-nuclear movements of the 1970’s and 80’s; globe-trotting developing worker and public health education programs on radiation and other health issues, food and food policy, industry and regional development; and campaigning against the seemingly inexorable concentration of corporate power that has come to be labelled as ‘globalisation’. Somewhere in the late 1990’s I had a sense that continuing this struggle was like beating my head against a brick wall, and the wall was winning. I became dimly aware that, at the very least some new tools were needed. It also occurred to me that, since I’d been on the ‘front line’ of much of this global social change movement, whatever was missing must be very well hidden from me and most other people. If I wanted to find something new I would need to go into some dark corners where I (and others) would probably prefer not to go. In reality I didn’t need to go looking – it came looking for me.

⁸ See Drinan, (2001) on the debate over the interpretation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights in the lead-up to the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna June 1993.

When I started this inquiry back in 1999 I was living in the Blue Mountains, West of Sydney, filling my days with long walks, reading, and interacting with the world through the medium of a struggling, much ‘upgraded’ but basically ‘clapped-out’ computer and various E-mail groups. For ‘work’, that is doing something I called meaningful activity rather than anything earning an income, I involved myself in three areas of activity. The first was what might be called ‘the men’s movement’. This involved coordinating projects run through the NSW Men’s Health and Wellbeing Association, which I’d helped form in 1996, building local national and international structures to carry men’s work in Australia and New Zealand. It included helping teenage boys, their fathers and/or significant male ‘mentors’ to explore the transition from boyhood to manhood; work around masculinity, particularly men’s anger and violence work; and helping to build and sustain men’s support groups.

The second was keeping a watching brief on the emerging debate about the ‘genetic engineering’ of food; occasionally nudging the Australian Trade Union movement to consider some of the wider global as well as local self interest issues around this technology and other aspects of ‘globalisation’. This was the residue from some 15 years work that began in Canada in 1983, led to a global consumer, environment and worker campaign to raise concerns about the technology of ‘food irradiation’ through the London Food Commission and, through most of the 1990’s, coordinating an Australian farmer, union and consumer ‘Food Policy Alliance’ and building broader alliances with environment, aid/development, church and community groups around ‘fair trade’ policies.

The third area involved coordinating the occasional Youth Justice Conference where young offenders were given the opportunity to avoid court in return for facing up to the victims of their crime and its effects on their family and community.

I would describe my life’s work as that of an itinerant troublemaker; making trouble for the rich and powerful around the world; and my current status as ‘retired slightly-hurt’. The truth is I was depressed. There was a profound sadness and feeling of hopelessness that came from frustrated expectations and a sense of powerlessness: my own powerlessness, and that of many of my former campaign colleagues to effect change.⁹ Nearly 30 years of social and political activism and, along the way, several broken long-term relationships had left a wealth of stories, a sense that within these was a mass of valuable experience, but a profound sense that there wasn’t much to show for a lifetime of trying. It was realism, I told myself, rather

⁹ I can now call this cluster of feelings ‘shame’ – I couldn’t then.

than disillusionment, to see the situation as, in many ways worse than when I started. Part of this was true. Those 30 years had seen the triumph of many ideologies I had strenuously opposed. Affairs that I believed (and still believe) should be operated in the public interest and whose strategic long term planning and operation should be subject to democratic processes, were increasingly being ‘privatised’ and operated according to relatively short-term ‘market-based’ economic principles. Attempts to develop a democratic society, which balanced social and ecological considerations against the so-called ‘rational’ economic ones in the interest of long-term sustainability, were as far or further from being realised as when I started in the late 1960’s.

The sense I had was not that the original ideals were wrong, rather that something was missing from the social change toolkit that I and my colleagues had been using. Doing more of the same would not bring about the kind of change that I believed in. It is part of the cultural wisdom of the late 20th century personal growth movement that ‘insanity’ is doing more of the same and expecting a different outcome. The existential question that arose was: ‘what am I missing here?’ What tools, skills, understanding might make a difference? Having been ‘out there’ in terms of social change activism I also had a sense that I was not alone. Whatever was missing, others were missing it also. Since I wasn’t the brightest, cleverest or only person involved in this struggle, whatever was being missed was obviously well hidden. Otherwise others might well have found it before. There is an old joke about the man who dropped his car keys and was unsuccessfully searching for them in the dim light of a street lamp. He is asked by a passer-by,

“Where did you lose them?”

“Over there” he says pointing to the shadows.

“Then why are you looking here?”

“Because there’s light here under the streetlamp and there’s no light over there!”

Finding a new direction, or even an old set of lost keys to unlock the situation would mean going where there wasn’t much light. More important, these would be the un-obvious and far from popular places to look for social change tools.

What I didn’t realise at the time was that depression can be one aspect of unacknowledged or, as I have come to call it, ‘unresolved’ shame. I knew anger well – well enough to be able to work with my own and with that of others. I’d even raised it to the level of justifiable indignation at many and various forms of social injustice. I had enough experience with addictions (my own and others’) to work with these also. What I didn’t understand, though I thought I did at the time were the aspects of isolation and depression. These are the ‘hide’

and ‘attack-self’ poles of what I now know as the ‘compass’ of common reactions to shame.¹⁰ Maybe I needed to be able to go into the depressed state and, rather than seeking to ‘get rid of it’, to see in it the gift of what I had been avoiding if I was to fully understand shame. I know I needed to understand shame if I was to do more than just paper over the cracks in my image of self that had led me to feel depressed.

Sometimes poetry captures such ideas better than any narrative. This one by David Whyte¹¹ might perhaps illustrate the point.

*Those who will not slip beneath
the still surface of the well of grief
turning downward through its black water
to the place we cannot breathe
will never know the source from which we drink,
the secret water, cold and clear,
nor find in the darkness glimmering
the small round coins
thrown away by those who wished for something else.*

Like Parzival, we often don’t see things clearly at first. We miss the opportunity that comes easily only to spend years searching to recover the gift and, much later, see that it was there, close by, all the time.

I’m no stranger to changes of direction. My ‘career’, if it can be called such, has many of the characteristics of a pinball bouncing around the table, given new impetus and direction by occasionally hitting some illuminated obstacle (ringing up a few ‘brownie’ points on the scoreboard) before disappearing down the inevitable black hole. Then re-emerging anew, impelled by an imperative force for another try. Usually such changes involve other people, often one or more significant others who make a difference and set in train a sequence of events that, sometimes only later takes on a sense of coherent meaning, purpose and direction.

One of the more significant changes in my life occurred back in 1972 when I first met Richard Hauser, then in his 60’s with a lifetime’s work in social change behind him. Anyone who knew Richard (or indeed who knows me) will understand that the relationship was, to say the least, tempestuous but ultimately founded on deep personal respect for a shared purpose in seeking to understand the social change process. From the terrace house in London’s Pimlico and a ramshackle office on the Thames Embankment, Richard and Hephzibah provided a base for an ever-changing assortment of young and old ‘catalysts’ for social change. In this environment I spent what seemed like endless hours in meetings,

¹⁰ Nathanson 1992, 1996.

¹¹ Whyte, 2001 p 35.

discussions and arguments, always interspersed with good food and laughter. Through these offices trooped many who came in their search for answers that would help their people: Romany's, ex-prisoners, Catholics and Protestants from Ireland, Kurds, emerging leaders of African colonies, teachers in and out of schools, community and youth workers and more. The Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities became a second home for the next four years; a place to visit, review, revise, and redirect. The learning process seems from this distance to be as much one of osmosis as conscious assimilation. Many of the ideas I encountered at that time have informed my actions since in various fields of activity. Some have been re-examined and revised, moulded and bent to my own style and intentions. Others have been less examined but remained as general signposts on the roadmap for social action that have occasionally helped make sense of immediate and particular problems. Many of them will resurface here in terms of the framework for and the methodology used in this exploration of shame and shame culture.

From guilt to shame culture?

One of these ideas was the starting point for this study. It was Richard's view that one way to view the current transition in society was in terms of the collapse of an old 'guilt' culture and its replacement with a new 'shame' culture; one that currently operates at an 'infantile' level. Before you object, I am aware that there is a significant academic tradition that holds that the cultural trend has been in the other direction – from shame to guilt. This is the dominant view that can be found in the substantial body of literature from the fields of psychology, sociology and anthropology. Much of the academic research which distinguishes shame from guilt also privileges or values guilt as the more mature emotion. In this view guilt is seen as 'moral shame' and associated with codes for behaviour (rather than self-image), and the development of the individual's sense of integrity. Shame, by comparison is reserved for the negative feelings aroused by being seen as deficient in the eyes of significant others and, as such, bound to negative self-identity.

What I want to explore is another view that might be more useful. Richard's view of shame and guilt was influenced by his first language, Austrian-German, where the word for guilt carries implied overtones of obligation or duty.¹² It also needs to be understood in terms of the very broad sweep he applied to human history and particularly Judeo-Christian western culture. For many, throughout the centuries up to and beyond the renaissance, the dominant worldview, *Zeitgeist* or hegemonic framework, which acted to maintain social order, was a

¹² Parallels with this view can be found in Lynd, 1958 p24.

culturally accepted view of guilt. This involved internalised awareness of a set of externally imposed rules and duties, with a hierarchy of authorities which defined and enforced these – parents, community elders, class-based authority figures, aristocracy and royalty and ultimately big-daddy God sitting on his cloud, all-seeing and all-knowing. Transgressions against such rules were never invisible. Even if apparently undetected by ‘authorities’, an internal sense of guilt operated to unsettle peace of mind, and spoil whatever gains the individual might have achieved from his/her transgressions. And, more importantly, the internal pressures of this guilt would prompt disclosure, confession and, albeit ambivalently, the seeking of punishment as a way of expiating the guilt. I can recall vividly, as a nine year old, a conversation with friends where we ‘knew’ (and felt at a visceral level) that our behaviour was not invisible to the ‘God’ we had been taught to believe in, even though our parents would not know unless we ‘fessed up’. That being so, we concluded we had better get in first and own up to the crime. The details of the actual offence and what happened on our ‘confession’ have long faded from memory. The memory of the feeling associated with guilt in the eyes of this all seeing higher authority has not. While the feeling might have been triggered by something we had done, **it was I who was ‘guilty’**. None of the niceties of guilt being just the behaviour here! And, while it might be a precursor to my developing moral standards, the feeling was far more like fear than anything that might be seen as ‘shame’.

Maintaining social norms across the culture and across generations is greatly assisted where there is hegemony for a worldview that gives legitimacy to externally imposed duties and has such internalised social-psychological ‘guilt’ mechanisms to compel compliance. Now the very extent to which this view today rings hollow is a measure of the extent to which this mechanism has broken, or is breaking down. Guilt today is for many (not all) a ‘head’ rather than ‘gut’ feeling. I can be aware of transgressing against my own or society’s moral codes. I rarely (voluntarily) seek out authorities to confess to and receive punishment from. I rarely (unless still bound within the culture of one or other ‘fundamentalist’ religious code) see it in terms of the all-seeing ‘eye of God’. I am more likely to be concerned about what my peers see and/or know and hence may think of me, and to think in terms of doing better in the future; modifying my behaviour towards people who may have been affected and perhaps engaging in some compensatory behaviour towards them.

The guilt-culture defined in the terms above was not without its merits. It can most kindly be viewed as a 2,500 year experiment – with the aim of replacing the idiosyncratic (and gender/class biased) morality of the early Greek democracies with a more universal morality. In this sense the shift from the ancient Greek shame culture was towards a guilt-based culture that reflected the dominant social psychology of European culture for at least 2,000 years.

Yet even within this there was, as the Parzival story and the whole Grail legend attests, an alternative perspective – one that held a more privileged place for ‘shame’ within the world of the soul and the pantheon of the emotions.¹³

The current breakdown of the old hegemonic view of guilt can be seen as going hand in glove with wider social changes: weakening of power of organised religion (political Christianity) and belief in monotheistic Gods, erosion of hereditary class structures, weakening of family structures etc. In the space of my lifetime there has been a significant breakdown in extended family structures rapidly followed by breakdown of the ‘nuclear family’ to the point where a significant portion of young people in western cultures are raised in single-parent and blended families.¹⁴ Alongside this has been the emergence of peer cultures increasingly narrowly stratified by age, class, lifestyle, interests, geography etc.; what has referred to as the ‘sibling society’.¹⁵ Thus the social structures that reinforced guilt as the mechanism for maintaining social morality are eroding. For those who hold onto the older values within tightly contained value-oriented structures (such as, but by no means limited to, fundamentalist religious communities) this erosion is to be deplored – in other people. There is conflict between such ‘conservatives’, and ‘liberal, free thinkers’ who seek to make the transition to an internalised sense of individual values. For the latter the breakdown of structures may not seem like a problem for themselves – only for immoral others!

I share some of this latter view. My behaviour is determined by my sense of what is ‘right’, sometimes in defiance of what society may determine as lawful. How else could I have embraced civil disobedience as part of the campaigners tool kit? But the fundamental paradigm of morality being determined by reference to a higher authority is unchanged, even if this authority is now internalised. Thus the privileging of Guilt culture over Shame culture, in Western academic as well as popular thought, is identified with individual rather than collective rights. But this privileging of ‘identity’ over ‘identification’ occurs at the same time as the collective social structures that maintained the hegemony for guilt are eroding.

While I can, in the light of these changes, chose to redefine guilt as now associated with personal morality, this guilt-driven morality comes at a high price. The existing view of shame and guilt, and the considerable body of theoretical work that has gone into

¹³ Godwin, 1994; suggests that the story also carried ideas from both an older spiritual tradition and Gnostic elements that were part of attempts to promote a more balanced East/West religious and cultural perspective at a time of increasing political control by the Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁴ Richard was fond of saying: *‘Once, 80% of the knowledge of a grandparent was relevant to a child but today perhaps less than 20% is still relevant.’*

¹⁵ Bly, 1996.

distinguishing these,¹⁶ is not necessarily wrong. But it is far from neutral in its choice of the place to stand from which to view the phenomena. It has as its underpinning a privileging of the personal over the social and, as we will see, a view of the ‘self’ that may be unhelpful to both personal and social growth. At the everyday cultural level it carries many of the older deeply rooted feelings associated with guilt; most importantly the associated fear of punishment. As we will see, this confusion around guilt and shame, combined with the overlay of other emotions that effectively mask the body language of shame, has direct consequences for the way that shame has become so dysfunctional. In Richard’s terms, it is operating at an ‘infantile’ level in our culture.

Why is this body language important? Let me ask a question. If you are in a social situation and you sense a difference between what a person is saying and their body language, which do you trust? OK, so if like most people you trust the body language then we have a real problem with shame if only because it is so often hidden; overlaid with other emotions (especially fear) and masked by the visual signals associated with these other emotions. This we will explore in detail with a number of people you will meet in Chapters Five and Six and Seven.

The shadow of shame.

Shame, as being seen in bad light for transgressing against the norms of my family and/or peer groups, can (to the extent to which my self image depends on external approval) also be internalised and form the basis for my conscience, values and sense of self-identity. This can be the sense of self towards which I may be striving.¹⁷ All too often however, it is the sense of who I am. Therein lies both a mechanism of social value and a personal, social and political problem. The normative power of shame can influence behaviour of individuals towards socially desirable or, at least, approved outcomes. But the associated binding of shame to self-image can be as damaging as it is useful.

Our culture of shame is ‘infantile’. For most people, the way it operates has not developed much beyond the way we learned it as infants. The distinction between behaviour and the person (the act and the actor) is rarely made. The patterns of shaming to achieve physical and emotional control, notably blaming and fear of punishment, are carried over into adulthood and future parenthood. There is little in our patterns of education, social learning

¹⁶ From the seminal work of Piers & Singer, 1953, through to Tangney and Dearing, 2002.

¹⁷ In psychoanalytic terms, this is sometimes defined as the ‘ego-ideal – failure to live up to which can be a source of shame - whereas, guilt is associated with the ‘super-ego’ or ‘conscience’.

opportunities, cultural forms or popular thinking which encourages a more mature shame culture to develop. Indeed within most discourses, shame is regarded as a negative, regressive emotion and either avoided or actively opposed as a subject for exploration. It is hardly ever considered as a basis for social progress.

An example of this avoidance can be seen in the way that the NSW Juvenile Justice Department has, until recently, discouraged exploration of shame theory. The theory of 'Reintegrative Shaming'¹⁸ provides a rationale for 'restorative justice' programs, developed empirically by police in work with young offenders.¹⁹ It was noteworthy that my training as a Youth Justice Conference Convenor²⁰ omitted all reference to working with shame. It was dismissed as an 'unacceptable' approach. Only recently has 'Advanced' Convenor training explored facial expression of emotions and discussed the role of shame; though still with reluctance from some participants.²¹ It is this perspective on the salutogenic role of shame which, alone in my view, provides a coherent theory for the understanding of the emotional content of the conferences between offender, victim, and community of care that are mandated as an alternative to Juvenile courts for some young offenders. Without such an understanding there is very real danger that such conferences will fall far short of the alternative, 'restorative' approach that is the avowed objective of these legislated diversionary programs for young offenders.²² The term 'reintegrative shaming' might be better phrased as 'reintegration through shame'. Overt shaming of the offender is neither necessary nor helpful. As I will illustrate, shame is inherent in the face-to-face situation created by the conference process. It affects **both** the offender and the victim (and many others present). Critically, it can be either shown or it can be masked. The extent to which it can be brought into the open and shown visually in the body language of the participants will determine the extent to which the conference process produces genuinely restorative (as opposed to retributive) outcomes.

The resistance to the idea that understanding shame has a pivotal role to play in the management of the strong emotions that surface in a conference between offenders and the victims of criminal behaviour, is symptomatic of our shame-avoidant culture. It has all the hallmarks of what those with a leaning towards Jungian psychology could view as pushing

¹⁸ Braithwaite, 1989.

¹⁹ See O'Connell, 1997.

²⁰ NSW Dept. Juvenile Justice YJC Convenor training, St Mary's (Western Sydney) April-May 1999.

²¹ NSW DJJ, YJC Advanced Training, Newcastle, May 2002. Facilitated by David Moore, see Moore and McDonald, 2000.

²² See: NSW Young Offenders Act, 1997. Similar legislation exists in other Australian States, and there are 'restorative' diversionary programs established in the Northern Territory following public opposition to 'Mandatory Sentencing' legislation.

uncomfortable thoughts and feelings into the ‘shadow’, with the almost inevitable consequence that these return to bite us in the rear.

As I hope to show throughout this study, it is not a matter of whether we have chosen to replace guilt with shame. With the breakdown of many of the social structures that maintained the old guilt culture, shame is re-emerging by default as a normative social influence. As such it warrants investigation not merely as-it-is. If the current shame culture is indeed infantile, it needs to be explored against the background of the question: what could a more mature shame culture look like?²³

Truth or usefulness?

Try to love the questions themselves. Don't search for answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. Live the questions now. Perhaps then someday far in the future you will gradually without even noticing it, live your way into the answers.

Rainer Maria Rilke²⁴

I don't think it necessary to accept Richard's claim is that shame has replaced guilt. I do think that the current guilt-shame culture has elements that are keeping people in a socially infantile state. I think we are dealing with an immature form of what could mature into a normative cultural mechanism for the promotion and maintenance of human rights and responsibilities. However, even this perspective is not necessary for some of the ideas, and particularly the practical work outlined in this study to be of value.

There is a story attributed to Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rashneesh). My recollection of it is that a Sanyasin has pointed out that Osho had said one thing but that Krishnamurti had said another and both cannot be correct. Osho replies that Krishnamurti has told the truth; but from where he sees it, the Sanyasin is unable to use that truth. What Osho has told him on the other hand he will be able to use; and in his own time arrive at an understanding of the truth.

The importance of Richard's original idea lies not in its validity but the implications that flow from it. If for a moment we accept his view, it raises the question: ‘what would constitute a mature shame culture?’ The aim in attempting this study was to answer, or at least begin to answer this question. And like Rilke, the answer is less one that can be spoken: perhaps one that can be lived into.

²³ Much as Braithwaite (2000) describes the distinction between ‘normative’ and ‘explanatory’ theory

²⁴ Rilke, 1984 – cited in Macey & Rothberg 1994.

I am a utilitarian. I'm happy to accept that others believe they have the truth. I'm interested in what is useful. If that means following crazy ideas to see where they lead in the hope that some use will be found I'm happy to do it. The result thus far has been to find another place to stand from which to view shame and a deeper understanding of some of the ways that people and our culture (me included) are limited in the area of personal and social growth. The challenge at the end of this study will be to give expression to the forms through which this understanding can grow. For now, I'm interested in exploring how a shift in perspective can radically alter the way we describe even everyday scenes, let alone complex human emotions. I'm interested in how human emotions influence behaviour. I'm also interested in seeing how we learn through personal and social experience. How, initially, we learn through the inevitable exercise of external control by others who are bigger, more powerful authority figures: our parents, teachers, social institutions, the state, our God or our gods. How can we mature through these experiences to the point where we are learning with and from our peers and passing on some of this knowledge in less authoritarian fashion to those who come behind us?

Is it drawing too long a bow to suggest that we might obtain a coherent and perhaps useful view of social reality through the lens of shame? It is an unconventional idea - but then my starting point is that conventional approaches don't appear to be yielding much by way of positive results. My interest is in the area of global social, economic, ecological and political change. Despite a growth in global awareness of environmental issues, the world appears to be now further from the kind of cooperative, democratic, just and sustainable society that I have spent my adult life working for. So it seems reasonable to test the idea that there exists the possibility for developing a mature shame culture that would act as an ecologically sustainable regulator of personal, social and economic behaviour.

The structure of this study

The key questions

Some of the important questions that will need to be addressed in this study are:

- What theoretical framework might we draw on to identify a more salutogenic perspective for the normal functioning of shame as a natural human emotion?

- How might this perspective be communicated so that ordinary people can understand it?
- What is the effect on people who share in this re-framing experience?
- Where and how might this understanding be applied in interpersonal day-to-day situations and in terms of work at community level?
- What can we gather from theory and practice that will inform our growth towards a more mature shame culture? In particular, what are the key elements that might distinguish a more mature shame-aware approach from current practice, much of which is caught up in the ‘infantile’ guilt-shame transition or has, at best, developed only slightly more mature, what might be called ‘juvenile’ forms?
- What actions might we undertake in the future to test whether the lived awareness of shame theory and practice can contribute to the development of a more socially mature society; and how would we know that we have made a difference?

Attempting to answer these questions provides the framework for what follows.

Exploring the questions

In Chapter Two I explore Richard’s suggestion that shame can be a trigger for social growth. I place this in the context of the broader body of his theories for social change and his views on local-to-global crises affecting social structures and values. It is in this context that he locates the suggestion that we are in transition from a ‘guilt’ to a ‘shame’ culture. His alternatives are stark. Negotiating this transition offers possibilities for personal and social growth. Alternatively we face serious dangers if we remain stuck in a socially infantile or adolescent form of shame culture. I draw these ideas together using both published and unpublished material from the **Hausers’ archive**.²⁵ In particular I describe some of the practical tools that he used with various groups he worked with to trigger shame as a stimulus to social responsibility. There has recently been renewed interest in Richard’s ideas in Europe and attempts to make these more widely available. This chapter is a contribution to this process, being perhaps the first to attempt an overview and synthesis of material currently scattered about the globe.

In Chapter Three I outline a theoretical framework for emotions with reference to more recent academic literature. This will identify the material that Richard did not appear to have

²⁵ See Appendix.

accessed, particularly the work of **affect theorists**.²⁶ I explore evidence for a set of ‘universal’ primary emotions and the refinements to this idea that need to be made in light of linguistic and cultural analysis. The result will be a framework that allows us to map the experience of shame and other primary emotions in terms of the way we feel them, show them, think about them, and act on them. I indicate how this basic framework allows for integration of many different psychological approaches to working with emotions.

In Chapter Four I build on this framework to explore the social psychology of that class of feelings we see as ‘shame’. I explore the subtleties of the language of shame, touching on some cultural and historical differences. In particular I explore the role of shame as a **visual affect**, where it acts as a signalling system whose function is to maintain and/or restore social bonds between ‘self’ and ‘other’. This places shame as, pre-eminently, **the social emotion**. I also explore the major behavioural patterns through which we act when shame is unacknowledged and how these define not only personal but social pathologies of violence and alienation. This locates unacknowledged shame at the root of such social problems as: aggression, depression, isolation and addiction. I will ground the idea of a ‘compass of shame’ in empirical work that significantly reframes the original idea²⁷ and exposes stronger links to the social psychology of violence and alienation.

The outcome of this exploration will be a perspective on shame that offers a different place to stand; one where shame can be seen through a ‘salutogenic’ lens (i.e. normal, functional and both personally and socially healthy) rather than, as is so often the case, through the lens of ‘pathology’; where it is seen as a disease: ‘toxic’, unhealthy, at best a burden and at worst crippling and itself ‘shameful’. The implications of this salutogenic view of shame are, I suggest, profound for ‘emotional work’ practices in programs tackling a number of major social crises.

In Chapter Five I illustrate the development of my steps and stumbles attempting to ground this theoretical perspective in practical work. I take up the challenge of finding tools to teach salutogenic awareness of shame and its potential for personal and social growth.²⁸ The result is a description of the path that led me to create an experiential workshop, **‘Working with Shame’**.

²⁶ Notably the work of Sylvan S. Tomkins and followers.

²⁷ Nathanson, Op. cit.

²⁸ Inherent in the Hauser approach, but prompted by a suggestion from Tom Scheff in June 2000.

This workshop is described in **Chapter Six** along with details of the experience as seen through interviews with a number of workshop participants over a 2½-year period.²⁹ I illustrate how each exercise creates a micro-social environment for a deepening awareness of shame in its personal and social contexts. In particular, I indicate the form of the questions that lead participants towards personal and social growth through increasing experiential awareness of the constructive and socially creative role of shame. The workshop exercises represent attempts to simultaneously model the key elements of a more mature shame culture, and open up possibilities for reflection and curiosity. They encourage participants to **experience** the healing power of shame when this is acknowledged and, particularly, when shown visibly as shame-affect. This experience relocates shame, in the awareness of participants, as less of a self-reflective, introspective emotion and more as an **affective signalling process** operating on the boundary between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’: one which serves to repair, maintain and strengthen the social bonds between people.

In Chapter Seven I explore some of the implications of this way of reframing the unmasked shame experience as social and salutogenic on some of the current modalities for work with the pathologies of shame, including shame-based addiction/recovery work. Further extracts from interviews with workshop participants and other practical examples of working with shame in group-settings are used to ground the thesis:

- That immature understanding of shame often leads to its co-assembly with other emotions that mask shame affect
- That this lack of (affective) acknowledgement of shame contributes significantly to both personal and social pathology.
- That unmasking of shame produces a quality of empathic response in people who witness it: one that, uniquely, repairs damage to social bonds.

I explore the effects of unmasking the shame that is often hidden by shame-anger, shame-disgust, shame-grief or shame-fear. I illustrate how this unmasking allows direct affective work with shame. I note how the experience of this unmasking appears to produce therapeutic effects, for both the ‘shamefaced’ and those who witness it. I revisit ideas (touched on in Chapter Four) regarding: the theory and practice of catharsis and emotional discharge, and the apparent special nature of empathic responses to shame.

In Chapter Eight I attempt to locate this work in the broader cultural frame from which I started. I indicate some of the areas of proactive social action where it may be of relevance and detail some of the current and future community and social change activities that have

²⁹ See chart: **Timeline of the major events of the study** on page iv above.

evolved as a result of this study. I then attempt to place these starting points for social action in the context of longer-term cultural change - identifying the historical trends in the social incidence and awareness of shame that can be seen in literature and social-cultural studies of human behaviour. I illustrate some of the implications of these trends when they are seen through the lens of shame developed in this study and outline a basic framework for evaluating the **shame-maturity of a culture**. In particular I identify some key features that can be used to mark the transition from 'infantile' to 'juvenile' application of shame-awareness with respect to a range of socio-cultural issues from the global to the local; and some of the factors which limit further growth towards shame-maturity. I illustrate the scale of the challenge with reference to the need for a more mature understanding of the pivotal role of shame in: the building of social capital; conflict resolution (from the interpersonal to the international); transformative (rather than merely restorative) justice; building human rights institutions; and the development of collaborative industrial relations cultures.

In conclusion I suggest there is a huge gulf between the kind of mature awareness of shame that is being explored here and the way it presently operates in our culture. The challenge ahead will be to explore how these 'maturing' elements can be cultivated within various classes of social actors engaged with the critical issues of our time: to refine shame as part of the kitbag of personal and social action tools by practical work in the fields of social and environmental action.

Chapter 2. Tools for personal and social change?

"What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible."

William James³⁰

"Leaders are made and not born. In what was considered the worst area of a large industrial city, we chose what was considered the worst factory, . . . we then asked for a group of those workers considered the least bright, to train for leadership. These people . . . who obviously thought little of themselves (and therefore of everybody else), gradually came to life. . . forgot their self-consciousness . . . started evolving real personalities and qualities of leadership which had been lying within their minds all those years, unsuspected and imprisoned. They started thinking more deeply and acting more intelligently both in the factory and in the home . . . developed new interests against the dreary routine backgrounds. They proved again what we had already found amongst criminals, 'dull' youths, and 'handicapped' people, incapable of helping themselves, that if you give a person a chance to grow, a real chance, not by words only, but by giving him the opportunity for social action too – teaching him to recognise a personal challenge in society – and if you train him in the methods which give him further insight into and interests in life, he will start to grow again from where he stopped off."

"Everybody must act as a potential leader . . . to 'get going', if democracy is to work in a fraternal society."

Richard & Hephzibah Hauser³¹

A man and his work

Let me backtrack. I met Richard Hauser and Hephzibah Menhuin-Hauser in 1972 at the suggestion of Alec Dickson who had established Community Service Volunteers and Volunteer Services Overseas in the UK. Alec had inspired me to try to develop a 'community service' approach to my work as a UK Secondary School teacher. The pupils took to this like ducks to water but the school found it much harder to accept and control. I left the school system in 1972 intent on taking some of these ideas into the community. This work began with the creation of 'drama-scape' play schemes. With some colleagues who were almost as crazy as myself, we built a complete 'wild west' town called 'Bonanza City' for the summer

³⁰ Richard Hauser was fond of the phrase: "*We need to create the moral equivalent of war*" here attributed to James, 1987, p332/3

³¹ Hauser & Hauser 1963, p145/6. I feel embarrassed reading this now with its exclusive use of masculine gender. It was only in the 1970's that Richard was made aware of the need to frame his ideas in language that recognised 51% of the population was not male.

on a derelict bombsite in a ‘redevelopment’ community in Birmingham. I then moved on to work with an alternative race and community relations organisation developing a resource library for teachers on race issues and community relations³² and using this as a base for developing range of other ideas that eventually emerged as the ‘Shape’ housing and community project.³³ Around this time, Alec invited me to meet at his home and talk, which I did. As I recall, I talked for two hours straight, without interruption; a confused jumble of ideas for work on unemployment, youth and community education, housing and community development. At the end he said,

‘I have two things to say. The first is that you can either do one part of that at a national level, or do all of it at a local level. You cannot do both. The second is that I don’t think I’m the person to help you, Here is the number of a friend of mine called Richard Hauser. I suggest you call him and arrange to meet.’

I observed many others take the path that I followed over the next four years. Like me, for many people meeting Richard was a life-changing experience. It was perhaps his greatest skill: at least for those who were ready for it. I left that day knowing that I was now on a different path and with a sense that I was about to learn something very different about the process of social change. All great men have feet of clay, it is part of what makes them human, and the Hausers’ have their critics, many of them.³⁴ Indeed for one who espoused the collegial ethos Richard was singularly individualistic, often intolerant, sometimes apparently rude and arrogant. He would make a virtue out of such vices by reference to a ‘Socratic’ model of provocative education that he described as being a ‘gadfly’: stirring and shaking people out of complacency, provoking curiosity about other ways of working; and walking away from the uncurious. He could also play the other role in this model, that of the ‘midwife’, nurturing new things into being through the difficult and dangerous moments.³⁵ He had no time for acolytes. It was not a matter of working with him, doing things his way, but taking what he offered and then making it my own: adapting, changing, challenging. Always with two questions in mind, *‘Is it new?’* and: *‘Can it be replicated?’* He and Hephzibah would often say,

³² All Faiths For One Race, Handsworth, Birmingham UK.

³³ The Shape project was established in 1973 under the nose of the UK Government’s ‘Inner Area Study’ program in the Small Heath area of Birmingham. It’s success in demonstrating renovation of short-life property in a redevelopment area to relieve homelessness, provided a model for the national short-life housing program that allowed organised squatting groups to make the transition to recognised Housing Associations.

³⁴ See for example Clark 1983, pp 134-140. A salutary comment is also provided by his daughter Eva – see Cox, 1995, p59.

³⁵ Seen in his work with: prisoners, minority groups, or people on both sides of the paramilitary conflict in Northern Ireland.

'It is not what the first generation of people we train do that matters. It is what the people they train achieve. Only then do we know that we have something new to add to the toolkit for social growth.'

Richard wrote much but published little in his lifetime. Almost nothing is written on the early work as part of the Jewish resistance in WWII, the 'de-programming' work with Italian Nazis³⁶, the establishment of the Romany Council or the organising work of the early human rights groups such as PROP, (Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners) that emerged from some of the early prison work.³⁷ The legacy of much of this (along with the work in the East-London settlement, with Kurds, various factions of colonial African freedom struggles and others) resides mainly in the memory of those who worked on these campaigns. Some papers exist as monographs of the Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities or the Centre for Group Studies. An idea of the scope of the work can be seen from the list of 'pilot' projects (including my own on 'Unemployment') reproduced in *Social Responsibility and Social Planning*.³⁸ *The Homosexual Society*³⁹ written for the UK Home Office now seems very compromised and dated in light of the revolution in social attitudes to homosexuality in the intervening years. *The Fraternal Society*⁴⁰ is perhaps the only book in English, available to the general or academic reader that sets out the key elements of Richard and Hephzibah's thoughts on social change.

Part of my research for this study involved locating and identifying the major elements of what remains of the archive of written material.⁴¹ This includes two major unpublished works. The first of these, a complete manuscript for a book *Coming of Social Age*,⁴² significantly updates the ideas in *The Fraternal Society*. The second, a *Handbook for the New Society*,⁴³ was the major 'work in progress', perhaps never intended to be finished, from the late 60's though to his death in 1991. Elements of this were published in German⁴⁴ but have received little attention in the wider English-speaking world. Significant elements of the

³⁶ There is brief mention of this, and pilot projects with children, adolescents, disabled, mental health patients and prisoners in Hauser & Hauser, 1963, pp 192-206.

³⁷ See Stratton, 1975.

³⁸ Hauser & Hauser, 1975, pp 10.6 - 10.10.

³⁹ Hauser, 1962.

⁴⁰ Hauser and Hauser 1963.

⁴¹ See Timeline (page iv above); and the Appendix (page 341 below) below for report on the Archive.

⁴² Hauser & Hauser, Ua. - undated but written c1975

⁴³ Hauser & Hauser, Ub. – undated, most sections originally c1967. See note in Appendix.

⁴⁴ Hauser und Hauser, 1971.

theory drawn from both manuscripts can be found in work of the US Institute for Human Rights and Responsibilities Inc.⁴⁵ Some sketches for the handbook were published by the Centre for Group Studies (Zentrum für Gruppenstudien und Gemeinwesenarbeit) in Germany and the Centre has recently published posthumously (in German) some 30 papers covering various aspects of Richard's theory and practice.⁴⁶

The handbooks contain the key concepts in his social change theory and suggested methods for teaching them which he had used with groups engaged in a wide range of activities. Also in the archive are papers giving glimpses into other areas such as the work in Prisons, particularly the (inmate-run) education programs in H & K wings of Wandsworth Prison.⁴⁷ This was closed down by the UK Home Office when the programs were seen to present a major challenge to established ideas for management and control of prisons and prisoners. The Northern Ireland project papers exist as a self-published report.⁴⁸

Also in the Archive is an extensive, though incomplete, record of official correspondence and a large body of personal correspondence, including a large volume of letters between Richard and Hephzibah. This provides a lifetime context for the work and indicates how many of the ideas were developed over time. The Archive also contains many of the working papers developed and shared with people the Hausers worked with over the years. Unfortunately much of this material is undated and Richard used what can only be described as an eccentric referencing system, the code for which has been lost.

Social tools for a world in crisis?

Central to this body of thought is the idea that society, as we know it, is in crisis. Richard identifies a series of major social, political and ecological crises - from the personal, though family, community, national, and global dimensions. Different papers written between the 1960's and the mid 1980s suggest different numbers of crises and different ways of

⁴⁵ Lafayette and Jehnsen, 1995. David Jehnsen (Director, US Inst. for Human Rights and Responsibilities, Galena, Ohio) is negotiating to publish an edited version of *Coming of Social Age* (Personal Communication December 2002)

⁴⁶ See Hauser, c1975; and Hauser, 1993-2002; The Hauser Archive has copies (in English) of many of these sketches. Additional material in English and German is to be held at the Akademie für Sozialarbeit, Voralberg, Austria (Sabine Steinbacher: personal communication, February 2003).

⁴⁷ Hauser, 1963, pp 208-210; and the 'prison' papers in the Hauser Archive.

⁴⁸ Hauser, 1975. Richard's assistant on this project, Fr Ray Helmick SJ now teaches at Boston College in the USA.

categorising them.⁴⁹ The number and indeed the detail of how these are structured is not the issue. The key to understanding this work is to see these as parts of a wholistic approach to social change that was crisis driven; very much in terms of the oriental synthesis where ‘crisis’ implies both ‘danger’ and ‘opportunity’. The challenge was to create conditions in which people would focus on overcoming these social crises; creating the moral equivalent of the unified and single-minded focus that people, communities and cultures usually achieve only in wartime.

Behind specific crises was the idea that society is in a process of breakdown: not just in its structures but also in terms of its values. As someone from an Austrian Jewish background who survived the European holocaust, Richard claimed as a right the ability to recognise danger signs of social changes that might threaten human rights. He argued that the social-psychological structures, which supported an old authoritarian, ‘paternalist’ order, were in a state of progressive decay. This presented society with both a crisis and an opportunity. There was no guarantee that, with the breakdown, the new shoots of a more open, communitarian, democratic or, as he preferred to call it, ‘fraternal’ society would grow in its place. Without considerable effort to develop and support this new growth we could easily revert to an even more authoritarian ‘super-paternalistic’ order. The new growth needed was both personal-psychological and social-political. New ideas, ways of working for change, teaching and learning, and social structures can only be created by people. Some will have to become leaders or ‘catalysts for social change’ in this process. But many people are confused (through ‘social ignorance’) and/or personally/psychologically blocked in their ability to think, explore, and act for social change even when they recognise a need for it. Hence, included in the analysis, was a need to understand the importance of working with emotions in order to help people to remove these personal blockages to effective social action.

Asking questions – barefoot action research

It is in the context of their analysis of the personal-to-global crisis situation that the Hausers spent much of their lives developing and testing tools for social change or, as Richard preferred, ‘social growth’. This involved working on a wide range of pilot projects (usually,

⁴⁹ The papers in the Archive (circa late 1960’s to mid 1970’s) suggest between 14 crises (Hauser Archive 2080) and 122 crises (Hauser Archive 582110), across issues such as global, national local/community, family, personal and ‘values’ dimensions. These he revisited later (1984) in two papers *‘The last chance and the best’*; *‘The last chance but the best’*. See Appendix.

in my time with him, around 64 different projects in various stages of development) to discover what worked, when, where, how and with whom and sometimes why?⁵⁰

Central to this work is the idea of asking questions. Action Research is now an accepted discipline and research methodology in social science.⁵¹ Other people have developed similar approaches to identifying the ‘powerful questions’ that help unblock situations.⁵² For Richard the key tool, and the one that I have modified and adapted over time as the starting point for most of my work in the quarter century since, is what he called the ‘Social Action Survey’. Richard’s ‘social action survey’ approach is similar to that of Kurt Lewin⁵³ and has elements reminiscent of Grounded Theory,⁵⁴ but the approach was more flexible, with less concern for protocols and links to academic theory, and with a focus on effective social action. Unlike approaches which involve an academic/professional researcher, working either alone or as leader of a community-collaborative process, the aim was to enable non-professionals to undertake the surveys as a tool for planning and leading their own social action.

In the days when I and my peers cast hopeful eyes towards China under Mao-Tse Tung for models for rapid community-based social change, the term ‘barefoot doctors’ was used to describe paramedical people sent into the fields to work with people on community and personal health issues. Richard, it seemed to me at the time, was interested in training ‘barefoot’ action researchers; people involved in, drawn from and often directly affected by an area of community concern. It was axiomatic that they should be at the forefront of the social planning process: to explore the issues, identify what needed to be done, and be able to plan strategically and tactically to bring about the necessary changes that affected their lives and the lives of others in their community. An example would be the training of prisoners and ex-prisoners so they could intervene on the issue of prisoners’ rights⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ The projects changed, but the total number remained at around 64. See Hauser & Hauser 1975.

⁵¹ See Greenwood & Levin, 1998.

⁵² For example: Peavey, 1994; and Peavey: in Green et al. 1994 pp 89-117. I have benefited from ideas on searching for ‘powerful questions’ from Warwick Pudney, (Director, ManAlive, Auckland.) Personal Communication, Auckland and Taupo, October 1997.

⁵³ Lewin, 1935, 1948, & 1951. Richard uses a number of the same concepts as Lewin - such as ‘the social climate’ ‘social responsibility’ and has a similar focus on ‘groups’, ‘leaders’, and approaches to resolving social conflicts; as well as the reframing of questionnaires and interviews in terms of ‘action research’..

⁵⁴ Glaser and Strauss, 1967; and Glaser, 1992, 1994, and 1998.

⁵⁵ We noted earlier his work with prisoners that led to the formation of prisoners’ rights organisations: Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners (PROP) and also Recidivists Anonymous (RA). The former coordinated ‘rooftop’ protests across the UK prison system demanding an inquiry into prison conditions in the UK - prompted by published first-hand reports on prison social conditions. See Stratton, 1975.

The same basic tool can be used to explore the ‘social climate’ and identify a social action profile of a community. This involves the researcher/catalyst identifying the issues of concern and the potential for locally led action. I recall spending some four weeks at Richard’s suggestion on the Thamesmead estate in East London identifying potential actors for work on ‘unemployment’ and the broader ‘climate’ for community development. When I reported my findings he commented that the situation was basically unchanged from what he had found ten years previously. The problems were considerable but the climate would not permit locally led change – an important message if the objective was to develop an alternative to a benevolent (but paternalistic) welfare approach to intervention on these local issues. In the process I did spend time with a number of the local unemployed youth that clarified ideas on what was needed and the then insurmountable obstacles. Repeating ‘unemployment’ aspects of the survey in several other boroughs indicated that these conditions were not localised and that there were only very limited opportunities for real change.⁵⁶ But there was little scope for action either for or by the young unemployed.

For example: the Brixton area of London, where I worked in the early to mid 1970’s, had an unemployment rate among 16-19 year olds of 70%. It was not that these young people lacked initiative. One group of young black kids worked out that, on any day, one in ten secondary school children was not in school. Their view was that perhaps one in ten teachers shouldn’t be there either. Instead they should be:

‘ . . . out on the streets teaching the kids some of what we wanted to learn when we were wagging it because we couldn’t stand the school. The teachers wouldn’t know where to find them but we would, so maybe they should give us a job working with these teachers so we could help them find the kids, and work on what they really want to learn?’

Local youth, community and ‘probation’ workers who subscribed to the hegemonic values of reinforcing the ‘work ethic’, actively undermined this and other social responsibility initiatives. They were into chasing young people to look for ‘jobs’ (that were not there) and, as a last resort, creating short-term ‘program’ jobs (similar to today’s ‘Work for the Dole’ programs) to keep people off the unemployment register. Most of the young people I worked with didn’t surface in the unemployment system - preferring to ‘*con starve or steal*’ than face the ‘*humiliation*’ of the dole.

⁵⁶ One such ‘limited’ opportunity was establishing cooperatives for people with recognised employment skills. This idea which I explored in Lewisham in 1975, was being piloted by Manuela Sykes through the UK Industrial Common Ownership Movement (ICOM) and Wandsworth Council in London and was taken up by the Greater London Council’s Cooperative Development Agency in the early 1980s.

To Richard, having good ideas was not enough. It was important to analyse the situation on the ground so these ideas could be planted in fertile soil, not waste time trying to get things to grow in hostile climates. He drew the distinction between: ‘sowing’ (where we try a variety of ideas in different places to see what will ‘grow’, and then ‘harvest’ the experience); and ‘planting’ an idea in ‘fertile’ ground (where previous experience suggests the social climate is conducive to action). Sowing is testing the climate. Planting is attempting to create a viable, self-sustaining model for change on an issue that might have general application.

How to make a social action survey

“The importance of making surveys is best understood in the light of Socrates’ maxim that the unexamined life is not worth living. Surveys allow us to examine our life and in doing so to learn to use social tools and techniques, to use our frustrations constructively, and to increase our reasoning abilities. We can be greatly helped to gain experience of life by learning to use interview, survey, group and community work techniques with which to measure social situations, to evaluate them and make a constructive impact on them.”⁵⁷

The action survey process itself involves four stages: the concern, the pre-survey, main survey and action. To Richard it was almost axiomatic that the survey was a group process, though one that could start with a small group or a single ‘catalyst’ researcher.

Step 1. The concern

This is used in the old Quaker sense of the word – the problem we want to ‘have a go at’. It is either a concern that we are directly involved in, or one that concerns the lives of others. At this stage we help people link up with others who share the same or similar concerns and clarify their hypothesis about the concern; as subjectively as possible. This can then be examined objectively to reveal the group’s bias against which it can then be on guard.⁵⁸ This bias cannot be eliminated. It can be contained. Consistent responses by one of the team that confirm his/her bias can be challenged by the group and another person be allocated to check whether they get similar results from the same or similar stakeholders.

⁵⁷ Hauser (Uc). The undated paper ‘How to make an action survey’ (in use 1972-6) was the one I used as the basis for my work. Alternative versions of the action survey process can be found in Hauser & Hauser (Ua and Ub) and as separate papers in the Archive (e.g. Hauser 1978).

⁵⁸ Perhaps the single most distorting feature of qualitative research is the expectation of the researcher. It is not just that personal bias creeps in so that I hear only what I want to hear, but that the responses I get from others are subtly biased by the cues that they pick up on what my expectations might be. A colleague who taught Psychology at York University illustrated this with undergraduate classes. He would give an assignment on using a questionnaire to sample views of other students. The class was divided into two groups. Each was separately given the same questions and instructions but as the second group was leaving he added the comment “Oh, don’t be too disappointed with the results of this.” When the results were analysed in class they showed a marked difference between the two groups’ results – indicating that researcher expectation even at this simple level can influence participant responses. Taff Townsend, Personal Communication 1976 and July 2000.

The result of the concern stage is a working hypothesis about how the community could be involved in tackling the concern: what might people be able to accomplish at short, middle and long range?

Step 2. The pre-survey

This is a working model in miniature of the main survey to follow. The aim is to confirm in broad terms whether we were right or wrong about our concern. At the end of this we make a second hypothesis to sum up what we have learned, whether action is now possible and if so what this action might be. The questions we ask in both the pre- and main surveys help us to uncover:

- Objective facts rather like any other survey.
- Subjective opinions surrounding these facts – being the emotional, invisible facts surrounding the objective ones. The aim is to get behind the initial or stereotyped views to real ideas and opinions.

“facts and emotions must be seen as an indivisible partnership, even if they contradict one another. The same situation (and even the same person) may be an absolute battle ground of ambivalence . . . the survey must provide an outlet for both facts and feelings”⁵⁹

- People we can collaborate with: particularly groups and potential leaders who can help make the survey and take it over themselves.
- Lines of action resulting from groups and their leaders deciding their own course.

The pre-survey thus needs to explore:

- The questions that, when asked, uncover the above.
- The people these questions need to be asked of.

Questions: I have found it helpful to develop three levels of question. The first are broad open-ended questions that are used as ‘mouth-openers’. These can be carried in my head and used to guide the conversation with a stakeholder/participant such that at the end I have a map of his/her responses to the ‘interview’. Under these there will be some areas where I’d like to explore specific issues and around which I will be seeking the form of the question that best unlocks information about the situation and information about the person being interviewed. What moves or blocks him/her to taking action to deal with the issue? The third level are the ‘luxury questions’. Things that might be interesting to explore if there is time and the interview goes well but not essential.

⁵⁹ Hauser Ibid – *How to make an action survey*

Stakeholders: The aim is to survey a small sample across the full range of ‘experts’ who might have opinions on the subject of concern, i.e. anybody who knows anything about the problem. These include: professionals and people with a specialist viewpoint, non-professionals who may have knowledge about the field, and people directly affected by the problem across the full range of ages, income, sex, geography etc.

The questions are subject to alteration; being changed if they are misleading, added to as new areas of interest emerge and modified as we learn to uncover the hidden subjective elements of the concern.

Finding the Questions: The way I see it, in most surveys (whether quantitative or qualitative) the researcher(s) approach the subject population with a set of more or less defined questions. The answers to these questions are the variable. In an action survey, the answer(s) are fixed – in terms of what makes social action possible; though I don’t know what they are at the outset. The questions are the variable. The aim is to identify the questions, and particularly the form of those questions, that will elicit both objective and subjective information about the situation, how it is perceived, ideas for action etc. And, as important, gather information about the extent to which individuals and groups are able to participate in social action, what prevents, blocks or limits them, and how these blockages might be overcome. The survey questions seek to draw the subjects into the process of the survey, to build networks, alliances and eventually strategic actions that enable them to influence the situation they are concerned about.

“Too often we find it is taken for granted that one already knows what questions to ask. In fact we find that by asking open-ended questions of a general nature . . . we get many answers to questions we never asked. The people’s own priorities come out and the standards by which they see their own problems, something which no one coming from a different culture or even from a so-called objective point of view, can possibly do.”⁶⁰

Over the years I have often used a set of five generic open-ended questions as a starting point:

1. What’s The Problem
2. What is currently being done?
3. What needs to be done?
4. What are the obstacles to change - what stops good ideas from happening?
5. Where do we go from here? - Who else might have something significant to contribute etc.?

⁶⁰ Hauser Ibid.

These can then be supplemented with issue-specific inquiries.

These questions often reveal elements of the social climate. For example: what sometimes emerges is an inability to think beyond the problems: often a tendency to confuse the obstacles (question four) with the problem (question one).⁶¹ While some groups may have many ideas about what needs to be done, others show a lack of creative or strategic thinking. Often question three is heard as *'what can we do?'* Perhaps one of the more generic problems we face in attempting social change is the tendency to allow our thinking to be constrained by what we believe to be possible rather than what we often know to be necessary. Richard framed this problem in terms of the ideas of 'blockage' and 'shrinkage'. Sometimes I can see where I need to go but there are obstacles in the path that (initially) prevent this. The thinking of a group can be focussed on strategies for overcoming these 'blockages'. For some people and groups the problem is more severe. It is as if their horizons have been so shrunk that the obstacles are the boundary of their vision. At best their action is 'anti-negative'. Their attention is focussed on opposing social injustice and the social forces that maintain it, but they have little vision for how to change it and what to replace it with. In Richard's terms, 'imagination' is needed to build a bridge between the 'negative' current situation and the future 'positive' alternative. Strategic action needs both anti-negative and positive elements.⁶² Anti negative alone leads to political action of the kind that advocates we 'smash the system' with little idea of what can be put in its place and still less about transition strategies for getting there. On the other hand much 'new-age' thinking has been characterised by a focus on 'positive thinking', which ignores the need to deal with current injustices and, equally, has little to offer strategically in making the transition.

Key to Richard's thinking is the need for people to 'unblock' whatever is holding them back from being effective actors in the social change drama. This he often represented as involving a process of *'catharsis'* – an emotional release that allows new ways of thinking. This is often seen as an explosion of repressed anger or hurt; though sometimes as a quieter collapse of old identity structures as these come to be seen as inadequate. We will return to this later.

⁶¹ Working with union and worker representatives of the (apple and vegetable processing) Mountain Maid Cannery in Batlow, NSW, after a successful campaign to salvage the company from receivership in 1995, I offered the five questions above as the basis for exploring strategies for the future. Half an hour of discussion later I asked which questions we had actually addressed. They were almost exclusively related to 1- the problems, or 4- the obstacles. My asking this question pushed the discussion out of the 'anti-negative' into the area of the 'positive'. It led to the development of creative ideas based on a 'Search Conference' between workers, management, local apple growers and community representatives. See A.C.B.P., 1996.

⁶² An example of the kind of radical thinking that can emerge from using the action survey process can be seen in: The Stegley Foundation, 1996. Here the process was adapted for a strategic board meeting exploring new ways to direct philanthropic funding to non-profit community groups.

Step 3. The main survey

The pre-survey is a dry-run for the main survey. It can indicate if the project should proceed, be abandoned or approached from a different direction. It is designed to test and modify the questions so that these uncover: the realities of the situation, the possibilities for action, the actors who can make a difference, and what it will take for them to do so. Once the questions start to yield some consistent responses the research group can reframe the initial hypothesis, clarify questions to be used and the people to be involved in the main survey. We will have a clearer idea of both the points of indignation around which action might be built, and, the form of questions that uncover where people are or might be willing to re-think, grow personally and socially, and take action. The main survey involves a larger number of people and is carried on until there is sufficiently large group of collaborators who:

“show will for leadership, who want to be trained, and who will in time lead the action part of the survey.”⁶³

Step 4. Social action:

Action follows from the main survey. The whole point of the survey is information-gathering for the purpose of action. **The survey itself is part of that action.** The survey questions explore what Richard called ‘the social climate’ and are aimed at stimulating its growth through prompting responsible community action. This action involves the people affected by a concern investigating, planning and determining what should be done. He makes much of the distinction between social planning and social engineering whereby:

“... an elite group of planners decides what people should do or what should be done for them: the planners as an exclusive group remain in charge. When we speak of social planning we mean quite the opposite, namely a process by which people are inoculated against submitting to or being controlled by the plans of any such elite, but instead become responsibly involved in the planning, the decision making itself, as well as the actions in which they have had a responsible voice.”⁶⁴

Like many of Richard’s other ideas, the prescriptive detail of how to do action research is of lesser significance than the fundamentals.⁶⁵

- Working with people who have a direct stake in the issue of concern.

⁶³ Hauser Ibid.

⁶⁴ See Hauser, 1978. Note this is an alternative (later) paper on the Action Survey.

⁶⁵ The tone of his writing on the topic is almost like a ‘recipe’ for how to do it. A similar critique can be levelled at a number of other ‘action researchers’. See for example Emery, 1977; Emery & Emery, 1975; and Emery and Trist 1973. I vividly recall a conversation around the precise form that ‘Search Conferences’ **must** take when I was working in Batlow (see footnote above) (Merrelyn Emery, Personal Communication, 1995).

- Mobilising and empowering them to take action.
- Using questions as a tool for identifying and mobilising allies.
- Using questions to begin to identify and work with the less tangible (much harder to encapsulate) emotional and subjective elements in the situation and empowering people involved to better understand and hence influence the social climate in which they operate.

Groups and Leaders

In this approach the role of the action-researcher is that of a ‘catalyst’ – the psycho-social equivalent of the chemical go-between that is sometimes needed for some chemical reactions to take place. The difference is however that the chemical catalyst is unchanged by the process whereas in the social action process both I, and the people I work with, will grow – personally and socially. As catalyst, I come away from the process with a residue of experience, knowledge and skill that can be carried over to the next project.

What is particularly relevant here is that the catalyst is not there to ‘lead’ the project in the traditional sense but to initiate a self-sustaining process and get out of the way. Observing what others do with the ideas and social change tools is key to the process, and what Richard and Hephzibah were most interested in. Like most of their precepts this was grounded in a theoretical approach – in this case to the idea of leadership and leaders. This involved a simple, sometimes over-simplified, framework for analysis of leaders in terms of three categories: ‘influence leaders’, ‘power leaders’ and ‘establishment leaders’.⁶⁶ These are conceived of in relation to groups (which may be as small as a family or as large as a nation).

- The catalyst is an **influence leader**. His or her role is to stimulate thinking about issues of concern, mobilise the group sense of curiosity and doubt and/or indignation about the inherent injustice and guide the group into planning and strategic action.
- The **power leader** is seen as the one who (in that moment and for that stage of the action) is acknowledged by the group to be ‘half a nose ahead of the field’. The one the group will follow.
- The **establishment leader** is one who tends to work in the background and who is often needed to make things work in practice.

⁶⁶ Hauser Archive – *Leaders* (Undated). In this later paper there is reference to: ‘type 3½ - *The leader of the Spirit*’ who represents values which are timeless. He describes this type as “*Normally an influence leader . . . he carries the Messianic Message!*”! A Messianic tendency was one criticism often levelled at Richard.

Applied to community, society and the social climate these three types of leadership have parallels in stages of growth. These were defined in terms of: ‘emerging new ideas’, ‘plateau’, and ‘decline’ – with the potential for new growth to emerge at any time as a result of influence leadership. While these are not hard-and-fast divisions, social action projects are replete with examples where individuals taking leadership have confused their roles. I have found the above to be a simple and far from simplistic tool for analysing my own role when projects and actions went awry.

Richard was explicit that the social catalyst’s leadership role was primarily about influence rather than power. It’s not that I can’t lead from the front or make things work from a background position, but (like Richard) I’m most interested in the new, the start-up phase of projects and have frequently been ready to move on when these have reached the point where the ideas are sufficiently established to attract funds and employ other people to run them. There is no greater or more interesting challenge than to be told something can’t be done: to tackle the necessary rather than the possible.⁶⁷ The imperative of social crisis creates a clearer sense of necessity. The task then becomes to develop my own skills to act as a catalyst for change by exploring with others where the boundaries of the possible really are and developing leadership among those people who share the concern and are directly affected by the problem.

Personal and social age

Personal and social development is seen as building on, and frequently unlearning, patterns from what he describes as four stages in the development of the psyche.

- **Archetypes:** Our inner drives and innate inheritance – mainly instinctive, sometimes intuitive.
- **Prototypes** – what we learn ‘at our mothers knee’ from primary caregivers, which we tend to accept as absolute.
- **Stereotypes** – the attitudes and values we acquire from peer group and culture and behaviours that derive from these – often unquestioned but held in the belief that they are our own.

⁶⁷ Like arriving in Canada in late 1982 and organising a national newspaper advert and 23,000 letter write-in campaign to PM Pierre Trudeau against testing of Cruise missiles. In the process, bringing together the previously mutually hostile Canadian church, peace and trade union organisations, and leaving behind an ongoing (staffed and funded) Peace Caravan Coalition and Campaign based on the 7,000 person activist database created from the ‘Cruise Project’. All of which, I was told, ‘couldn’t be done in Canada’ at that time for n-zillion reasons.

- **Personality** – our freely chosen values for self-identity and identification with others. Our personal and social creativity.⁶⁸

Key to Richard's thinking was that, more important than chronological age, was the stage of an individual's personal and social development. There are people whose personal development lags behind (or may sometimes be in advance of) their chronological age. Some older people maintain many characteristics of the young. Some can be described as immature for their age - '45 going on 15'. To Richard, as important was the measure of the person's social development – their ability to empathise and engage with others outside their 'peer' groups where they might feel comfortable. The high point is social maturity when one has the ability to act socially and to teach and empower others to do likewise. As well as applying to individuals, the same ideas of personal and social age can also be applied to a group or a culture.

Underpinning the process of helping people unlearn and grow beyond stereotyped behaviour was what Richard called 'the Socratic method' - asking questions, sometimes provocative ones, with the aim of getting people to think for themselves. In practice, Richard's teaching (and that of Socrates) often fell short of the ideal. Re-reading Socrates⁶⁹ as part of this study I found myself experiencing a frustration not unlike that I had when working with Richard. The art of asking 'open-ended' questions has come a long way since Socrates and the effect of asking 'leading' questions (where the teacher has a firm idea of the answers and prods the student to affirm this view) produces much the same reaction today as it did to Socrates in his day. He was condemned to death for his teaching. Details of the form aside, as a process for engagement and collaborative learning, questioning works where other forms of 'education' may fail. Stimulating a questioning approach is effective in challenging old, established patterns of thought and behaviour by provoking doubt about whether these are the only or right ones, and curiosity about what others might be.

Applied to the analysis of personal and social age, the approach involves finding and asking the appropriate questions for different groups that invite comments and discussions about what a scale of personal and social age would look like. The result is that characteristics for personal and social ages of: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12½, 15, and 18+ are developed and used to

⁶⁸ In his later work he added a fifth level – again that of '*the spirit*'. Another not inconsistent framework he used was that of five dimensions: *instinct, emotion, reason, intuition* (seen as the realm of compassion solidarity and identification) and *spirit* (which allows identification beyond time, place and a single lifetime). Source: paper 1821, Hauser Archive.

⁶⁹ In: Livingstone, 1938/1950.

evaluate the social age of various social groups. See Fig 2.1.⁷⁰ At (social) ages two to eight, our behaviour can be seen as broadly anti-social. At age ten, the age of conformity, it is a-social. Beyond this there is evolving social behaviour – emerging from stereotypes with increasing ability to identify with others outside of our peer groups.

Fig 2.1. Personal and Social Age

Personal Characteristics (Identity)	'Age'	Social Characteristics (Identification)
<i>Able to help others move outside the framework of stereotyped thought and action</i>	18+	<i>Able to identify with others one has helped to grow to 18+ themselves, who may follow lines different from one's own. Teaches others</i>
<i>Adult - Age of wisdom – make decisions independent of outside pressure</i>	15+	<i>Active in society – solidarity with wider community and social concerns</i>
Independent creativity	Adult	Identification developed growing socially and able to teach others
<i>Self-chosen values – growing sense of balance – able to stand on own feet but may give up under pressure</i>	15	<i>Interest in neighbourhood/small community/sub-culture</i>
<i>Begins to assert whole personality - starting to think and act independently</i>	12½	<i>Identification with peer group - Beginning of responsibility</i>
Personality developing	Youth	Pre-social Growing social responsibility
<i>Growing intellectual intensity and personal values – resents those who do not conform</i>	10	<i>The age of conformity with the environment – for good or bad</i>
	8	<i>Couldn't care less</i>
<i>Growing emotional intensity – self assertion</i>	6	<i>Would like to be anti-social but daren't (potential mobster)</i>
Personality underdeveloped	Child	A-social (conformist)
<i>Able to imitate and can tell right from wrong</i>	4	<i>Resorts to violence when in a temper (psychopaths)</i>
<i>Ego centric and self assertive</i>	2	<i>No identification (fascist)</i>
Personality undeveloped (violent)	Infant	Anti-social, (irresponsible and ignorant)

It should be noted that the personal/social age scale is a tool. The stages and descriptions are indicative of responses from groups. As Richard himself put it:

⁷⁰ Adapted from Hauser & Hauser, 1963; the unpublished manuscripts Hauser & Hauser, Ua and Ub; and various sketches relating to these scales in the archive. Fig 2.1 is a synthesis of six different forms of these scales found in the archive

“It is not a value structure per-se; but merely a graduated tool which can be used to evaluate our own development and that of others, and anyone who uses it is perfectly welcome to alter the descriptions of personal and social growth if he finds more accurate ones than ours”⁷¹

The scales were developed afresh with each group, though they tended to adopt a similar form. They are used as,

“. . . a measure of human development (a) in depth, within the person and (b) in breadth, towards others. The personal age scale can be used to evaluate the identity development of individuals, ordinary or notorious, as well as that of a group, an institution or a community. The social age scale can be used to measure the social attitudes, positive or negative of individuals, historical personalities, certain professions, groups, institutions, communities or societies. One may also use these scales to ascertain the degree of personal and social development likely to have been achieved in certain historical periods. As a training tool it is desirable to use it without the introduction of any personal views or opinions on the part of the person . . . who is offering it.”⁷²

Richard (disingenuously) would always stress that the scales were for evaluating others, not one's own group. The result was of course that each would insist on evaluating their group's 'age'. A result was that prisoners would consistently evaluate themselves at ages 6-8 (younger for more violent crimes). Prison officers identified with age 10 (the age of conformity). Many groups engaged in social action would, reluctantly admit that their age rarely exceeded 12½ (limited identification with others, predominantly within their peer group).

It was axiomatic for Richard that the resulting 'shame' from such self-evaluation would act as a stimulus to growth; would lead to understanding the importance of reaching out to and embracing work with people outside our own comfort zone, empowering ourselves to act on issues of human concern and to teach others. If this sounds fanciful, and I was a sceptic for some time, I can only say that I watched people grow through this and the related processes. To select just one example: a 'five foot two inch little bigot' arrived in London one day from one of the Protestant paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. This man of violence had decided (it was always a mystery precisely how it happened) that he wanted to work with Richard. Over the next four months I watched him grow. He came and went: each time with a clearer idea of the need for programs to bridge the para-military religious divide. He became a colleague and a friend. Eventually he returned to Ireland knowing that he was

⁷¹ Hauser & Hauser, Ua p 205; and Ub Section 10.

⁷² Hauser & Hauser, Ua, p 205-6.

about to be killed by his own side. A lesson perhaps for leaders who get too far ahead of their group; but by then my sense was that he had far outgrown his old life.⁷³

Violence and apathy

The action survey aims is to identify ‘points of indignation’ and those of ‘doubt and curiosity’. The importance of these points emerges from Richard’s view that two key blockages to social growth are ‘violence’ and ‘apathy’. Indignation and doubt/curiosity are the socially useful forms of these. In his view violence represents a fear of death and the will to overcome it at any cost. Apathy is the fear to live – of being unable to handle life and withdrawing from it to some imagined safe haven.

These are seen as two sides of the same coin. Apathy is ‘*only frozen violence*’ - capable of being thawed out in the heat of the moment, when it will manifest at the corresponding point on the violence scale. In this view an apathetic community might appear to be passive and non-violent but this is a dangerous illusion. My own experience in Birmingham in the days following the pub-bombings by the IRA in 1974 bears this out. Twelve years of involvement in community, social and political organising in Birmingham led me to label this as one of the more apathetic cities I know. The community outrage and subsequent mob violence (that forced police to close and cordon off the city centre) and the treatment by police and prison officers of the six men accused and subsequently jailed for 16 years (before being released as innocent) bears witness to this unfreezing process.⁷⁴

As with the personal and social age scales, Richard would develop rough scales for violence and apathy by which groups could make their own evaluation of individuals, groups, society and cultures. See Fig 2.2 below. There are obvious rough parallels with the personal/social age scales. Violence ‘matures’ as it progresses from frozen violence through its ‘anonymous, (age 2); ‘reactive’ (age 4); ‘strategic/controlling’ (age 6-8) where it is a response to personal inadequacy; socially conformist (age 8 - 10); ‘rebellious’ and ‘class preservative’ (age 12 - 12½) before emerging into the more adult ‘passive non-cooperative’ and active ‘indignant’ forms.

⁷³ Sammy Smith of the Protestant paramilitary ‘Ulster Defence Association’ was shot in Belfast in 1974, believed to be on the orders of a UDA faction opposed to his proposal for dialogue with the Catholic IRA.

⁷⁴ I also have my own story of fear blocking me bearing public witness at the time to what I knew in terms of the treatment of the ‘Birmingham six’ – and my shame when their innocence was established.

Fig 2.2 Violence and Apathy⁷⁵

Violence scale	Scale point	Apathy scale
<i>Indignation over injustice (usable violence)</i>	10	<i>Curiosity and Doubt (usable apathy)</i>
<i>Self-defensive anger and/or provocative non-cooperation: passive resistance, non-violent protest, non cooperation - with acceptance this may provoke violent reaction.</i>	9	<i>Apathy of asserting self in only one direction – going a yard when a mile is needed often overlaid with ‘pragmatism’ – their own cynicism/frustration blocking progress by others.</i>
<i>Violence as preservation of privilege and the status quo and/or self-righteous aggressive assertiveness - often provoking violent reaction</i>	8	<i>Apathy of false or forced activity - intensification of routine, (keeping busy doing nothing, ‘conference-itis’, ‘committee-itis’ and obsessive analysis without action)</i>
<i>Violence in defiance of authority – hatred, rebellion, martyrdom in search of a cause.</i>	7	<i>Minimum participation – one’s own rights and duties, keeping self to self, the ‘middleclass syndrome’ (alienation, and irresponsibility.</i>
<i>Violence as an accepted social outlet - active as in fighting sports, hunting or in crowd/mob situations - or vicarious as in enjoyment of watching violence in street fights, sport, films..</i>	6	<i>Escapism – living in world of irreality – or addictions</i>
<i>Violence as a social institution – authorised by those in power: war and war games, corporal punishment or scapegoating of minority groups.</i>	5	<i>Resigned acceptance of minimum standard of life</i>
<i>Violence as response to social inadequacy – acts of revenge, bullying - relief of frustration at others’ expense</i>	4	<i>Personal or social inadequacy – sense of failure and inability to try again - with burning resentment</i>
<i>Reactive –spontaneous outbursts of violence – aggression through fear and interrupted apathy – often triggered by loss of control e.g. with alcohol.</i>	3	<i>Giving up – feels incapable of doing anything – (easily aroused to violence)</i>
<i>Anonymous violence – sadistic or mob violence</i>	2	<i>Total despair – hopelessness and defeat – complete breakdown</i>
<i>Frozen – inward directed violence</i>	1	<i>Total apathy – frozen personality⁷⁶</i>
Extreme violence		Extreme apathy

In these parallel scales of violence and apathy, anger and cynicism are common responses to frustration – just below the high point where they are transformed into socially useful/usable

⁷⁵ Again, these scales are tools – developed with and in the language of groups he worked with. Fig 2.2 is based on Hauser & Hauser: Ua, Section III; and Ub, Section 19 - *Violence and Apathy*.

⁷⁶ Richard also notes (Ua and Ub) that a ‘frozen’ state can also represent the great dignity of the person resigned to death. He cites examples of death row prisoners and holocaust victims who, while they had nothing to lose, did not attack their guards.

elements. These frustrated responses are seen as a major block, one that often requires a ‘catharsis’ to move beyond.⁷⁷

To Richard:

‘indignation is the powerful and socially useful feeling that something wrong must be righted.’

It is however fragile. Frustrated, it can easily sink back into hatred. The opposition becomes the ‘enemy’ that must be destroyed. Similarly a person who is doubtful about the value of life lived with only partial social responsibility and curious about how to live more fully, is looking for new ways. This too can easily be frustrated. Hardest of all to counter are those who appear to know why changes cannot be made to happen – ‘Been there, done that, doesn’t work!’ But even curiosity is no guarantee of action. As Richard put it succinctly:

“Curiosity and doubt can produce thought without action, Just as indignation . . . can produce action without thought.”⁷⁸

I have found the concept of curiosity & doubt and indignation as the ‘usable parts’ of apathy and violence extremely useful over the years. Mobilising indignation (the sense of social injustice that transcends personal anger and hatred) is the primary focus of most community and social action. Those who are not involved are usually labelled as ‘apathetic’. This often involves ‘writing off’ a large section of the community – as much from the organisers’ frustration at their inability to bring these people into the action and usually without examining whether we are using the wrong tools for engaging the concern that is often there. Indeed ‘action’ approaches, which work on raising the emotional ‘tone’ of people on the violence-indignation scale, can often be a significant ‘turn off’ for ‘apathetic’ people. These people can often be mobilised, or at least we have a better understanding of what obstructs social action, if they are identified in terms of the apathy-curiosity scale and we use appropriate tools for raising their social awareness in this mode. Basically this implies less information and more questions and questioning. I have never ceased to be amazed by people (myself included when I forget) who think that organising campaigns is about ‘education’. By which they usually mean providing information, usually to the already converted, and wonder why the campaign fails to reach the broader mass who are, of course, ‘too apathetic’ to care and/or get involved.

⁷⁷ Below this level of ‘frustration’ he would suggest that people are ‘shrunk rather than blocked’ and more patient work (sometimes repeated catharses) may be needed before such people are ready to engage in social action, especially in leadership roles. The section of the handbook on leadership identifies as wide range of ‘false leaders’ who groups need to be wary of – but these are not specifically cross-referenced to his personal/social age or apathy/violence scales.

⁷⁸ Hauser & Hauser Ub: *Violence and Apathy*, p9.

Let me illustrate this with an example from work on the Oval Estate in South East London in 1974-6. Following initiatives of the local council community workers, the residents had identified issues such as housing problems, difficulties with youth and the lack of community facilities on the estate. A local Residents Association had been formed which lobbied for one of the flats to be converted into a Community Centre and resources for a local summer play-scheme (which was how I initially became involved). The underlying reality was that the committee was riven by internal divisions and increasingly isolated from the bulk of the residents. The committee felt that it was carrying the burden - *'most people here are apathetic . . . don't get involved . . . don't help'*. The burden of running of the Centre drained all their energy (protecting this from the vandalism that resulted from lack of ownership by most people and especially the youth on the estate). The residents saw the committee as *'exclusive' 'keeping information to themselves' and 'being in it for themselves . . . for power . . . for what they could get out of it'*; only some of which was true. The result was that some of the key resident activists dropped out. Some of the more vocal ones used their position to lever transfers off the estate to better housing elsewhere and the Residents Association collapsed. The attitude of the (local government) community workers was that this was normal. The whole cycle had already been repeated twice before and that given six to twelve months for the fuss to die down they would be going back to restart the process again! Nowhere was there any conscious attempt to work with the activists to help them understand the community 'apathy'; or work with the community's feelings of anger, fear, frustration, powerlessness, and distress - to build interest and enjoyment (beyond the immediate activities) and create an enduring culture of engagement in the social change process. Short-term anti-negative action (largely against the council) around points of indignation was assumed to be the antidote for social and community problems in this area.

In my own work I learned to complement the work on points of indignation, which taps 'usable anger', with the open-ended questioning approach that taps interest, curiosity and doubt – the usable parts of 'apathy'. I came to see anger and apathy as a part of a broad spectrum of emotional responses to frustration that reflected personal as well as social blockages and needing attention in their own right.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ What I didn't see then – and this is a missing element in Richard's theory – was the role of shame at the root of both apathy and violence. We will explore this connection in Chapter Four below.

A road map for exploring emotional and social change?

Richard frequently used the format of creating paired (often ten point) scales across the three phases of development (infant, juvenile, adult) as an evaluation tool for the stage of development of individuals, groups and communities.⁸⁰ It is of course open to the charge of being simplistic and often grossly oversimplifying the real world. Reality for many people in most situations is far more complex. That said, these tools, combined with other elements of the social action theory which address issues of ‘leadership’, ‘ambivalence’, ‘social ignorance’, ‘stereotypes’, ‘catharsis’, ‘blockage and shrinkage’, ‘human rights’, ‘duties and responsibilities’ (and more) have provided a social action ‘road map’ that has helped make sense of many of the confusing situations I have encountered in exploring and organising on a variety of issues, mainly on the interfaces between the environment, trade union and other social justice movements for more than a quarter century. Many of these I recall in terms of the sketches and Richard’s words. Some of his comments that have stayed with me are pithy in their ability to put a finger on common problems. I’m sure many other organisers will have experienced the way that groups sometimes disintegrate, with people falling out over one or more of *‘the three Ps’: petty details, personalities and particulars.’* Richard pointed out that there are two things that can derail a group that has moved into social action.

‘The first is failure – which can throw you back to the beginning. The second is success, which can have the same effect - two weeks later!’

His prescription was to always have more than one action project on the go. He suggested a minimum of four; at different stages of development. And the strategic planning stage for social action groups involved developing the follow-on or fall-back projects as part of the social action survey.

Some of the linkages are also profound, perhaps more so in the light of some of the connections made as a result of this study. In exploring the scapegoat syndrome he pointed out that hatred and violence towards others is often an ambivalent response: *‘the fanatic being the one who would destroy in others the doubts they feel in themselves.’*

What was also always stressed in his approach, and something that is all too often forgotten in many efforts to bring about social change, is that we need to pay attention to and develop

⁸⁰ See Hauser Ua: Section III; where in addition to the ‘Personal and Social age’ and ‘Violence and Apathy’ scales described above, he outlines models for: ‘Rights and Responsibilities’; ‘Shame and Guilt’ (to be explored below); ‘Groups and Leaders’; ‘Ages/stages /development of a group (child, adolescent, adult, commonsense); ‘Social phases’, ‘Social contracts’, ‘Resistance’, ‘Social development’, ‘Unloving life’, ‘Common sense’, ‘Joy of life’, ‘Shrinkage of hope’, and ‘Social shrinkage’.

skills for working with the emotions. Some people may be opponents or passive non-allies in our social action. We need to understand what it is that blocks these people from engagement with the process of growth from a 'paternalistic' towards a more democratic and socially just society.

Catharsis

As well as understanding, we also need tools for emotional unblocking. For Richard these tools involved being able to work with intuition and emotions as well as with reason. It was axiomatic that personal blockages needed some vigorous discharge of emotion before people were able to move forward into social action. At the time he offered very little more apart from the ideas that display of 'ambivalence' was a signal that there was likely some emotional blockage requiring 'catharsis' to remove it.⁸¹ His concept of catharsis appears to have been heavily influenced by Freudian ideas⁸² and can be located, at least at the period when I worked with him, at a time when the provocative approach of 'encounter' groups⁸³ and 'primal scream' therapies⁸⁴ were entering public consciousness. Richard's provocative style would often lead to expression of anger. He seemed to regard all such expression of strong emotion as a catharsis. On the other hand his practice, and that of those who worked with him, clearly produced results. I vividly recall a conversation with his deputy Fr Ray Helmick following a 'visit' by a man from one of the Northern Ireland Paramilitary groups. He was armed and looking for Richard but found Ray in the office.

"What did you do?" I asked.

The reply, without any sense of drama:

"Oh, I invited him in and worked on his ambivalence!"

In my own social action work I learned to recognise 'ambivalence' in people and see in this the seeds of what could be quite dramatic change. I learned to watch for the expression of strong emotion and to suspend the rational discussion, focus on the emerging emotions and allow people to work them through. I can't claim to have any clear understanding at that time of what it was that was 'working' here. However, trying got me into some interesting experiences. I recall vividly one such moment in the mid 1970s talking with Ted Eagle, then a recovering alcoholic, about his work as a para-social worker setting up a 'shop-front' centre for homeless men in East London. When Ted became agitated, speaking rapidly and pacing

⁸¹ Hauser & Hauser, 1963, 1971, Ua, and Ub.

⁸² See the early work of Freud in Freud and Breuer, 1895.

⁸³ See Capra (1982/1987 Chapter 11) for discussion of the origins of various 'therapies' around this time.

⁸⁴ Janov, 1970.

about the room my first instinct was to ‘shut this down’, to redirect attention back to the rational discussion. But in that moment I sensed something deeper emerging. I had an intuitive sense that this was a turning point for Ted - and that it was also a point of responsibility for me. The inner question was: {“Are you prepared to walk with him if his life takes a different direction as a result of this?”} What emerged was Ted’s ambivalence about becoming a professional social worker and, like other such workers, patching up holes in the welfare ‘safety net’ but not fundamentally challenging the way society treated homeless men. The result was our fledgling attempt to establish an organisation for the preservation of the rights of ‘dossers’ (P.R.O.D.) with initiatives such as challenging the actions of the community, traders and police in the Spitalfields market area of East London where Ted and I were involved in civil disobedience around the issue of a street-corner bonfire that had been the focal point for the homeless; providing warmth, shelter and a meeting point for the charity ‘soup-run’ as well as serving as an unofficial accommodation and employment agency within the ‘dossing’ community.⁸⁵

Since those days I have come to understand much more about emotionality, emotions and how to work with them. Lately, some of this in the area of men’s group work has validated what I did intuitively a quarter century before. The body of skills emerging in what has become known as ‘the men’s movement’ includes a more mature understanding of the process of ‘emotional discharge’ based on the co-counselling model developed by the re-evaluation counselling (RC) community.⁸⁶

Richard’s point about needing to understand how to achieve effective discharge of blocked and blocking emotions is, I think, a valid one. His writing gives the following insight into his perspective.

“Catharsis is a usually painful process whereby the hurt or wounded soul tries to clean itself by spitting out pain and hostility as one might clean a wound of pus. It is always somewhat dangerous, since a genuine catharsis produces a

⁸⁵ Webb and Eagle, 1974. Our survey among homeless men and agencies working in the field identified the term ‘dosser’ as a disparaging label applied by the community but which was also used by the men themselves with an element of perverse pride. Ted’s hypothesis was that this label could be used to focus attention on the human rights of those who chose to ‘live rough’, rather than be forced to use the DHSS ‘reception centres’ – referred to in the homeless community as ‘The Spike’ from the practice of storing details of each man using the centre that night on a form that was placed on a spike in the front office.

⁸⁶ See Jackins, 1982a and 1982b. The important difference between the RC approach and cathartic ‘encounter’ therapies of the 1960’s and 1970’s lies in the praxis of ‘working light’ rather than forcing intense emotional expression. The creation of ‘aesthetic distancing’ of the person from his/her emotional experience allows discharge (and release of distress) rather than re-stimulation - something yet to be fully appreciated in trauma counselling. Below we will explore this concept of ‘emotional distance’ in effective catharsis in more detail and see how some of it might work in practice with respect to shame.

vacuum once the bitter accusations, the agonising doubts and the self-pity have been expressed. If the vacuum is not filled quickly by the determination to seek new values it will soon be invaded by the same demoralisation and the same undigested misery as before, made even more desperate by disappointment”⁸⁷.

On occasions he would also talk of the process as manifesting less as an explosion than as an implosion - a collapse of a previously held views of one's self and its place in the world. Either way, leaving a space that needs to be filled.

He recognised the need for what today we refer to as ‘emotional safety’ for this work:

“(T)here should be an understanding and an acceptance . . . that the hurtful and hateful things said and done during the catharsis will neither cause one to lose face nor be held against one, once the crisis is over. Genuine catharsis is a symbol of honest travail, . . . an either deliberate or uncontrollable breaking out of the blockage that shackles the mind whose purpose is to open up the way to new understanding. Thus if the catharsis is followed by a rational assessment of what led to it, it will not need to be repeated again and again, because the mind will be freed of the negative obsessions that held it back and can now let positive thought and action develop alongside the awareness of what was wrong. It is this lack of awareness that causes . . . a never-ending pattern of anti-negative rebelliousness, at loggerheads with everything they are against. As long as they fight with negative means, as negative as the ends they oppose, they cannot hope to produce and positive growth.”⁸⁸

His description of cathartic work with prisoners (and Italian ex-Nazis) shows that he not only understood and could manage the cathartic process but also could teach the prisoners how to help each other to become ‘midwives’ in the process. He suggests that a cathartic process has four stages:

- The emotional explosion – often hostile or anxiety-ridden, that brings out miseries that were buried out of ignorance or fear which have blocked social development and which are due less to personal hurts than the social problem of our time
- Rational reconsideration of the situation – as it was, and as it is to be brought into being. Expanding beyond the personal to realise how others have been in similar situations, so that the issues behind the symptoms can be identified and seen as needing to be dealt with, not alone but with others. Personal failure thus becomes transformed into ‘*security in the group and . . . faith in the future.*’
- The will to act – ‘What am I going to do about it and with whom?’ A feeling of constructive aggression against injustice releases self-assertion and solidarity with others to plan social action.
- Learning new tools and techniques for action and to understand and help others.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Hauser & Hauser, Ua, p246.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p246.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p256.

Overall however he saw every catharsis in terms of a crisis of values and an opportunity for people to grow into social action⁹⁰ around any of a number of points of departure such as:

- ❑ **Sense of injustice** – what we feel incensed about.
- ❑ **Shame** – where we feel they have let ourselves down or allowed others to abuse or mislead us.
- ❑ **Curiosity** – wanting to find out what the situation really is; rather than what we believed it to be.
- ❑ **Doubt** – willingness to confront questions opponents are raising; seeing there may be wrong on both sides.
- ❑ **Leadership** – failure (of others) to take responsibility for the problem and the need for leadership we can/should provide or participate in.
- ❑ **Identification** – fellow-feeling for others in state of hopelessness and despair because they are not being shown alternatives.
- ❑ **The peer group** – as a means of overcoming failure; collectively tackling issues
- ❑ **Solidarity** – observing how other groups fight for human rights and share responsibility for achieving together what no-one can achieve alone.
- ❑ **Indignation** against institutions – those that should have been involved in solutions and those which, though not directly involved, also take no action.⁹¹

It is at this point that many individuals and groups become ready for action; and where perhaps the greatest danger lies. All too often there is a rush into action, without the tools and techniques, and without attention to planning and strategy. The social action survey approach is designed to both assist the planning process and also to highlight the need for a wider range of tools. These tools are analytical, a road map on which to locate the issues, ways of framing the problems encountered, and group tools for developing effective ‘grass-roots’ strategies for action. They are also tools for understanding and working with emotions. Ultimately to overcome the blockages at the personal and social levels within others and ourselves.

Shame and guilt

It is in this context of work with emotions and the opportunity for growth in social responsibility that the question (or in Richard’s terms the social crisis) of the transition from guilt to shame culture needs to be located.

⁹⁰ Reminiscent of the RC communities - though there is nothing in Richard’s writing that suggests he was aware of Jackins work in the USA, which was in print in the 1960’s.

⁹¹ Hauser & Hauser, Ua, p258-160.

I noted above the self-evaluation by many of the groups he worked with. A group's own evaluation would often result in a sense of shame (sometimes the other side of a major catharsis) and that this alone would act as a driver for involvement in the social change process. How this worked in practice is unclear. It is not developed much further in any of the written material, and my personal recollections from this time add little to the process of how it operated. It seems I'm not alone in this. A handwritten note at the end of the section on Guilt and Shame in the Handbook manuscript says:

*"This is the least ~~intel~~ satisfactory chapter so far. The idea of shame and how to use it is very confused. And there is no link-up with the ideas of duty and responsibility. Also, are guilt and shame merely social imprints? There is too messianic a quality about this, unless you feel that that's the only way to fire hope."*⁹²

It is important to remember Richard's first language was German where shame and guilt carry slightly different (or slightly stronger) overtones than they do in English. German like most other European languages has two words that we translate directly as shame representing two major aspects: that of shame as disgrace, and that of shame as modesty or embarrassment; roughly the distinction made late in Ancient Greek between the words *Aischyne* and *Aidos*.⁹³ Viz:

Latin	<i>foedus</i>	<i>pudor</i>
French	<i>honte</i>	<i>pudor</i>
Italian	<i>vergogna</i>	<i>pudore</i>
German	<i>Schande</i>	<i>Scham</i> ⁹⁴

In German the word *Scham*, commonly translated as shame, might better be seen as 'shame-embarrassment' and it is probable that this is the sense in which we should understand the 'sense of shame' referred to in the Parzival myth. Richard himself uses the term "*Schande (soziale Scham)*"⁹⁵ indicating his view that disgrace shame is a social embarrassment – closely related to what he calls 'social ignorance'.

⁹² Hauser & Hauser, Ub, Chapter on Guilt and Shame, p14. The deletion of the start of what I assume to be "*intelligible*" is in the original. It is unclear who wrote this comment but Clara confirms it was not Richard or Hephzibah.

⁹³ Originally, as noted earlier, *Aidos* served both functions in Ancient Greek. See also Lynd 1958, p24.

⁹⁴ See Scheff and Retzinger, 1991, p7.

⁹⁵ Hauser & Hauser, 1971 p191. In his English writing Richard frequently uses the phrase 'sense of shame' suggesting that this is a more literal translation of how he conceptualises the use of this word in German. It is also the translation of Von Eschenbach's description of Parzival's experience cited in Chapter 1.

It has been suggested that English has only one word for shame itself⁹⁶ though we commonly make a similar distinction between disgrace-shame and embarrassment over body exposure.⁹⁷ In fact, we have a wide range of other words that together describe a family or spectrum of ‘shame’ feelings: humility, shyness, embarrassment, humiliation etc. These provide us with the ability to describe a wide range of rich and subtle nuances of the experience in terms of: the various circumstances in which shame arises, the intensity of the feeling and the extent to which it is externally imposed or internally generated.

Where Guilt is concerned Richard uses the German word *Schuld*, which carries overtones of dereliction of duty.⁹⁸ In both English and German, guilt / *Schuld* have roots that link the concept to the ideas of ‘shall’ or ‘should’ and thus involve an imperative, injunction or prescription: ‘I should or should not have done that’.⁹⁹ Guilt is also closely linked to the ideas of ‘sin’ and ‘evil’ (*Sühne*) and, as such, of having broken a law, or transgressed against some rule as a result of which there is the expectation that some reparation will be needed often in the form of acceptance of punishment (*Strafe*) if not for one’s own benefit, as a deterrent (*Abschreckung*) to others. As Richard summarises it:

*“Guilt is the feeling of having committed a wrong against some superior, paternal power the result of which . . . will be suffering on our part: revenge or punishment will be inflicted on us by the authority whose displeasure we have incurred . . . meant to deter us and others as well from sinning again and if we have duly repented, forgiveness may follow punishment.”*¹⁰⁰

He contrasts a vertically (patriarchally) structured guilt (sin-evil, punishment, deterrent) model with a horizontally (democratically) structured model of shame (social ignorance, compensation and social education). In developmental terms (reminiscent of the personal and social age scales) he suggests guilt is associated with the child state while shame evolves through adolescent to adult forms. See Fig 2.3.

⁹⁶ Scheff and Retzinger, 1991

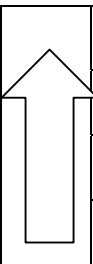
⁹⁷ See Harris, in Ahmed, Harris et al, 2000.

⁹⁸ Lynd, 1958 p 24.

⁹⁹ See Partridge, 1983 - cited in Meares, 2000 p81. Meares highlights another aspect of Guilt – characterised by the 1970’s counter-culture phrase ‘a guilt trip’. He traces (drawing on the work of Mauss, 1925) the role of guilt in ‘indebtedness’ from ancient/indigenous Pacific Island, North American, Scandinavian, Indian and Roman cultures through to modern families where parents highlight what has been ‘given up’ for the children. This ‘obligation to repay’ is, like the guilt of moral transgression, grounded in a power relationship with a superior/parental authority. As an aside, in the Small Heath area of Birmingham in the 1970’s we uncovered a cultural ritual known as “*Give him the ha’penny*”. In circumstances where one person asked for and was granted a favour (and might therefore be obligated to ‘return the favour’ sometime) a third party would remind the receiver to give the (then smallest) coin as a token discharge of the ‘debt’.

¹⁰⁰ Hauser & Hauser, Ub, *Guilt and Shame*, p1.

Fig 2.3 Social age of guilt and shame¹⁰¹

Common-sense, Social creativity		Social responsibility <i>(Sociale Verantwortung)</i>
A-social non-action		Adult shame <i>(Erwachsenenalter Scham)</i>
Anti-social action		Teenage shame <i>(Jugendlichen scham)</i>
Child		Guilt <i>(Schuld)</i>

He suggests the adolescent sense of shame is described by the question: ‘Why have I done such a thing?’ ‘How wrong could I have been?’ - while the adult’s question is more: ‘Why haven’t I done the right thing?’ Thus he suggests:

“ . . .the teenager tends to act and then feel that the action was improper. The adult tends to fear he has failed to take a positive action that was necessary, perhaps because of cowardice or misunderstanding. But at the highest level, that of common-sense, wrong doing is governed by self-imposed social responsibility.”¹⁰²

And elsewhere

“There is a terrible pessimism inherent in the acceptance of guilt . . . but the shame-responsibility axis is a tremendous lever towards greater awareness and can be used to help people grow.”¹⁰³

Central to Richard’s prescription for a new social order was the idea that a transition was needed from a society based on rights and duties, to one based on rights and responsibilities. In this framework, duties were those requirements defined by the society (in practice by authority figures) for which one received compensatory rights. Anyone who has been through the process of changing citizenship will have experienced how these can be neatly codified in terms of what is expected of the citizen and the rights he or she can expect to enjoy as a consequence of complying with these duties. Responsibilities, on the other hand, were seen (by Richard) as *‘freely chosen burdens’*: those things that the individual undertakes as a result of his or her commitment to society; a reflection of his state of social maturity, his social age. Rights, or at least human rights, were seen as inalienable; an entitlement by virtue of being human. This shift from conditional rights and duties, to inalienable rights and freely chosen (socially mature) responsibilities was closely tied to his idea of a transition from a

¹⁰¹ Adapted from Hauser & Hauser, 1971, p 203; and Ub, *Guilt and Shame*, Part Two - sketches p4.

¹⁰² Hauser & Hauser, 1971, p 202-204; and Ub, *Guilt and Shame*, Part Two, p2.

¹⁰³ Hauser & Hauser, Ua: p75.

guilt to a shame culture.¹⁰⁴ In this framework guilt is seen as the result of transgression against externally imposed duties (even if these are internalised as a result of the developmental process to the point where they provide an accepted moral code for the individual). Guilt is an ‘infantile’ response, at best a ‘juvenile’ one. Shame on the other hand is seen as developing across the full spectrum of the personal and social age scales. At the infantile level it may be indistinguishable from the guilt associated with rule breaking in the family. At the juvenile level it manifests as the effect of transgression against the norms of the peer group. At a more mature level it manifests in response to the individual’s awareness of social injustice – the violation of one’s own or another’s human rights.

In this we can see how Richard could assert that shame, as a result of self-evaluation, could operate to promote social growth.

“Shame is the feeling we have towards our friends and our peers and others similar to ourselves whose code of behaviour we have transgressed and whom we feel we have let down. . . . Shame can be a very primitive feeling in response to fear that we have lost face, made ourselves ridiculous vis a vis our peers and that we may, therefore be cast out. It can also stem from a deeper awareness of having disgraced or endangered someone to whom our security or well-being happens to be bound. It can produce low-level or high-level reactions; for instance, a gang may isolate one its members who has transgressed its code . . . but a group which is socially aware may try to enlighten one of its members who has shamed himself or the group . . . Shame is, therefore, a very basic reaction, which expresses itself according to the value base of those who feel it. Where there is an ethical vacuum, an absence of empathy, of imagination, of desire for excellence, and of idealism, shame adheres to previous status symbols. . . . Because these symbols are often presented to us as values in their own right, the emerging shame culture has a low value system . . . exploited by paternalists or advertisers as easily as it could be used as an influential aid to fraternalism if we learned to relate it to social constructive values.”¹⁰⁵

In this framework the origin of shame is:

“. . . loyalty to one’s group expressed as conformity to commonly held values. To raise the level of values from mere stereotypes . . . people have to become aware, through intuition and instinct, through reason and emotion, of such concepts as justice and injustice, courage and cowardice.”¹⁰⁶

He suggests:

“Fear and guilt are first cousins; and knowing this no one would or should subscribe to an order of society in which behaviour is governed by fear. No one can be frightened into constructive thinking.”¹⁰⁷
(We) cannot frighten people into being good”¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁴ This was a common feature of discussion with Richard – despite the handwritten comment on the section of the Handbook quoted above.

¹⁰⁵ Hauser, Ua: p 70-71.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid p 72

¹⁰⁷ From undated paper titled: ‘Chapter Four. Guilt and punishment: Shame and compensation’ - supplied by David Jehnsen from his records of Hauser’s handbook materials.

“(P)unishment . . . is hardly ever constructive since it is mainly designed to hurt and not to make us grow. It underlines our failure and may make us afraid to err again lest we be punished again, but does not teach us how to undo the results of our wrong action, let alone to understand and to outgrow the mentality which made the wrong action possible. On the other hand, shame . . . is an awareness of our own social ignorance which we can correct by voluntarily making an effort to compensate for the harm we have done. If victimiser and victim were both helped to overgrow the hurt resulting from wrong action, provided it had not had a fatal outcome, it could often be cancelled out. . . . The will to compensate for something one feels ashamed of having done is a much more hopeful and dignified way of dealing with the social ignorance which we see as the root of anti-social behaviour than letting oneself be burdened by crushing guilt . . . so deep rooted especially if it has become sub-conscious, that to remove it may require a complex religious or psych-analytical process.”¹⁰⁹

Throughout his writing Richard suggests that shame is a product of social ignorance. Awareness of this social ignorance can lead to indignation against the self and be used as a stimulus to personal and social growth. He sees guilt as limited to the feeling I have for the action that I have done. Shame on the other hand can also be for the thing that I have not done - the failure to defend the rights of another. In this I think he stretches the point. However, while guilt may sometimes be felt for my ‘sins of omission’ as well as those of commission, it is shame rather than guilt that I am able to feel for the thing done or not done by another.

To locate this in a current political context: at the time of writing we have in Australia a government unable to offer a public apology to the Aboriginal population for the various acts of past governments that so clearly violated what are now widely recognised as fundamental human rights. It is unable to say the simple word ‘sorry’ for these past actions and the devastating effects on Aboriginal life and culture. In this refusal it is responding to the view of its own conservative constituency and a large section, though by no means all of the population who believe that we (in this generation) should not be held to be guilty for the actions of the past. With a large migrant population, recently arrived, there are many for whom this is clearly so. The issue is however not one of guilt - the transgression against rules or standards (accepted or not); but of shame - the sense that we can take responsibility for the injustice of the past and its continuing hurt into the present. Not just for what was done, but for what was not done. And, importantly, we can feel shame for what is currently not done by the government refusing to say ‘sorry’. It may not be our guilt, but it can be our shame. And

¹⁰⁸ From: ‘Notes on a discussion with Adrien Arnold’ headed: ‘How to help Society to Mature.’ dated February 1990. The Hauser Archive.

¹⁰⁹ Hauser, Ub: *Guilt and Shame*, p1. This (written 1967) appears to anticipate the role of shame in ‘restorative justice’ processes.

the extent to which it is so (or not) is a measure of the degree of social maturity (social age) achieved by individuals and groups within the society.

The mechanism for this social growth is the will to ‘compensate’ for the hurt caused by the shameful behaviour.

“As soon as awareness makes us feel ashamed of an action committed or a wrong action one has allowed others to commit without interfering, the question of compensation arises. Compensation can mean to a very minor extent, direct repayment for something which has been lost or damaged. Welcome as this may be . . . real compensation lies in what one does over and above the minimum, trying to draw out of the crisis situations all the good there may be in it, all the common sense and understanding which may be shared with others in the same position. . . . when compensation goes far beyond what is expected it is already well on the way to expressing a sense of responsibility; it is no longer a material restitution or a reaction to the negative but a concern with positive factors.”¹¹⁰

*“It is not enough for shame to be theoretical - . . . “mea culpa!” – it must be applied to **paying forward** (i.e out of one’s own free will) which is even more advanced – and more responsible than **paying back**. Positive self respect can grow out of responsibility”.¹¹¹*

Thus shame can lead to compensation, responsibility, dignity and self-respect. This is not guaranteed. The result relies on the stereotypes and values of the peer group. Shame can be as easily manipulated as guilt and can lead to passive a-responsibility or active irresponsibility, but it offers hope where, to Richard at least, guilt with its inseparable links to paternalism, punishment and fear, offers none.

Rights and Responsibilities

As noted above, the shame-guilt culture distinction is closely bound to the distinction Richard makes between duties and responsibilities. This helps to place these emotions in a broad cultural and social change context. A key element of the transition (seen in Richard’s terms as from feudal to truly democratic society)¹¹² is from a society based on rights and duties to

¹¹⁰ Hauser, Ua: p74.

¹¹¹ From: *Notes on a discussion of ‘Social Academy’* (dated 19 January 1987), The Hauser Archive.

¹¹² He would sketch this as a process of progressive breakdown over about a millennium with various crisis points – each with an opportunity for growth of new forms or a danger of accelerated breakdown. Among these points in the past century he would identify: 1914-18 which saw breakdown of many of the old class barriers with growth around the idea of ‘equality’; and 1939-45 with the defeat of fascism around the unifying idea of ‘freedom’ or ‘liberty’. Both of these (on their own) failed to achieve a turnaround. Faced with the intensification of crises (see The world in crisis section above) the challenge was to develop awareness of the threat and a unifying set of ideas around which to build social consciousness that would produce unprecedented social cooperation – the moral equivalent of war. To equality and liberty he suggested the addition of a new ‘fraternity’. Hence the title of his publications – *The Fraternal Society*. and *Coming of Social Age*.

one based on rights and responsibilities. In his terminology ‘duties’ are externally defined, enforced with sanctions and rewarded with compensatory rights. In contrast, ‘responsibilities’ are freely chosen burdens, undertaken to enhance the wellbeing and preserve the rights of self and others, which are themselves inalienable; something that human beings need to have in order to be fully human. This concept of responsibility as ‘freely chosen burden’ has many parallels in the idea of ‘service’ running through both western and eastern spiritual and humanistic traditions. It stands in contrast to many uses of the word today where politicians and authorities tend to use it as a synonym for duty. A word less favoured perhaps because it implies acceptance of the older hegemonic framework.

Does this seem idealistic? In the ‘Shape’ housing and community project¹¹³ we had a team of a dozen young people who were initially homeless and unemployed who we ‘recruited’ through a local church-run night-shelter. My colleagues and I had spent six months getting the project off the ground. When we finally got the go ahead we were run off our feet trying to fill the gaps in what we’d promised to deliver. One night over coffee with a group of the residents at the night shelter I said that we had been given three houses for homeless families who were working with us on these and if anyone had time I could use a hand. We had nothing to offer them. We had barely enough money for the materials to patch up the houses to make them habitable. The next day one ‘scout’ turned up. The next day two and by the end of the week we had a dozen. They stayed, working for nothing but their dole money, sleeping on the floors of the houses at night, sharing the rough times and the fun. We also opened and, with their help, ran a play centre for the local children; took over and ran a local adventure playground; organised school-holiday ‘dramascape’ programs for the children in the local community; ran a second-hand clothes shop and an advice centre for local people; and at night we helped out at various of the homeless shelters, soup runs etc. Eventually a local Housing Association gave us a large derelict house it couldn’t use and we turned this into a self-managed home for the young people working on the project. They did most of the work making this habitable using material they scrounged, begged and occasionally ‘borrowed’. One night, about nine months after we started, I asked them:

‘Why? We had nothing to offer you but you came and you stayed. Why?’

Their reply:

‘You were the first people who didn’t ask what could you do for us. You asked what could we do for someone else. We came because we could help the families who needed a home!’

Maybe Richard is right – that we really grow when we choose (or are given opportunities) freely to take on the burden of responsibility.

¹¹³ Birmingham 1973, see earlier footnote.

Towards a more mature shame culture?

The above is but an outline that barely does justice to the scope and depth of Richard's thinking on both theory and practice for social change. What stands out is the way that work with emotions is given an integral place in this thought. How, particularly, there is a need to assist the evolution of a culture that displaces the negative, personally and socially constricting impacts of guilt with the more mature forms of shame. Shame is seen as having the potential for stimulating personal and social growth through calling into question aspects of my behaviour (and non-action) and that of others. Working creatively with this shame allows the behaviour to be re-evaluated (often after cathartic unblocking). Emotional energy is then refocussed: as indignation over social injustice and curiosity over how to make a difference. These energies can then be channelled into action through the will to assume responsibility for dealing with the injustice in terms of the underlying and collective social issues: tackling these not just for myself, but also with and on behalf of others affected.

However, apart from the broad-brush strokes, Richard has little to offer on how we might begin to develop such a mature awareness of shame as a positive force for social change. Indeed he makes little or no reference to shame in the context of working with the unblocking catharsis that is seen as often needed before the process of growth in social awareness can begin.¹¹⁴ His critique of guilt, conditioned as it is by his Germanic origins and a lifetime of work with people in prisons and other stigmatising institutions, is insightful in identifying the way this feeling is largely imposed on people by 'higher authorities' in our culture. But his perspective is an idiosyncratic one that makes, or made in its day, its own original contribution but with little intersection with other strands of thought. Even where there are obvious parallels with other thinkers and writers these are almost universally unacknowledged.¹¹⁵ There is an emphasis on personal-to-social change and the future potential for cultural change through shame that glosses many of the uncomfortable features that characterise the shame experience for most people today. Shame is to be the stimulus for

¹¹⁴ But then neither do any other therapeutic processes. As we will see, most emotional work either: ignores shame completely, sees it as something 'toxic' to be got rid of, or assumes that shame issues will be dealt with (indirectly) through discharge of other emotional distress patterns.

¹¹⁵ Above we noted the parallels with Lewin's work. Here I think here particularly of the work of Assagioli (1965, 1974) on Psychosynthesis which has many parallels to Richard's ideas of personal, social and spiritual 'wholism'. It is noteworthy that nowhere in his writing does Richard make reference to the work of other thinkers – with the exception of Socrates!

growth but it's psychology and the practice of working with it is relatively unexplored - certainly less explored than the handling of anger. It is seen as something to be transcended by the making of socially oriented compensation – as though this were the end of it.

He is right, I think, to point to a socially valuable function for shame. Rather than seeing it, as is the predominant view today, as something deeply personal, pathogenic, to be gotten rid of at any cost; he locates it almost exclusively in the social realm - as something with potential for personal and social growth and intimately tied to freely chosen responsibility. It is something of human value and something with a 'heroic' element.

“(Guilt or) low level shame cannot lead to any sense or development of responsibility. There is, however, a positive shame arising from awareness of the needs of others as if they were our own. This shame may reveal a clash of values between the duties imposed on us by the state and our own responsibility as free-thinking citizens. It corresponds to a lifting of the social ignorance which allowed us to act in ways hurtful or damaging to others. To cope with it may require us to make amends by compensating fully for our previous short-comings.

The willingness to do this voluntarily coincides with the early stirrings of that sense of responsibility which is the only truly maturing factor in life, more important in raising the level of humaneness in society than compassion, than learning, and even than suffering, helpful though suffering can be in attenuating arrogance.

It is the willingness to choose to do what is humane, however great the cost which transforms simple rights-and-duties creatures, moulded by caution or fashion, into human beings and sometimes heroes.

Unlike duty which is rewarded by rights, the self respect which comes of being the bearer of responsibility is its own reward. There are however calculated risks involved . . . a responsible person may expect trouble for the privilege of acting out of genuine conviction. Some may have to give up their security, some their freedom, some even their lives.”¹¹⁶

His work in the criminal justice system and ideas for transforming the guilt culture appear to have anticipated much later work in the area of restorative justice;¹¹⁷ but without the detailed attention to understanding the interpersonal dynamics of shame, and particularly the role of the facial and body language of shame that more recent work has provided. While some of his ideas on prison reform go beyond anything so far achieved they lack detail on what was achieved in many of the initiatives; and particularly how these were achieved.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Hauser, Ua, p334-335. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ We will discuss this idea further in chapters that follow. For discussion of culture change via 'restorative justice' work see: Braithwaite, 1989; O'Connell, 1997; Moore and Macdonald, 2000; and Zehr, 2002.

¹¹⁸ There are tantalising references to some of the achievements. For example he talks of prisoners undertaking unsupervised social work in the community (see *'The prison papers'* in the Archive – also referred to in Hauser & Hauser, 1963, Appendix II). But there is almost nothing on how this turnaround in people's attitudes and sense of social responsibility was achieved.

Despite an ongoing interest in ‘observation’, and particularly work on ‘the face’,¹¹⁹ he seems to have remained unaware of the work of affect theorists.¹²⁰ He wrote little on facial expression of emotions and nothing on the facial or body language of shame. There are some fascinating anecdotes on his work teaching observation in Chicago schools. I recall him recounting how he engaged boys in one of the more alienated classes by teaching observation. This started on the concrete level of dress and physical characteristics, explored what this allowed them to ‘know’ about a person, and moved rapidly to validating the students’ intuitions: their ability to sense more in human body language than could be explained by details of their observation alone. In one anecdote he told of how he brought a schools inspector into the classroom and invited the boys to say what they could tell about this (unidentified) man. They began with some basic details then commented that they were confused -

‘He appears to be some kind of salesman – but he is also an ‘authority figure’- we don’t understand how he can be both.’

‘He’s never married.’

‘He lives with his mother.’

‘We think he may have been a teacher – not a very good one.’

‘He doesn’t like kids.’

‘Sir, he likes little boys!’

The noticeably embarrassed inspector subsequently confirmed to Richard that these intuitions (except the one about ‘little boys’) were correct.¹²¹ In one of the later papers in the archive Richard says:

“We look with one eye; we see with two eyes; we observe with three eyes on the level of intuition, taking in all that is not directly visible; and we comprehend with four eyes, on the level of the spirit, we are aware of the ‘aura’ and there we know that we live beyond one life.”¹²²

His work on ‘auras’ is either profound or ‘off the wall’ depending on your own experiences in this area but I would often observe him ‘reading’ people by un-focussing and rapidly blinking, something he would usually mask with hand-to-face gestures. When done to me I found the process disturbing, but his insights ‘uncanny’ in their ability to reach the heart of the matter at a level of depth that had not been touched in the surface conversation. He and

¹¹⁹ This was a subject of many conversations with Richard. The archive contains papers showing he was again revisiting this topic in the years just before his death.

¹²⁰ Such as: Tomkins, 1962, 1963; Ekman, 1973; Ekman and Friesen, 1972, 1975; or even Darwin, 1872; whose work we explore in the next chapter..

¹²¹ In Chapters that follow I describe my own work with Probation and Parole clients, which also suggests that attention to detailed observation opens the door to a number of more intuitive insights.

¹²² ‘Dimensions’ paper (undated- but late) point # 13, The Hauser Archive.

Hephzibah had an abiding interest in analysis of handwriting. He had appeared as an expert witness on this in court in cases, and the signatures in the house 'Visitors Book' were often studied for insights into personality.¹²³

For the purpose of this thesis, in his work on shame it seems to me that he points in the direction of what might be a significant tool for assisting social growth. But ultimately he leaves many questions unanswered. Perhaps this is as it should be. The challenge now is to see if we can fill in some of the gaps in his analysis and understanding of shame. To begin to address the questions of what a more mature shame culture would look like. What is it about shame that provides a stimulus to personal and/or social growth; and what are the tools and techniques that allow us to work with this and teach it to others?

The next step will be to look in more detail at this phenomenon we call 'emotion'.

¹²³ The original Visitors Books and some notes on handwriting analysis are in the Archive.

Chapter 3 - A mirror for our emotions

*Strange, but it seems the harder we try
to reach perfection's distant shore –
so, mirage like, it slips away
and we are left once more
with shadows
moving on the outer rim of time.*

*The words we use, the actions that we take,
thoughts that are formed within the crowded mind,
should serve to make us realize
that only a pool whose surface can be
stilled
could possibly reflect a perfect sky.*

George Griffiths, ¹²⁴

Seeing feelings

Surface or deep? If Richard Hauser is right, social activists need to understand how to work with emotions in general and shame in particular. But what are these 'emotions'? Some like anger and fear are usually obvious, though not always so. Others like shame seem to be more elusive. In terms of how it is seen in everyday use, 'Shame' hides in the shadows. It hides deep in the soul. To see it we believe we need to dig deep – deep beneath the surface of the experience and most of us prefer not to go there. What if, however, it was there on the surface of the experience – just confused by the way we think about it; the way we learned it, the way our culture thinks about it? To still the surface is of course to simplify, to smooth out many of the everyday realities, but we may see more clearly the reflection of the wider world that this pool of emotions is able to reflect.

This chapter will explore the personal and social aspects of the why, what and how of the experience we call 'emotions'. How we see them, feel them, think about them, talk about them, come to know them and make meaning of the experiences as they arise each day, and as we recall and (sometimes) reframe these experiences over time. I want to outline a framework of ideas drawn from existing theory that helps make sense of the sometimes confused and confusing world of emotions.

¹²⁴ Griffiths, 1975, 'Surface'.

The fundamental problem we face in trying to understand emotions, is that these are seen as a function of the mind. But the only tool we have for exploring mind is the mind itself. This is a bit like asking a fish to describe water. Charles Darwin expressed this dilemma incisively when he said

“Experience shows that the problem of mind cannot be solved by attacking the citadel itself – the mind is a function of the body – we must bring some stable foundation to argue from”¹²⁵

This chapter will explore this other, more stable foundation from which to observe, describe and understand emotions. It will involve a critical exploration of ‘affect theory’ to identify what might be seen as primary emotions in terms of the way they are expressed physically; as ‘body language’ rather than just through the way we think (and talk) about them. It will be seen that, in these terms, shame is one of the primary emotions. In the next chapter we will explore the social psychology of shame itself, its role and function and how disruption of this function contributes to personal and social problems.

These theoretical ‘framework’ chapters provide the base for development of practical initiatives that are described in later chapters. There I will be exploring how we can communicate the experience of shame as salutogenic rather than pathogenic and how this understanding might be applied in interpersonal, community and cultural settings. To some extent placing the theoretical chapters ahead of the practical work distorts the view on how the process of inquiry evolved. Questioning the academic literature for a theoretical framework went alongside and in some cases followed some of the practical interventions described later. At the heart of ‘praxis’ - the blending of theory (knowing why) with practice (knowing how) - is the task of understanding what one is doing while one is doing it. What makes a difference, where, when, with whom, how and why? These are the powerful ‘W-H’ questions. Overall, I hope to illustrate how content and process, theory and practice, knowing and asking questions have been blended in this inquiry.

Feeling and doing – emotions in social action

Richard Hauser’s contribution, outlined in the previous chapter, was to place the need to explore the emotionality of the situation alongside rational and objective identification of social issues and their practical solutions. His social action tools enabled people to explore both personal/psychological and social/cultural elements of an area of concern, to identify what he called the ‘social climate’. At the core of his thinking was the need to balance

¹²⁵ Cited in Desmond & Moore, 1992, p268-269.

personal and social growth in a time of crisis: which he characterised as a transition from a paternalistic guilt culture to a more socially mature shame culture.

Albeit with little detail on the actual process of working with the emotions, Richard challenged the common framework for thinking about social change. Education and empowerment of people and communities require more than just the use of rational tools. Today it seems self-evident that people often act from how they feel as much and sometimes more than what they think. In those days it wasn't as clear. It is not that the role of emotions in social change was unrecognised at that time; but they were definitely regarded as subordinate and in some senses inferior to the world of rational thought. Feelings were then (and in some quarters still today¹²⁶) seen as an impediment to clear rational thinking - and to action based on such thought. Part of this was inherent in the patriarchal male-dominant view of the time. Then (and today) the cultural challenge for men and women is, in part, to integrate archetypal elements of the other gender. For women this challenging of the dominant patriarchal culture has involved insisting that their 'personal' experience has validity within the sphere of political action, and demanding access to aspects of this political life previously denied them. Men face a different challenge: to reach inwards to embrace those elements that their culture (and particularly their gender) has regarded as weak and inferior: characterised by their 'emotionality'.¹²⁷

Clearly emotions are a critical feature of any analysis of human behaviour. Anyone who tries to influence social change soon discovers that a rational argument is not merely contested in terms of counter argument based on rational thought. The very choice of argument, perspective, goals, ideals and values is highly personalised. Both my own and my opponents' views are influenced by our emotions, often unconsciously or in ways that are little questioned in the moment when we choose them as the 'appropriate response to the challenge' before us.

Understanding the emotional content of an opponent's position is part of a campaigner's toolkit. In the international Food Irradiation Campaign in the 1980s¹²⁸ many of the strong advocates for this technology had an emotional investment in it as a result of their active opposition to nuclear weapons programs and/or the impact on human populations from radioactive 'fallout' from weapons testing in the 1940s and 50s. Their commitment to irradiation as an 'atoms for peace' technology (supposedly useful for inducing genetic

¹²⁶ For fuller discussion of the persistence of this 'folk' view of rationality and emotions see Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pp410-414)

¹²⁷ E. Jung, 1957.

¹²⁸ See Webb and Lang, 1990.

mutation of seed varieties and for the ‘preservation of food) was ‘idealistic’. It formed a significant part of the personal self-identity of these individuals. Understanding this, it was possible to work with the ambivalence felt by some to achieve significant campaign breakthroughs.¹²⁹ In terms of this thesis, in a way I failed to appreciate at the time, I began working with the nexus between shame and honour/respect rather than my traditional focus of indignation and rational argument.

Thinking about feelings

What is this phenomenon we call emotion? In lay terms it clearly has something to do with the mind – the way we interpret the world of feelings. If I feel happy, or sad, angry or disgusted I choose the appropriate ‘emotion’ words to describe these. I choose from a range of possible ways to express how I view the circumstances I find myself in. To some extent I choose how I respond to them. There is both a personal and a social component to this choice. My experience of an event will be influenced by my previous experience of similar events accumulated in the process of my development from childhood to adulthood. Both my development and the choices I make at the time are influenced by the norms of my culture. I learn preferences for reactions considered ‘appropriate’. Most of us also learn appropriate ‘display rules’ about what, when and where, and with whom we can show our emotions.¹³⁰ Emotions can also be triggered by our thoughts. I can recall a situation that made me sad and feel sadness as a result. This reflexive nature of mind and emotion poses a challenge: rather like the classic chicken and egg scenario. The complex inter-connection between thought and feeling can be seen as a combination of interactions such as: what I think affects how I feel; what I feel affects how I think; how I think affects what I feel; and how I feel affects what I think.¹³¹

What we label as ‘pathogenic’ reactions, from the mildly to extremely dysfunctional, are largely socially or culturally inappropriate responses to events. In initially exploring the academic literature on shame I was confronted by a wealth of material: much of it

¹²⁹ See Webb & Lang, 1990. An example was how Peter Elias, research director of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Food Irradiation Research Institute at Karlsruhe, FRG, helped us expose flaws in the scientific evidence that had underpinned the UN, WHO/FAO assurances on the safety of irradiated food. Jim Garrison (my co-director in the Radiation and Health Information Service in 1979/1980) tells a similar story of assistance from an individual Kerr-Magee Manager during the investigation of the murder of the US union anti-nuclear activist Karen Silkwood. For background to the Silkwood case, see Garrison, 1980 p 205-223.

¹³⁰ Ekman, Friesen and Ellsworth (1972, p23) suggest that social norms provide guidelines for when to: inhibit, intensify, minimise or dissimulate affective behaviour - i.e. when to use which display rule and how.

¹³¹ See Saarni, 1978 - in Lewis and Rosenblum (Eds) p363.

contradictory and much of it drawn from study of this emotion in the context of its pathology. There seemed to me to be two fundamental problems. First that much of psychology had attempted to interpret emotions as an aspect of the mind. There is good reason to be sceptical of arguments that are based on tautology – where a thing is defined in terms of a definition of itself. So before we describe emotions as a function of the mind (when the only tool we have for exploring mind is the mind itself) we should perhaps take up Darwin’s challenge: see that *‘the mind is a function of the body’* and look to the body to provide a more stable foundation for a theory of emotions. The second, perhaps even more fundamental challenge, is that we need a theory that sees emotions primarily in terms of their normal, healthy functions; and only then attempt to explain how these become dysfunctional, not the other way round! Much of psychology is built on observation of emotional dysfunction. This is particularly so of shame as we will see in the next chapter. If we look at shame through the window of its pathology then perhaps all we will see is the pathology of shame. This study is about looking through the salutogenic window – seeing what is normal, healthy functional about shame and other emotions.

Pulling faces – and naming them

Let me share a piece of my personal story that has relevance to the cultural dilemma for men (and hence a culture still influenced by patriarchal attitudes) in integrating the emotional with the rational. For the first 18 months when I started in ‘men’s work’ I was the despair of my men’s group. I was stuck, frozen, unable to ‘feel’ or show feelings and my talk was ‘about’ them but rarely on target. I just didn’t do it ‘right’. I felt that I was judged as being ‘stuck in my head’ etc. It wasn’t that I didn’t have feelings - but they were all jumbled up so that the only thing recognisable was “confusion” - and that’s a description not a feeling. One ‘group’ night I went to the bathroom. Yes it was a run-away-and hide. When I came back half an hour later the guys asked:

“You alright?”

“Yes” I said, “I’ve just been learning a new language.”

Behind the bathroom door was a poster (you may have seen it) with about 36 funny faces - each a circle with a caricature of the eyes, brows, nose and mouth contorted in different ways expressing a ‘feeling’. Underneath each ‘face’ was a word like ‘happy’, ‘sad’, ‘angry’, ‘frustrated’ etc.¹³² It sounds silly now, but at the time I simply didn’t have the language of these things called ‘feelings’ - a clear vocabulary with which to begin to describe some of what was going on. Not that I didn’t have these words in my general vocabulary; but I had no

¹³² Called *‘How are you feeling today?’* Author Unknown

basis for clearly correlating the word with a 'feeling' - as something felt and distinguishable from the morass of 'feeling' that made up the 'confusion'. Armed with the poster's words and images, I could add qualifiers like mild/weak, medium and strong etc., and the initial 36 could be expanded to over 100 describable and identifiable feelings. I had a serviceable vocabulary! I was no longer inadequate and ashamed of my inadequacy in front of my group with whom I desperately wanted to feel 'connected' (another feeling) and so on it went.

Now I've learned in about eight years (albeit a bit late in life) to 'have' a wide range of my own feelings - to 'own' them at the levels of experience, understanding, and ability to access them as they arise (and sometimes on demand). I also have a variety of tools in the 'men's-work' kit bag for helping others get there too.¹³³ Along the way I learned three things that I think are important. First, I wasn't alone. Many men coming to this work have a similar problem. There is a clinical term '*Alexithymia*' which comes close to fitting this psychosocial pathology of not being able to have a feeling because I don't have the language to describe it.¹³⁴ Second, it is the visual 'affect' - the pattern of facial expression (and body language) - that is critical in our identifying what it is we (and others) are feeling. There is a growing body of evidence that the way we pay (or don't pay) attention to key details of the face (our own - and that of others) affects our ability to understand this world of 'feelings'. Third, men 'do feeling' differently from women. The woman's way isn't the only or the right way, and most probably isn't the best way for men! For men, this involves less talk. Indeed my experience in men's groups (and the workshop to be described in Chapter Six) is that talking 'about' a feeling is often counterproductive. Men often 'talk themselves out of the feeling. They go away from it as they talk about it. Grief workshops specifically for men recognise this now - and encourage and validate 'male' ways of 'doing grief'.¹³⁵ I'd been involved in men's groups for several years before I found myself questioning the assumption that I had taken on from the prevailing culture - that women were better at handling feelings

¹³³ One day we'll have competency-based standards, with badges (like the boy scouts) for aspects of men's emotional work, like: 'Rage' (can throw tantrum on demand); 'Dummy spit levels 1 & 2'; 'Anger' (levels 1,2 . . . Advanced); 'Grief-1' (can cry like a baby); . . . ; 'Grief-Advanced' (can cry like a man - know & show the difference between authentic distress and beating-myself-up). Graduate level in such a 'men's-work' university will include ability to display shame without overlay of fear anger, disgust, or grief. I'm still working on what the PhD might look like. I jest - but only in part!

¹³⁴ See Taylor, 1984. Also Levant, 1988; who comments: "*I have found that alexithymia occurs in 'garden-variety' or mild to moderate forms and in these forms is very widespread among men. I have come to call this 'normative male alexithymia'.*"

¹³⁵ Tom Golden notes that, anthropologically, indigenous people have different grief rituals for men and women. He suggests instead of asking a man '*How do you feel?*' or '*How can I help?*' more effective questions are '*What's the toughest thing about this?*' and '*What do you want to do now?*' The 'feeling/helping' approach, effective for women, can be counterproductive with men who respond better to approaches framed in terms of 'challenge' and 'action'. See Centre for Grief Education, www.webhealing.com and Grief Workshop, Sydney University, 9th July 1999.

than men. In a conversation with my partner about how we were approaching the feeling/emotional dimensions of an issue I said:

“Hey, you women don't actually **deal with** feelings any better than we men do, do you?”

“No,” she replied, “we just talk about them more easily!”

Like Richard, my assumption is that there is a valid role for the cathartic - ways that emotions can be discharged by expressing them, rather than just talking about them.

The feature of both the academic and ‘folk’ psychology of emotions that stands out immediately is that there is much discussion of what we **think** about what we feel. Feelings are defined in **cognitive** terms. To some extent this is natural and has validity. As my personal experience above suggests, we do need such a cognitive framework and particularly a language to describe the complex nature of human emotion. However, given the largely negative reaction to thoughts about some emotions, shame in particular, I wish to explore an alternative, more grounded theory of emotions – one that seeks to understand how they are expressed, and the role and function of this expression in both personal and social terms.

The evolution of feeling as a response to environment

There has been a tendency to see emotional responses as ‘irrational’ – a less than rational and, by implication, dysfunctional response to the environment. This is part of the pathology touched on above. A salutogenic perspective sees ‘emotions’ as a critical part of our response to the environment – relevant to the processes of personal and political/social adaptation and change. Our challenge as humans is to choose appropriate rational and behavioural responses to those situations where emotions alert us to significant features in the environment. And part of this behavioural response is the appropriate expression of the emotion.

Studies on brain structure indicate that emotions are associated with the limbic system and particularly the amygdala, a part of the brain that can be seen as similar to (and hence evolving from) earlier mammalian and reptilian brain structures.¹³⁶ Our thinking, particularly when associated with language, involves the cortex; the part of the brain most developed in humans (and upper primates) and, as such, the site of the functions that distinguish us from our non-human evolutionary past. It is however a huge step, and the extreme of arrogance, to assume that this older, emotion-processing function is an impediment to our ‘true’ and

¹³⁶ Ledoux 1996.

‘rational’ nature. Rather we might ask why has evolution retained this function? Not how does it impede; but rather how does it serve our ability to negotiate and survive in the environment we have evolved with?

Even if emotional responses are seen as an impediment to rational existence they cannot be easily wished away. The last century of attempts to study the working of the human mind seems to teach us one significant lesson above all others – that what we deny in ourselves has a tendency to come back and bite us when we least expect it.¹³⁷ The tendency to push the undesirable into the shadows, ‘out of sight out of mind’, with the associated tendency to project its contents on to others is the source of much that is pathological both psychologically and socially.¹³⁸ Hiding/avoiding and/or projecting strategies seldom work. The unconscious is merely that – that of which we are unconscious. The ambivalence that results from denial frequently shows on the surface in our behaviour, body language or choice of language. In the extreme case the result is fanaticism. As Richard put it *‘those who would destroy in others the doubts they feel in themselves’*. Sometimes this takes the form of ‘scapegoating’ – where some ‘other’ individual or group carries (and is persecuted for) the characteristics we wish to deny in ourselves.

A framework for a theory of emotions

The first principle that a functional theory of emotion needs to be able to embrace is that emotions are functional. They are the product of evolution and they serve a function. I may associate some emotions with feelings that I like and dislike others but it is profoundly unhelpful (as is, unfortunately, common in both popular thinking and academic literature) to think of some emotions (such as joy) as ‘positive’ and others (such as anger) as ‘negative’.¹³⁹ For a start, anger, fear or any other emotion that is called ‘negative’ can be entirely appropriate in some circumstances. To think of it as ‘negative’ is to focus on the times it is called into play when we dislike it or see its use as inappropriate. We can also ask, is enjoyment at the expense of another ‘positive’? It is a question of seeing all these emotions as primarily functional: a part of what makes us human and hard-wired into our psyche to

¹³⁷ Earlier we touched on the concept of the ‘shadow’ (c.f. Jung, 1963) as the psychic repository for what we are unable or unwilling to accept in ourselves. .

¹³⁸ see Jung 1995

¹³⁹ Retzinger, 1995 p 25 and 27; suggests that describing some emotions as ‘negative’ is a value judgement that obscures what their function might be. She suggests it may be more useful to see them as ‘unpleasant’ or ‘painful’.

serve a purpose. It is also about seeing where these operate dysfunctionally as due to some failure in their application in that moment, possibly influenced by past experience, that has led to inappropriate ways of thinking about and acting in response to the feeling.

This is to focus on the salutogenic - on the natural conditions that promote health and wellbeing; rather than on the pathogenic - the conditions that lead to a breakdown in health. Nowhere is this more important than in considering the emotion of shame. If we are to conceive of the development of a more mature shame culture (and convince the existing culture that currently sees shame as primarily pathogenic) we will need a framework that allows this emotion to be seen as salutogenic - natural, functional and healthy. From this perspective we can then consider what happens when it goes wrong. Not just where it causes temporary distress, which might be considered normal and in some cases functional, but where patterns of response are clearly chronic, long term and dysfunctional to the individual and society.

In addition to the evolutionary and salutogenic perspectives, a theoretical framework for emotions also needs to encompass a developmental analysis. How do these emotions develop over time from infancy to old age? How do we learn, such that the human emotional response matures over time? We need a place from which to view emotional pathologies as the result of dysfunctional experiences, arising in the development of the individual. We also need to look at the culture in which this personal development takes place. From this perspective we can then look for ways of changing such dysfunctional patterns of responding to situations.

There is clearly a role for our ability to think about and intervene in the process of emotional response to situations based on learning. What I'm interested in exploring is the relationship between the cognitive and the non-cognitive, non-verbal, **'affective'** expression of emotions. At one end of the scale, theory needs to embrace the biological (and hence evolutionary) foundation: and at the other, how it is socially constructed, its role in social interaction and communication. Beyond the individual, it will need to consider emotion in the context of language and culture. But the pivot point in this wholistic framework is the way that these emotions are expressed. How they show themselves in terms of body language and particularly the signals we send and receive via the human face.

The theoretical framework for a social psychology of emotions in general (and shame in particular) needs to encompass or at least permit exploration of:

- ❑ A language of these emotions that is both verbal and visual – words to describe emotions that can be related to how these are made visible in body and facial language.
- ❑ An understanding of emotions as natural ‘hard-wired’ elements of the human psyche with salutogenic functions; and what these functions might be in evolutionary, biological, individual (psychological) and relational (social/cultural) terms.
- ❑ An understanding of how these might develop as a result of childhood and adult experiences (both influenced by the prevailing culture) leading to patterns of personal and social behaviour that could be either functional or dysfunctional.
- ❑ Specifically, the role of shame in this framework. How it manifests, the function it serves and how shame pathology develops as a result of breakdown of the otherwise salutogenic process. Where and how such breakdown might be the result of cultural influences.
- ❑ How such breakdown might be related to aspects of ‘guilt’ or residues of a ‘guilt culture’ – always assuming that guilt can or should be differentiated from shame within this framework.
- ❑ Finally, what from this understanding of emotions theory and the specific functioning of shame might be useful in promoting a more mature personal and cultural understanding of shame and its role (if any) in social change processes.

Affect Theory – seeing the expression of emotions

In 1998 I organised a weekend training school for a group of men to explore aspects of what has become known in Australia as ‘Restorative Justice’.¹⁴⁰ The facilitator and trainer for this was Terry O’Connell, then Senior Sergeant in the NSW Police Restorative Justice Group who had coordinated the pilot program of ‘restorative’ conferences in Wagga Wagga.¹⁴¹ The training explored the theory and practice of effective interventions with juvenile offenders and how these might be extended to wider school and community-based programs for conflict resolution. The theory had emerged from Terry’s efforts to make sense of and refine practical processes that had developed empirically and intuitively. The practical training involved direct experience of, and attention to the emotions aroused in role-plays of actual ‘conferencing’ scenarios. I subsequently spent time with Terry, observing restorative process conferences and participating in teacher-training around school discipline issues. I also

¹⁴⁰ See Webb, 1999.

¹⁴¹ For details on the Wagga Wagga experiment see: Mugford and Braithwaite, 1994; Moore, 1993, 1995; O’Connell, 1997;

facilitated conferences for young offenders as a ‘Youth Justice Conference Convenor’ for the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice and have been exploring how the process might be applied to work with adults around violence and particularly domestic violence.

The restorative justice starting point introduced me to the work of Don Nathanson and Tom Scheff in the USA and to that of John Braithwaite in Australia. These in turn pointed me towards the wider community of academics, educators and practitioners who have been exploring elements of the framework for my current understanding of the role of shame in the psychology of emotions, and the sociology through which we attempt to make sense of our culture. The theoretical framework that follows is the result of my own action survey; seeking a framework that could assist the development of social action. This has involved: interrogation of the academic literature; practical work (to be described in Chapters Five, Six and Seven); meetings, discussions and e-mail correspondence with a number of the key investigators, and an ongoing dialogue with people exploring shame issues through web-site and E-mail discussion groups.¹⁴² A network of personal contacts developed through both the academic and practical work has contributed to the emerging theory and some ongoing practical initiatives to be described later.

At the core of the framework that has emerged is the theory of **emotions as ‘affects’** – how I am affected (physically and emotionally) by something. Charles Darwin’s solution to the dilemma of finding a stable foundation from which to approach the mind field of emotions¹⁴³ was a simple one. He focussed on how these were expressed in terms of the body language – and particularly on the face. The reasoning was simple. The face in both man and animals is a primary source of information about what we are feeling.

*“The movements of expression in the face and body, whatever their origin may have been, are in themselves of much importance for our welfare. They serve as the first means of communication between the mother and her infant; she smiles approval, and this encourages her child on the right path, or frowns disapproval. The movements of expression give vividness and energy to our spoken words. They reveal the thoughts and intentions of others more truly than do words which may be falsified . . . These results follow partly from the intimate relation that exists between almost all the emotions and their outward manifestation . . .”*¹⁴⁴

An interesting, perhaps apocryphal, explanation of the origin of these thoughts on how emotions are expressed was gleaned from a visit to Shrewsbury, Darwin’s home town in the West Midlands of England. According to local legend, Charles Darwin’s father, Robert was a

¹⁴² Notably www.behaviour.net and shame@mail.lsit.ucsb.edu .

¹⁴³ Pun intended

¹⁴⁴ Charles Darwin, 1872/1998 - cited in Bowlby, 1969/1997 p 104.

local Doctor, but also a moneylender to local entrepreneurial capitalists. He prided himself on never having lost money on his investments and argued that this was because he could read a man's character from his body language, particularly his face. He made a point of making young Charles concentrate on remembering people's faces.¹⁴⁵ This story has another side. The then popular idea of foretelling character from faces almost prevented Darwin from joining the voyage of the Beagle (from which he acquired the data for his theories of evolution) because the ship's captain thought that his face (particularly his nose) suggested he would not cope with a long sea voyage!¹⁴⁶

Whatever the origins for the idea, Darwin documents his observations on the way that some 'emotions' are accompanied by body language and facial expression while others are not. For example, he finds no common facial expression for jealousy.¹⁴⁷ What emerges is a detailed description of a number of core emotions that appear to produce similar expression in both man and animals. For example:

*"With all or almost all animals, even with birds, terror causes the body to tremble. The skin becomes pale, sweat breaks out, and the hair bristles. The secretions of the alimentary canal and of the kidneys are increased, and they are involuntarily voided, owing to the relaxation of the sphincter muscles, as is known to be the case with man, and as I have seen with cattle, dogs, cats and monkeys. The heart beats quickly, wildly and violently; but . . . the surface seems bloodless . . ."*¹⁴⁸

He suggests that such emotions are:

*"a direct result, in large part, independent of 'habit', but in some cases possibly augmented by previous experience."*¹⁴⁹

Even more important he suggests that at least some of these are '**universal**' expressions of emotions – found not just in people and animals but common expressions of similar emotional states in people all over the world. To test this he corresponded with people, many of them colonial administrators, doctors or missionaries in a wide range of countries, asking questions about whether or not such and such was commonly observed among the native people.¹⁵⁰ His reasoning was that, if the individual acquired expressions during early life, they would probably be different in different racial groups, much as they have developed

¹⁴⁵ Anecdote provided by Henry Quinn, Darwin Society. Personal interview. Shrewbury, UK, August 2000.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Ekman in: Darwin, 1998, p10.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid pp81-84. Darwin also suggested that the 'emotion' of 'Love' was problematic from this perspective. We will return to this point for further discussion in Chapter Eight.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p81.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid p82.

¹⁵⁰ Freeman and Gautrey, 1972.

different languages. The similarities led him to conclude that emotional expression was inherited rather than acquired.

What Darwin appears to be suggesting is a role for the signal contained in the expression of emotions. The language of the body influences both the personal response to feeling this expression and the social response of other people reading this signal. He points to something that is only lately being appreciated and explored – that the expression of emotions acts as a signalling system that produces emotional responses in **both the ‘self’ who shows it, and the other who observes it**. For example he discusses how some actions “*appear to be due to imitation or some sort of sympathy.*” For example:

“when a public singer suddenly becomes hoarse, many of those present . . . may be heard to clear their throats.”¹⁵¹

Discussing how the study of expression is so difficult because the facial movements may be “*extremely slight and of a fleeting nature*” he goes on to say:

“When we witness any deep emotion, our sympathy is so strongly excited, that close observation is forgotten or rendered impossible.”¹⁵²

In discussing shame and blushing he suggests this can be felt by and observed in the face of one who witnesses another’s inappropriate behaviour,¹⁵³ and witnessing the pain and terror of another we may,

“where there is no danger to ourselves; but from the power of imagination and of sympathy we put ourselves in the position of the sufferer, and feel something akin to fear.”¹⁵⁴

This ‘sympathetic’ response to another’s expression of emotion may override social restraints that normally limit the expression of our own emotions:

“(The) habit of restraint which is so powerful in checking the flow of tears from bodily pain has not been brought into play in preventing a moderate effusion of tears in sympathy with the sufferings or happiness of others.”¹⁵⁵

But we get ahead of ourselves here. The central idea (both right and wrong as we shall see) was that emotions, caused by a wide range of situations, lead to a pattern of physical responses that show what it is we are feeling. This looks like a refinement of an idea that has been in and out of favour many times – that of behaviourism. But now, the emotional expression, or to give it its academic name, the **affect** is interposed between a stimulus to an organism and its response. As a central building block to our framework for a theory of emotions we have:

¹⁵¹ Ibid Darwin, 1998, p 40.

¹⁵² Ibid p 19.

¹⁵³ Ibid p 332.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid p 306.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid p 216.



Put simply, faced with a situation that I perceive as a threat (e.g. a dangerous snake), I will instinctively show fear. I may then act in one of several ways including backing or running away, remaining frozen to the spot, or attacking the snake. How I act will be highly dependent on the situation, my past experiences and the way these have been processed by me to produce particular patterns of response. What is invariable in this is the display of the affect of fear. Signals that stimulate activity in the brain's limbic system produce what appear to be evolutionary programmed responses including the automatic contraction and relaxation of certain muscles. There is for, example, a tensing of some muscles in response to fear. Part of this will be contraction of some of the muscles of the face. The activation of fear produces a widening of the eyes and other facial movements of mouth and jaw that we recognise as an expression of 'fear'. It is this system of physiological response and its characteristic expression that we call the affect. This facial display functions as a signalling system. As shorthand, we can think of 'affect' as **the display** of emotion though, strictly, it is the whole physiological response whether this results in facial display or not.

Where Darwin was (in part) wrong was the implicit assumption that the affect is the result (i.e. follows from) our experience of the emotion, the feeling; whereas it can and does precede it. The affect is the signal that there is something there to be felt.¹⁵⁶ It is affect that is triggered by the brain as a way of alerting us to some change in our environment. Feeling and what we call emotion follow from our awareness of the signal we receive via the affect. Thinking about our feelings occurs late in the process, if at all. This is not to deny that we can stimulate feelings by thinking (for example by remembering situations where we had strong feelings) but that the primary process involves the innate and unconscious triggering of affect.

The idea, that the body and particularly the face was a signalling system and one which served particularly for the expression of emotions, was largely ignored for the next century. The early work of Freud drew attention to the expression of distressful emotions as part of the

¹⁵⁶ Strongman, 1996, p 9; suggests that both James (1884) and similarly Lange (1885) challenge the common, everyday way of thinking that we (a) mentally perceive something, that (b) produces a mental affect (the emotion) and this (c) produces some bodily expression. He cites James as arguing that *'the bodily changes follow directly from the perception of the existing fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion.'* Izard, 1990; makes the point that this is more than the idea that emotion follows behaviour (the affect). The more important point is that: *'emotion is feeling. Without feeling emotion does not exist.'* To this I would add, or stress, that feeling is awareness of the behaviour and **sensations of the body.**

cathartic process.¹⁵⁷ Unfortunately, his later work relocates the primary focus for the exploration of the psyche more in the realm of a theory of primary ‘drives’. These can be considered as the basic motives that drive our actions, and are cognitive rather than expressive aspects of emotion. His observations, from which both data and hence theories are drawn, derive mainly from people whose emotional world is distinctly pathological. The other main influence of Freud, for our purposes here at least, was in the way he tackled the issues of shame and guilt with the latter being regarded as a more psychologically developed form of the more primitive shame. This valuation is closely tied, as noted earlier, to the long-term cultural shift towards a consciousness based on ‘individuation’ – the development of the personal, separate identity and the devaluation of forms of consciousness more associated with the collective. This struggle over the balance between identity and identification continues today.

It is worth noting that Darwin initially considered the expression of guilt in the chapter where he discusses the expression of disdain, disgust and contempt,¹⁵⁸ and again briefly in association with fear¹⁵⁹ before locating it alongside shame among the expressions of awareness of the self.¹⁶⁰ Here, in addition to other signals, he explores blushing as a common signal for the expression of a wide range of emotions. His conclusion was a remarkably concise and comprehensive description:

*“ . . .that blushing – whether due to shyness – to shame for a real crime (guilt) – to shame from a breach of the laws of etiquette – to modesty from humility – to modesty from an indelicacy – depends in all cases on the same principle; this principle being a sensitive regard for the depreciation of others, primarily in relation to our personal appearance, especially our faces; and secondarily through the force of association and habit, in relation to the opinion of others on our conduct.”*¹⁶¹

In placing emphasis on the expression of emotions we do not abandon our thinking functions. There is clearly a role for thinking; for ‘cognition’. Recognising the discrete nature of particular feelings is intimately bound to the processes of being aware of these feelings, of thinking about them and, as indicated earlier, the development of an appropriate language. And the language will in turn influence the way we conceive of and hence react to the experience. The previous emotional experience also mediates the form of the response. A situation that arouses interest in one person may draw him to approach while the arousal of fear in another may drive him away. But how we think (if we think) about the situation and

¹⁵⁷ See Freud and Breuer, 1895/1996.

¹⁵⁸ Darwin, 1998, p 260-261.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid p291.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid Chapter XIII

¹⁶¹ Ibid p334

the feelings associated with it, are part of a behavioural response. We can act without thinking but rarely without feeling – even if those feelings are unconscious.

The body language of feeling thought and action

I don't intend here to map the field of psychology in the intervening century.¹⁶² What is important to note is that throughout this century of theorising there have been attempts to integrate three elements, feeling (emotion), thought (cognition) and action (behaviour).

It was a century after Darwin's ground-breaking work that Sylvan S. Tomkins began to take these ideas forward. His four volume work, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*¹⁶³ was published between 1962 and 1993, the last volume after his death and 30 years after the first. While much of his work focuses on the exploration of emotional affects it is important to note that his goal was to place these alongside consciousness in explaining the functioning of the human mind. In his view affect serves to amplify the signals from the environment. It magnifies the significance of signals and alerts us to situations needing attention. Put simply 'good feelings feel better and bad feelings feel worse'. Consciousness is the vehicle for transformation – the process by which we transform the instinctive response (based on learning from past situations, memory and imagination) into our best judgement of what is an appropriate response. Ideally this leads, eventually, to mature adult responses. Both affect and consciousness are necessary. As he put it:

*"Amplification without transformation would be blind; transformation without amplification would be weak."*¹⁶⁴

Like Darwin, Tomkins argued that the face is the key site of emotion. Signals from the brain cause the patterns of muscle contraction and relaxation that produce the facial affect. It is, in part, the message we get from the facial affect that tells us what we are feeling. As we noted above, in this framework a facial affect is innate, 'hardwired' if you like. It precedes the awareness of the emotion, and its function is to signal (to both myself and others who observe it) what I am feeling.

Following Tomkins, affect theorists¹⁶⁵ suggest there are nine primary affects:

Two 'positive':

¹⁶² For a useful summary see Ekman, 1973; and for broader description of theories of emotion see Strongman, 1996.

¹⁶³ Tomkins, 1962, 1963, 1991, and 1992.

¹⁶⁴ Tomkins, 1976, and 1992, p7.

¹⁶⁵ Particularly Nathanson, 1992, 1996. Also the ongoing discussion forum via www.behaviour.net and international study groups via the Sylvan Tomkins Institute.

- ❑ Interest-Excitement (eyebrows down, track, look, listen);
- ❑ Enjoyment-Joy (smile, lips widened and out);

One neutral:

- ❑ Surprise-Startle (eyebrows up, eyes blink);

Five ‘negative’:

- ❑ Fear-Terror (frozen stare, face pale, cold, sweaty, hair erect);
- ❑ Anger-Rage (frown, clenched jaw, red face);
- ❑ Distress-Anguish (crying, sobbing, arched eyebrows, mouth down);
- ❑ Disgust (upper lip raised, head pulled back);
- ❑ Dis-smell, (lower lip lowered and protruded, head forward and down);
- ❑ Shame-Humiliation (Eyes down, head down and averted, blush).

These are relatively simplistic descriptions. Considerable work has been done since on refining the detail, and developing systems for coding the elements of the facial affect display.¹⁶⁶ Other researchers use different categories and/or suggest different affect-emotions. For example it has been suggested that emotions can be placed on a continuum from pleasant to unpleasant, or using a three-dimensional model combining ‘pleasant-unpleasant’, ‘attention-rejection’ and ‘tension-relaxation’.¹⁶⁷ Other researchers have suggested different affects as ‘basic’ or ‘primary’ and different ways of categorising or grouping these.

A universal language of feeling?

Differences aside, what is remarkable is the extent of agreement on the way that certain affect-displays are universally recognisable as representing a cluster of core or primary emotions (See Fig 3.1). There is little disagreement that anger, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise and disgust are included in this list of primary affect-emotions.¹⁶⁸ Some researchers identify contempt as a primary affect¹⁶⁹ whereas others see this as a combination of anger and disgust.¹⁷⁰ Of significance, shame is also recognised by many as among these primary affect-emotions. For example: Izard says:

“If we allow gaze aversion and head movement as a substitute for a specific facial expression, we can add shame to that list.”¹⁷¹

He seems to ignore blushing as a signal of shame and suggests shyness and guilt are separate emotions from shame.

¹⁶⁶ See Ekman & Friesen, 1972, 1975; and Ekman, 1973.

¹⁶⁷ Harrison, 1974, p119.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Izard, 1972, 1991; and Ekman, 1975.

¹⁷⁰ Nathanson, 1992.

¹⁷¹ Izard, 1991, p 49.

Fig 3.1 Table of Suggested categories for primary affects by author and date¹⁷²

Tomkins (1964)	Woodworth (1938)	Pluchik (1962)	Osgood (1966)	Frijda (1968)	Ekman (1972)	Izard (1991)	Darwin (1872)
<i>enjoyment-joy</i>	<i>love, mirth, happiness</i>	<i>coyness happiness joy</i>	<i>complacency, pleasure joy, glee, laughter</i>	<i>happy</i>	<i>happiness</i>	<i>enjoyment</i>	<i>joy, high spirits, love, tender feelings, devotion</i>
<i>interest-excitement</i>		<i>attentiveness expectancy anticipation</i>	<i>expectancy, interest.</i>	<i>attention</i>	<i>interest</i>	<i>interest</i>	
<i>surprise-startle</i>	<i>surprise,</i>	<i>surprise, amazement astonishment</i>	<i>surprise, amazement bewilderment, awe</i>	<i>surprise</i>	<i>surprise</i>	<i>surprise</i>	<i>surprise, astonishment,</i>
<i>fear-terror</i>	<i>fear</i>	<i>apprehension fear, terror</i>	<i>fear horror</i>	<i>fear</i>	<i>fear</i>	<i>fear</i>	<i>fear, horror</i>
<i>distress-anguish</i>	<i>suffering</i>	<i>pensiveness sorrow grief</i>	<i>boredom, sadness, sorrow, despair</i>	<i>sad</i>	<i>sadness</i>	<i>sadness</i>	<i>low-spirits, anxiety, grief, dejection, despair</i>
<i>anger-rage</i>	<i>anger, determination</i>	<i>annoyance anger rage</i>	<i>anger rage stubbornness determination</i>	<i>anger</i>	<i>anger</i>	<i>anger</i>	<i>ill-temper, sulkiness, determination anger, hatred</i>
<i>disgust</i> <hr/> <i>dis-smell</i>	<i>disgust</i> <i>contempt</i>	<i>tiresomeness disgust loathing</i>	<i>annoyance, disgust, contempt, scorn , loathing</i>	<i>disgust</i>	<i>disgust/ contempt</i>	<i>disgust</i> <hr/> <i>contempt</i>	<i>distain, contempt, disgust, guilt, Pride</i>
<i>shame-humiliation</i>		<i>acceptance , incorporation</i>	<i>pity, distrust, anxiety</i>	<i>calm, bitter, pride, irony, insecure, scepticism</i>	<i>shame</i>	<i>shame</i> <hr/> <i>shyness</i> <hr/> <i>Guilt</i>	<i>self-attention, shame, shyness, modesty, blushing</i>

¹⁷² Data for Fig 3.1 derived from: Ekman, 1972; Izard 1991; Darwin 1872/1998; Tomkins 1962, 1963, 1991,1992, 1995; and Nathanson 1992.

Similarly Ekman also includes shame. He says:

*“Consistent with Darwin’s observation, there is evidence . . . that people in Western cultures avert their gaze and turn faces away when feeling shame, as if hiding from observation. I also noted this in the preliterate people I studied in New Guinea, which suggests that this is universal.”*¹⁷³

And elsewhere

*‘I have not published my findings on shame, but they are very well documented in my work among the South Fore of Papua New Guinea. I asked them to show me different emotions, and when I asked them to show shame, they all averted their gaze and turned their faces away. When I did this work in 1967-8, most of the people I studied would not have had the opportunity to learn this from Western culture: they had little or no contact with outsiders and no exposure to film, television or photographs.’*¹⁷⁴

Critically, the empirical research has shown that many of these affects are generally recognisable as representing identifiable emotional states almost universally across cultures, including those with little prior contact with Western civilisation.¹⁷⁵ In work with the Papua New Guinea highlanders, for example, there was close correlation between the recognition of affect and emotion for: ‘anger’, ‘happiness’, ‘interest’, ‘sadness’, ‘disgust’ and ‘contempt’. ‘Fear’ and ‘surprise’ were recognised, but there was some confusion of these emotions. Some of this can be attributed to the way that this culture might have reason to fear what is surprising. Below we will see that this confusion can also be understood in terms of a common feature of interest, fear and surprise.

The circumstances that give rise to the emotional states may vary. The extent of expression and the behaviour associated with these emotions may also vary from situation to situation and culture to culture. But the same core affect-emotions appear to be universal, just as Darwin suggested. It seems that in the theory of affect we may have that ‘stable foundation’ from which we might indeed be able to observe the workings of the mind and the function of emotions.

Affect as amplifier

Affect theorists following Tomkins have developed this further, offering detailed description of the different affect-emotions in a developmental context. These add weight to the ‘innate’ nature of the primary affects, showing their presence from early infancy to old age and suggesting that each represents a distinct static or dynamic state of arousal in the human body.

¹⁷³ Ekman in his commentary in Darwin, 1998, p 38. As evidence he cites Izard, 1971; and Keltner and Harker: in Gilbert and Andrews, 1998.

¹⁷⁴ Commentary by Ekman in Darwin, 1998, Note C15, p 452.

¹⁷⁵ The primary affects represented by photographs were correlated with ‘stories’ or “*descriptions of situations that might result in the person in the photograph displaying the affect.*” Ekman, 1975.

Importantly it places each in a functional context. Each affect-emotion serves a purpose and is ‘hard-wired’ into our biological makeup to serve a purpose in terms of improving our survival as a species.

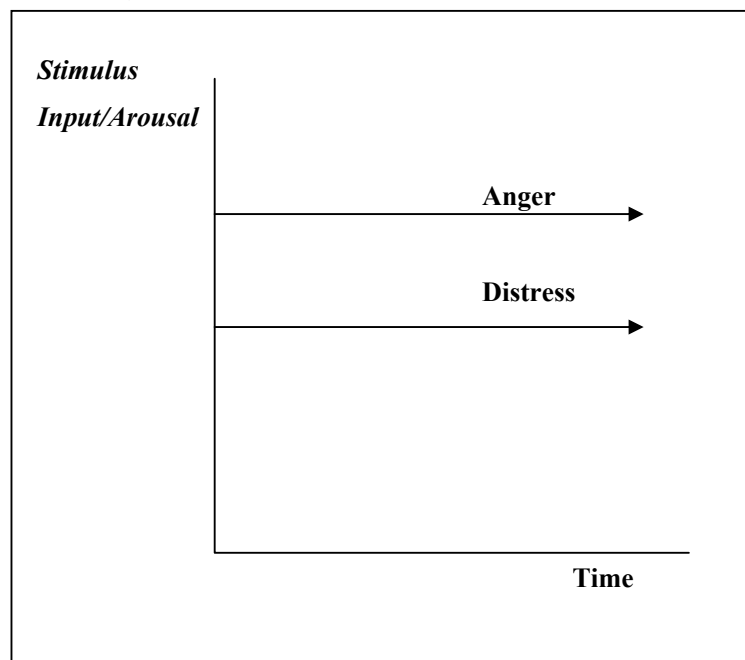
Normally, affect operates to draw attention to the environment. This it does by amplifying the signal.

“ . . . nothing is important unless it gains affective amplification; anything so amplified is important in direct proportion to the degree of amplification it achieves. . . . what an earlier generation thought of as impulsive behaviour is . . . overly amplified by affect. . . . – nothing can be called trauma unless it triggers affect.”¹⁷⁶

In biological terms, the suggestion is that affect signals the state of arousal of the organism.

Anger-rage is seen as a constant state of high level over-arousal. **Distress-anguish** as a constant state of lower-level over-arousal viz Fig 3.2:¹⁷⁷

Fig 3.2 Distress and Anger



Both these affects signal ‘too much’. Distress is the response to too much: whether this is noise, pain, or too many demands on us at work. Even ‘not enough’ interest can create the mild distress of boredom. In distress the infant signals to the caregiver that some constant stimulus (like hunger or a dirty nappy) demands attention. With infants whose needs are not

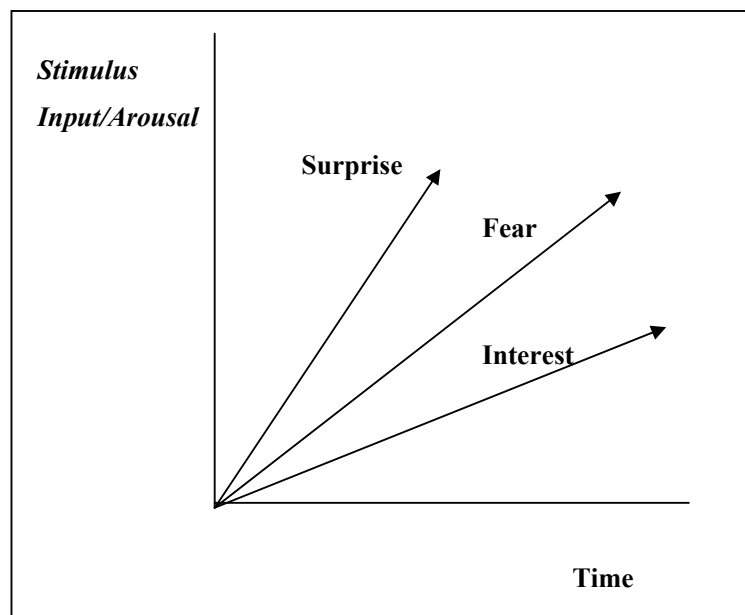
¹⁷⁶ Sylvan Tomkins cited in Nathanson, 1996, p17.

¹⁷⁷ See Moore and Macdonald, 2000, p144-150 - derived from composite in Tomkins, 1991, p58.

attended to, distress can turn into rage. The constant stimulation has caused an overload in the level of arousal and anger-rage is the resulting affect.¹⁷⁸

It is suggested that three other affects: **Interest-excitement, fear-terror and surprise-startle** originate from a common pattern – that of an increasing stimulus. Interest is triggered by a gradual increase. Fear is triggered by a rapid increase and surprise by a sudden increase. It has been noted that the face of extreme interest (excitement) is very close to that of fear, and that of extreme fear (terror) is close to that of surprise startle (or shock) these can be represented graphically as in Fig 3.3:

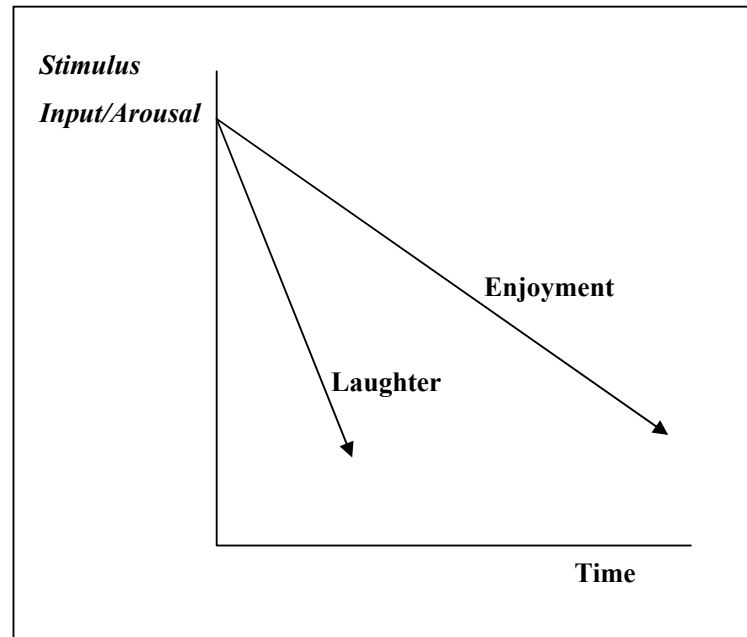
Fig 3.3 *Interest, Fear and Surprise*



So far so good. The theory goes on to suggest that enjoyment is the result of a decrease in stimulation. Viz: Fig 3.4. Enjoyment is thus associated with a decrease in stimulation leading to relaxation, quiet joy, and contentment. Tomkins also suggests that the sudden reduction of **any** kind of neural stimulation is a significant activator of joy or **laughter**¹⁷⁹ – something we will return to when we come to consider patterns of discharge for emotional trauma.

¹⁷⁸ See Nathanson, 1992, p101-106. The same often applies to children, adolescents and adults.

¹⁷⁹ Tomkins, 1962, p251; and 1992, p286.

Fig 3.4 *Enjoyment/Joy and Laughter*

Disgust and dis-smell are seen as serving different functions. They are regarded as drives (motives) that serve the primary function of expelling or avoiding intake of things that are experienced as unpleasant or dangerous. Over time these can be coopted to serve other but similar purposes – like signalling the distaste, disgust and contempt we feel for a variety of situations, the behaviour of other people and even these people themselves. Whatever the origin, the feeling is usually seen as a recognisable facial display.

In affect theory, **Shame** also is regarded as different from the first six affects above. It is regarded as an ‘auxiliary’ to the affect system – experienced whenever there is a sudden, temporary reduction of the ‘positive’ affects. It is the result of a partial reduction in enjoyment or interest – while the source of the interest or enjoyment remains present.

Nathanson summarises how these operate as

“The two positive affects operate the feelings associated with the entire range of interesting or exciting events, and the equally pleasant but quite different range of situations where we feel content, happy or joyous. Anything that starts out suddenly and then stops, like a pistol shot, triggers the affect range from surprise to startle, which sort of resets the mechanism by detaching us from whatever we have been thinking about and getting ready to focus on whatever comes next. The negative affects involve the ranges from fear to terror, anger to rage, the sobbing of distress to the wail of anguish, and the way we turn away from unpleasant situations on the basis of their taste (disgust) or their odour (dis-smell).”¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Nathanson, 1996, p3.

We should note that these can also be coopted to express feelings aroused by the thought of an event. Talking of changing a baby's nappy may trigger dis-smell in anticipation of the event.

*“Finally just as dis-smell and disgust can disrupt hunger, no matter how ravenous, there is an analogous mechanism that can interrupt the two positive affects of interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy **when the affect system detects an error in signal processing**. Although this error amplifying affect starts out as nothing more than a physiological mechanism, because the situations that trigger positive affect and the effect on us of the interruption, as we grow into adult life it is this new affect that is responsible for the range of feelings from shame through humiliation.”¹⁸¹*

Shame serves to interrupt the escalating spiral of, for example: pleasure-affect (feeling enjoyment); enjoyment affect (feeling joy); joy-affect (feeling rapture/bliss) etc. Critically it does so in response to “*an error in signal processing*”. We sense that the interest or enjoyment are not congruent with our environment usually because significant others do not share our feeling.¹⁸² The shame affect signals to us that the input stimulus has been interrupted. It is not strictly an ‘off switch’ for interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy. As such it is not strictly analogous to disgust. Rather it is:

“a unique biological mechanism . . . called into action when the organism remains fascinated by whatever had triggered interest . . . [or] whatever or whoever might have been a source of . . . enjoyment . . . a mechanism that throws the organism into a painful experience of inner tension by attempting to reduce the possibilities for positive affect in situations when compelling reasons for that positive affect remain.”¹⁸³

The common example given is that of greeting a person we think we know, to discover s/he is a stranger. We remain interested in the person (for the reasons that her appearance made us mistake her for a friend moments earlier) but recognise that our approach may be an unwelcome intrusion.

‘It is shame affect that is triggered to reduce our level of interest where every other stimulus operates to continue the process of amplifying our interest.’¹⁸⁴

This example clearly has cognitive elements of an adult social interaction. A more basic one which has been used to justify the idea that the process is innate, arising even before the infant is aware of a self-other distinction, is the instinctive blush (of shame) that can be seen on the face of a breastfeeding infant whose mouth slips off the nipple. Here again interest and/or enjoyment have been partially extinguished where the object of the original affect

¹⁸¹ Ibid. (emphasis added)

¹⁸² For example, the feeling we get after telling a ‘bad’ joke.

¹⁸³ Nathanson, 1996, p139.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. Though notice how his emphasis is only on how **we** feel; not how we sense the **other** person may feel.

(nursing mother) remains.¹⁸⁵ This perspective points to a critical role for shame in moderating the affective displays and the other reactions to situations that trigger ‘positive’ feelings.

Each category of affect is not a single ‘emotion’ but represents a ‘family’¹⁸⁶ or ‘spectrum’¹⁸⁷ of emotions associated with the same basic affective response. The differences within any family may be due to the intensity of the feeling and associated intensity and or duration of the affect. For example we can range from smile to laughter in enjoyment, or from the mildly upset to full-on tearful or sobbing grief in distress. These differences are also reflected in the nuances of our language as we attempt to capture the variety of situations that trigger the affects and/or our responses to them. For example, from the shame spectrum we might use ‘embarrassment’ or ‘humiliation’. Both of these suggest situations that are different from those where we might use ‘guilty’ or ‘remorseful’. The behavioural response to feeling ‘embarrassed’ would likely be different to that resulting from feeling ‘modest’ or ‘humble’. At the affect level the facial signal for all of these would be that of ‘shame’. We would be, literally, ‘shame-faced’.

The fact that these affects appear to be innate physiological responses, triggered by emotion-arousing stimuli that are cross-cultural and observable from early infancy to adulthood, suggests that they are ‘hard-wired’ into the human emotional response system.¹⁸⁸ A computer-age analogy would be that the body’s brain and nervous system is the neuronal equivalent of computer hardware. The learned patterning of responses, with our ability to select among these what we judge to be the most appropriate, is the equivalent of computer software. In between, the computer needs an operating system – a platform that supports the various programs. This ‘firmware’ is seen as equivalent to the affect system.¹⁸⁹

Affects act as signals. They bring changes in my environment to my attention. They also act as amplifiers. The physiological changes ‘excite’ areas of the body that in turn further excite the affect – they pump up the volume of the signal. They also communicate how I am feeling to others. Unless I have learned to control the display of emotion, when I feel angry I look angry. When I feel sad (or scared) I look sad (or scared). My affect displays are easily

¹⁸⁵ David Moore (personal communication 2002). For fuller discussion of the evidence for early expression of shame and ‘other non-basic emotions’ see Draghi-Lorenz et al, 2001

¹⁸⁶ Tomkins, 1962; Nathanson, 1996.

¹⁸⁷ Kaufman, 1985, 1989.

¹⁸⁸ There is a counter view, that ‘self-conscious emotions’ such as those in the shame family cannot appear before age two when the infant concept of ‘self’ emerges: See Lewis & Rosenblum, 1978; M. Lewis, 1992; Lewis and Haviland, 1993; Izard, 1991; Piers and Singer, 1953. For summary and critique see Draghi-Lorenz et al 2001.

¹⁸⁹ Nathanson, 1996, p15.

interpreted by other people. Equally important, they are contagious. When I see a sad person my own mood tends to reflect this feeling. Conversely, I tend to be happy when I am around happy people. This capacity for ‘empathy’, for feeling **with** another person, also seems to be something that is built into the way that the affect system operates, though the extent to which this is inherited or socially learned is unclear.¹⁹⁰

This aspect of affect-response is critical to understanding the pivotal role of affects in social interaction. Put simply the triggering of an affect sends a signal two ways. The first is inward to myself calling for attention to be given to the environmental stimulus and my feeling-emotional response to it. At the same time, even before I may be aware of it, it sends a signal outward to the other(s) that this is how I am feeling. And, critically, this display tends to trigger ‘reactive’ feelings in others who observe it. Of course like any signalling system there is the potential for misreading the signals, either by others or myself. Our reading of them depends on many factors that have conditioned the emotional response and how we have learned to handle these in social settings. We learn and develop patterned ways of responding to our own and others feelings. Often we learn to mask the signal - to consciously damp down the affect, to moderate its expression in ways we judge to be appropriate, or even to hide it completely. Rarely is the signal completely obscured, but blink and we may miss it.¹⁹¹

Affects, feelings, emotions, and scripts

So far I have used various terms loosely. Later I will make the case for using even simpler ‘vernacular’ words to talk about emotions, but the time has come to be more precise in defining some of these that I wish to use as the theoretical framework for further exploration of shame.

At the core of the emotional process is the idea that **affect** mediates between the stimulus provided by the environment and our emotional and behavioural response to it. In one sense the affect is our response to the environmental stimulus. It is how we are affected by the stimulus. It is a physiological response that manifests in patterns of muscular contraction and relaxation, particularly noticeable in the muscles of the face. It is thus something that can be felt in or on our own face and body and observed directly in the body and on the faces of

¹⁹⁰ We will explore this triggering of ‘similar feeling’ in a more detailed discussion of ‘empathy’ later.

¹⁹¹ Goffman (1967) suggests that in most social interaction there is a tacit agreement not to notice – we show deference to others by looking away and appearing at least not to pay attention to expression of emotion in others.

others. The physiological responses are **seen** as a signal of our emotional reaction to the stimulus.

The observation, call it awareness of this affect is what we call '**feeling**'. The English language has a very powerful tendency to turn verbs (actions) into nouns (things). Much of the literature defines this awareness of the affect as 'having a feeling'. We possess it as a commodity rather than own it as an activity. Note how the sense behind the language changes as we move through:

- Something is **affecting** me – there is an **interaction** between me and the environment.
- I **feel** something – there is a subjective **action** where I observe myself.
- I have a **feeling** (or an emotion) – I possess/own this thing; it becomes a **possession**.¹⁹²

What was fluid and capable of a flexible response becomes something concrete – and much harder to change. For now let us try to keep the idea that 'feeling' is the action of attending to a physical affect on (and sometimes in) the body that signals something about our physical and/or social environment. This feeling is a behavioural response to the affect – now in the realm of consciousness.

The next step is **emotion**. It is here that the primary system interacts with learning, with past experience. In the real world as an adult I rarely have a feeling in isolation. My response to a stimulus/situation is a complex combination of my feeling reaction to the situation in present time accompanied by feelings associated with how I have reacted to what I perceive as similar or relevant situations in the past. Emotion is learned and as such is a cognitive experience. The way I define the primary experience is a matter of choice, based on how I learned to frame such experiences in the past and rarely examined in the present.

For much of the time there is no need for re-examination. Our emotions provide us with ready-made ways of responding to complex situations without the need to examine each from scratch. Re-evaluation is only needed when these operate dysfunctionally – are inappropriate responses to the physical and social environment. We use a pattern developed for one purpose for another where its use is now inappropriate.

¹⁹² This tendency is part of what we referred to earlier as the culture of individualism – privileging awareness of self-identity over identification with others. It is a key element in the distinction Richard makes between guilt and shame cultures.

Over time I have ways of interpreting the emotions. I have stories (narratives)¹⁹³ about situations, some of which may capture the patterns of feelings that arise. And I have some standard ways of responding to these patterns emotionally and in terms of my physical behaviour. These are variously called ‘**scripts**’ or in some areas of psychotherapy where they are seen as dysfunctional, ‘distress patterns’.¹⁹⁴ Again these scripts are mainly functional – learned ways of responding to situations. They determine our actions – what we do as a response to a stimulus from the environment.

Where emotions persist over a period of time we may call these ‘**moods**’. Our unique personal combination of emotional responses, moods, narratives, scripts, is what we often call our character or **personality**. Fig 3.5 summarises this framework.

Fig 3.5 Affects feelings emotions and scripts.

- ❑ **Affect:** is the physiological response, which manifests as an observable display, associated with a conscious or unconscious emotional state – often occurring before there is consciousness of it.
- ❑ **Feeling:** is what the individual is doing when he/she becomes conscious of (pays attention to) the affect.
- ❑ **Emotion:** is the overlay of the feeling in present time with accumulated feelings elicited by past experiences where similar circumstances, or thoughts aroused by the experience elicited other similar or other associated feelings.
- ❑ **Mood:** is when the emotion persists over time – either in response to the initial stimulus-affect, or by re-stimulation by similar circumstances or thought patterns.
- ❑ **Script:** is the learned-patterned way of responding to emotions – particularly the behaviour patterns through which we tend to display in as the usual reaction to emotion-generating situations and/or the narratives/stories that we use in an effort to make sense of or give meaning to these patterns.
- ❑ **Personality:** is the result of this tendency to react in patterned ways to particular circumstances which may or may not be personally functional/dysfunctional or culturally appropriate/inappropriate.

Critically, in this framework, **affects are what we observe**. They are what the individual experiencing an emotional state displays. They appear to be displayed whether or not the individual is aware of the display or the associated emotion – or at least may appear before he/she is aware of it. They are universal in the sense that they are observed and associated

¹⁹³ Narrative therapy aims to examine how such stories or narratives act as ‘restraints’ on achieving more desirable objectives. See for example Jenkins (1990) who describes its use in the area of family violence and abuse.

¹⁹⁴ Jackins 1982a & 1982b

with feeling similar states across all cultures from infancy to adulthood. Affects can be triggered by a wide variety of stimuli. For example chemicals such as pseudoephedrine commonly found in cold medications, can produce an affect reaction similar to that of fear-anxiety. Other medications are used effectively to block, reduce or dampen unpleasant and unwanted affective reactions such as the excessive interest-excitement of the 'manic' phase of the bipolar manic-depressive cycle or in the treatment of anxiety. Bio-chemical intervention, acting directly on the operation of the 'hardware' of the nervous system, can clearly impact on the way that the affect-emotional system operates.¹⁹⁵ Correcting emotional system malfunctions can at times be achieved by influencing the neurological 'hardware' as well as the cognitive-behavioural 'software'. Affect can also be triggered by our thoughts. As we explored earlier there is a complex inter-relationship (indeed interdependence) between thought, feeling and action.

Affect theory thus provides a different base for building a theoretical psychological framework for emotion than that suggested by bio-psychological, psycho-analytical or cognitive-behavioural schools. Yet it is able to incorporate their insights. The 'pure' affect can be regarded as the common/universal crossing point between a wide variety of circumstances or stimuli and an equally wide variety of reactions or responses.

This framework allows for human development through both maturation and learning. It takes as the starting point the observation of primary affects in early infants across all cultures and their persistence into adulthood. But it allows for learned experience to modify both the emotional response, and to some extent the display of affect, as part of the adaptation of the individual to his/her environment and culture. It similarly accommodates the psychodynamic approaches based on discharging the associated physical, emotional and/or mental blockages to understanding the origins of emotions and life scripts. Cognitive/ behavioural approaches work on re-evaluation of the scripts and narratives – allowing new choices to be explored. Analytic processes explore the way old patterns were assembled, tracing them back to early childhood experiences and then set about reassembling new and more appropriate patterns and less conditioned ways of responding in the future. We can alter moods – the persistent patterns of emotional response by medication. If we allow that behaviour includes affective-emotional response sequences, then the cognitive-behavioural starts to blend with the psychotherapeutic-cathartic modalities that stress re-experiencing, discharge and re-evaluation of emotionally charged experiences.

¹⁹⁵ see Nathanson & Pfrommer in Nathanson 1996.

Approaching emotions from a universal affect base raises questions about what function the expression of feelings serves in human (and other species), their development from infancy to adulthood, and their use in social interaction at whatever age. Above all it allows us to see each affect from its salutogenic perspective. It allows us to ‘see the wood for the trees’ – to still the ruffled surface of this lake of emotions. It allows similar ‘emotions’ to be grouped together by the commonality of the observable affect and allows exploration of the common and differential functions they might be serving. This also allows for intervention at the social as well as personal level. If we understand how emotions ‘ought’ to function (and perhaps how they fail to do so in our present cultures) then there is the possibility of exploring what kind of culture(s) would allow them to function. For example it might allow us to address the question: Why it is that mankind, among all mammalian species, appears to have a dysfunctional block or brake on intra-species aggression? Members (mainly males) of other mammalian and particularly other primate species will fight for supremacy but such fights usually end almost instantly with a display of submission by one of the contestants. While similar brakes on aggression exist in man these frequently do not operate as reliably or as rapidly. Could it be that we send (or receive) confusing signals in this (and other) areas of human interaction? If so what interferes with the signalling system to make it dysfunctional? More important, how we might intervene to change the patterns (scripts) that underpin dysfunctional human aggression (and other socially destructive behaviour)? Can we do this through teaching better observation of masked/ hidden/ unacknowledged affect signals and creating institutional structures and a social climate that allow people to feel and display functional primary affects? How might we then apply this at the global-societal level to create a culture of peace rather than war, cooperation rather than exploitation between humans, and between humans and their natural environment?

Languages for talking about feelings.

It is now time to play devil’s advocate – to explore the idea of emotional universals through the frame of culture diversity and the different languages of emotion

As a first approximation to a workable theoretical framework for emotions it appears that affect theory has considerable potential. However, the assumption that particular facial expressions have universal meaning has been criticised in terms of its failure to recognise the

cultural bias imposed by the lingua franca of academic psychology.¹⁹⁶ Defining the categories of basic emotions in terms of English emotion-words imposes a particular framework that may not have universal application. It has been noted that some of the photographs of expressions used in the cross cultural research were posed, suggesting that these studies tell us more about the emotional system that Western researchers propose to be universal than they tell us about everyday human non-verbal communication.¹⁹⁷ This perspective does not challenge the idea that certain clusters of facial cues are universally recognised as indicative of the emotional state of the person and serve as a mirror of the internal state and a signal from the person to others. It does however adopt a more cognitive stance, questioning whether these arise unconsciously (are instinctive) or are under conscious control and hence subject to manipulation. It raises the question: what is the role of consciousness and culture in influencing the affective displays and how we group these into clusters that represent ‘emotions’? It indicates we need to consider: whether these facial signals have the same meaning in all cultures, and the way the language we use influences the meaning attached to them.

The problem is in part, as my early experience of struggle with the language of emotions indicates, that the words we use to describe the experience enable us to extract a particular ‘feeling’ from the mass of emotional experience; but at the same time they condition the experience. Many years ago I tried to capture this in poetry:

*From the corner shop of vocabulary
we select small boy's handfuls
a penn'orth of assorted
from the jar or miscellaneous sentiment
to construct patterns which,
while but indigestions of experience,
are arrogantly believed to embody
thought, art or truth.
In turn the arbitrary selection of these patterns
will condition the experience.¹⁹⁸*

Linguistic analysis shows convincingly that there are often no correlates for some words in other languages.¹⁹⁹ Even such a basic word as ‘anger’ has no direct correlate in some languages. Even when there is an approximate correlate, such translations often fail to

¹⁹⁶ See Wierzbicka, 1999. Also Mesquita, 2001; who cites Mesquita and Fridja (1992) Russell (1991) and Zammuner and Fridja (1994) as supporting this criticism

¹⁹⁷ Keating, 1994, p178.

¹⁹⁸ From ‘Samsara’ Webb, C1967, unpublished. A related idea can be found in Eliot (1993, East Coker) where he suggests “one has only learned to get the better of words for the thing one no longer has to say, or the way one is no longer disposed to say it”.

¹⁹⁹ See Wierzbicka, 1999.

capture the nuances of meaning.²⁰⁰ It also shows how the words chosen to express emotions change over time in one language. For example there has been a significant shift from the use of ‘wrath’ in Shakespearian literature to ‘anger’ today.²⁰¹ The language in which we describe the feeling carries significant variations in terms of its meaning – indeed the very categories we use to describe differences in affective emotions is a function of this language.

In part the linguistic approach throws us back into the kind of problem we sought to escape by focusing on the affect of what we call the emotions. For example: an emotion term like ‘shame’ refers us to certain kinds of situation, the ‘shameful’ or ‘humiliating, which in turn can only be identified in relation to other feelings which they trigger. To understand these concepts we have to be ‘in on’ certain experiences. We have to understand a language, not just in terms of its words, but also through the culturally shared experiences that these words evoke when they are used. In our own first (or thinking) language-culture we grow up sharing the meaning of such words through the shared experiences. But these meanings can be very different, either in the way they are categorised or the nuances attached to them, when the words and experiences are learned in a different culture.²⁰²

This can apply to some of the core concepts we are using such as ‘emotion’, ‘sensation’, and ‘cognition’. For example, in Asian cultures, emotions tend to be grounded in relationships. It has been observed that experience is more likely to be constructed as emotional on the basis of its relevance to social relationships, than on the basis of individual feelings.²⁰³ While Western emotional theories recognise the relational character of emotions, these are thought to take place within the subject and be directed at a social object; whereas from an Asian view, these emotions tend to be part of the social relationships themselves. The difference goes beyond the way people talk about emotions to the way they **experience** them. To the Japanese it is a strange idea that we can have emotions all by themselves. It is the relational setting that makes the experience recognisable as an emotional one.

Fortunately, however, there exist in other languages, as in our own, simpler words whose meaning is both clearer and more intelligible and hence easier to understand in translation. Even more fortunate, it appears that some, such as: ‘feel’ ‘want’ ‘say’ ‘think’ ‘do’ ‘happen’ and ‘if’, are common building blocks or stepping stones that can be used for cross cultural communication. If I think of emotions as involving ‘feeling something’, ‘doing something’

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p32

²⁰¹ Ibid, p33. Wierzbicka suggests this reflects change in language is also a reflection of the transition from a feudal to democratic society.

²⁰² Ibid, p7-8

²⁰³ See Mesquita, 2001, p 236-7.

and ‘having something happen inside my body’ I will be on firmer ground than if I describe these as involving: ‘*neuro-physiological*’, ‘*behavioural*’ and ‘*subjective-affective*’ components.²⁰⁴ So, a cultural-linguistic challenge does not mean there are no universals – just that the ‘categories’ we use to describe the ‘primary’ emotions in the English language are not themselves universally applicable. An analogy can be drawn between the language of colours and the language of emotions.

“Just as the English concept of ‘blue’ doesn’t match the Russian concept of ‘goluboj’ (‘sky blue’), the Polish concept of ‘niebieski’ or the Japanese concept of ‘aoi’, so the English concept of ‘anger’ doesn’t match the Ifaluk concept ‘song’ or the Italian concept ‘rabbia’. This doesn’t mean that there are no ‘universals of seeing’, or that there are no ‘universals of feeling’, but it does mean that in our search for these universals we should carefully listen to how people in different cultures talk about what they see and how they feel . . . and that we should avoid analytical categories based on culture-specific aspects of our own languages.”²⁰⁵

Analysis of the **language** we use to describe emotion is therefore important. In this the cultural and situation-specific context, the grammar and intonation play a part alongside the facial and body gestures in defining what meaning we attach to a person’s feelings.

This does not mean we have to completely abandon the idea of emotional universals.

*“The idea that there may be an infinite variety of ‘emotion’ categories operating across cultures is not incompatible with the view that there may also be some universal patterns of emotional organisation. The crucial point is that if there are universal patterns they cannot be captured by means of English folk categories such as **anger, sadness, or disgust**, but only in terms of **universal human concepts**.”²⁰⁶*

Paradoxically, we come closer to understanding the role of affect as a universal the wider we cast the net for words we use in each language to describe the category of emotion. It is safer to talk of the spectrum or family of emotions where we use a wide range of words that we associate with similar emotions. Tomkins does this in a limited way with his pairing of anger-rage (to which we might add irritation, annoyance, fury etc.) or surprise-startle (to which we might add shock). Later I will expand on this to explore what we call ‘shame’ as a diverse spectrum of experiences from humility to humiliation. The key feature in deciding what it to be included, is that the words convey a sense of a common emotional state characterised by common facial and body display features. But it remains a question whether this way of categorising has any universal application. Observe for example the way that adding ‘alarm’ to the surprise-startle family adds an element of fear; or adding ‘wonder’ links

²⁰⁴ Wierzbicka, 1999, p 8-9. This is an extreme example but, I suggest, one not too far removed from what occurs in most ‘academic discourse’ – For which read: ‘talk between people who are paid to think, and who have thought about something, that shows what they think and how they came to think it – sometimes!’

²⁰⁵ Wierzbicka, 1999, p 274-5.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p28 – emphasis in original.

it to interest. Earlier we noted how researchers reported that there was some confusion between ‘surprise’ and ‘fear’ in the early work with PNG highlander people, and the way the physiology of arousal links the affects of interest, fear and surprise. It may be that some of the categories shade into one another along a common spectrum, with the way we distinguish or see these as separate ‘emotions’ being not just the affective display but also largely a function of cultural use, heavily influenced by language.

Another approach, one which in my view has considerable other benefits alongside the need to resolve this dilemma of language, is to simplify the words we use. Many words are specific to a particular language or group of languages. The German word *Angst*, for example cannot be translated into English (or Spanish or Malay) with a single word that captures its exact meaning but it can be translated in terms of several much simpler words. In English it conveys how I have an uncertain ‘*feeling*’, which goes on ‘*for some time*’ that ‘*something bad can or will happen to me in the future*’ which I ‘*want to avoid*’. I can translate this as ‘anxiety’ but have actually found a use (in English) for the word *angst* itself that gives an intensity or edge to the feeling that is not captured by the more diffuse ‘anxiety’.²⁰⁷

There have been some interesting attempts to identify some of the possibly universal ‘primitive’ ideas through which we can describe emotional experience. It does seem that, for example, there is in almost all languages and cultures a concept of ‘feeling’ – one which refers to either mental or physical feeling or both. This is distinct from the concept of ‘thinking’ and this in turn distinct from such others such as ‘knowing’ and ‘wanting’. We also recognise feelings in terms of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and have words like ‘cry’ and ‘smile’ which recognise faces expressing the person has good and bad feelings.

This may seem pedantic but let us explore it further. If, as it seems, all languages have a word for the concept ‘feel’ we may be able to infer that this is also an integral part of the ‘universal folk model of a person’. That is, in all cultures people attribute feelings to other people, as well as themselves, and they have language that distinguishes between different kinds of feelings.²⁰⁸ There is thus a bridge between the body language of feeling and the mental (cognitive) language of emotions. This language allows us to describe both the body language (its posture, facial affect and sensations – what it looks and feels like) and the way we think about the feelings.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p 35 and more generally in Chapter 3.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p 305.

From this perspective the **relationship** between feeling and thinking is what we commonly refer to as ‘emotion’ and it allows for two way internal communication. Of supreme importance to the framework being developed here is the role of affect in mediating this relationship. If we assume for the moment that it works instinctively, as a physiological reaction triggered by processes ‘firm-wired’ into the human animal’s brain, then the function of the affect is to send kinaesthetic and visual signals to me (and to others around me) regarding my emotional state. But it is my thinking that then identifies, categorises and sorts through the repertoire of available responses based on learning and memory – and which selects the narrative, the words through which I describe (to myself and the others) what is going on. In turn, these thoughts influence what I feel and how I show that I am feeling it. I can choose to display the affect or mask it, verbalise it or create a smokescreen of words to hide, deflect or rationalise it. How I do this depends on the path of my development from birth to now – influenced by parenting, education and, critically, by the language(s) I habitually use and the culture(s) within which I use them. It is this interplay between the feeling and the thought process that makes meaning of and determines behaviour in response to emotional experience. It also makes for the vast and complex emotional lexicon available to the human animal. The awareness of the showing of a feeling is intimately and intricately linked (personally and culturally) to our thoughts.

Now, critically for my thesis here, it appears that all languages have words that overlap (though not identically) with the meaning of the English words ‘angry’, ‘afraid’, and ‘ashamed’.²⁰⁹ Less universal are the words used to describe the feelings of ‘happy’ and ‘sad’, though most clearly recognise the facial difference – and attribute the one to ‘feeling good’ and the other to ‘feeling bad’.

So, if some feelings are universally recognised by both their affect/body language and the words that various cultures use to describe them, what then do these represent? In the language of primitive concepts: feeling ‘angry’ has been described as representing the **thought** that *‘something bad can happen to me / I don’t want things like this to happen’*; feeling afraid represents the thought; *‘I want to do something because of this / I want to stop this happening’*, and feeling ashamed represents the thought, *‘people can think something bad about me’*.²¹⁰

Now this perspective, coming as it does from the exploration of the culturally influenced language of emotions, still presents a challenge to the affect theories on two fronts. First over

²⁰⁹ Ibid p305/6.

²¹⁰ Ibid. p 276 and 292.

the choice of ‘cross-cultural’ categories for ‘universal’ emotions: Second by shifting the emphasis from feeling as something that arises from awareness of the affect, towards the way we think and talk about it.

The first of these challenges can, I think, be accommodated at least for the purposes of our working hypothesis on the framework for a theory of the social psychology of emotions. This accommodation involves accepting that the words we use to describe the experience of feeling can be bound by our culture. Indeed in terms of distinguishing shame and guilt, which I will do later, such a view is helpful. It also means accepting that there is now almost universal agreement that there are some emotions that are distinct, primary and appear to be universal. This view holds for the emotions that we can loosely describe as anger - feeling angry, fear (feeling afraid) and shame (feeling ashamed, and looking shamefaced). It holds whether these are defined in terms of their facial (and body) affects; or the more cognitive, language-based descriptions of how we think about the feelings.

The cross-cultural accommodation is strengthened the more ‘primitive’ the language we use to describe the processes of feeling, thinking and doing that are associated with each of the primary emotion categories. Verbs (describing actions) are better than nouns (describing abstract concepts). It is also strengthened the more we allow the culturally influenced diversity in the words (in any given language) we use to describe the nuances of these feelings to be included in any given category. Each is part of a spectrum or family of words describing an emotional category. Thus we see ‘anger’ or ‘feeling angry’ as a **category** which includes feelings **like** those captured by the words: ‘irritated’, ‘angry’, ‘enraged’, ‘furious’ ‘wrathful’ etc.; or ‘feeling ashamed’ as embracing: ‘modest’, ‘bashful’, ‘humble’, ‘embarrassed’, ‘ashamed’, ‘shamefaced’, ‘guilty’, ‘remorseful’, ‘humiliated’, ‘mortified’ etc. The common feature for inclusion in the category is that we expect the feelings that arise, in situations where this word is appropriately used, could result in display of recognisable elements of the affect. The nuances **embodied** in each word are the ways our culture signals and/or describes verbally such differences as: the intensity of the feeling, the types of situation which might trigger the feeling, or the way we might be expected to respond to it. The nuances thus enable us to describe the human complexities of the stimulus, the affect and the response to the experience of these feelings.

They also reflect our values. An illustration of this can be seen in the difference between Aboriginal and ‘White’ Australian culture in the framing of shame. To me feeling ‘ashamed’ carries overtones of:

{people can know something about me}

{as a result they will think bad of me}

{I don't want this}

{I feel bad – ashamed}

Within Aboriginal culture there is more a sense of **being** shame or **getting shame**. 'Big shame' or 'Shame job' carries overtones of 'being in the wrong place' both physically vis a vis the environment and in terms of violation of a social norm. Aboriginal 'law' embodies both environmental and social taboos and customs. Thus the being/getting of shame carries overtones of:

{it is bad for me to be here} – {in this place / in this relationship to others}

{something bad may happen because of this}

{I don't want this}

{I feel bad - shame }²¹¹

Not all of these subtleties are captured in the English language 'shame' family above. We therefore need to embrace within this shame category different words and nuances of meaning from other language cultures.

The other challenge – the role of cognition in triggering and/or acknowledging the body language of emotional affects - is perhaps best seen in terms of a 'chicken and egg' scenario. It is a reasonable hypothesis that affect precedes cognition: that affect is the instinctive response to a variety of different situations. To use the computer analogy it is 'firm-wired' as part of the evolutionary process. It precedes cognition and is indeed the internal signal that alerts us to the 'feeling' we have about the situation. The resulting cognitive processes then define the 'emotion' based on: our perception (affective and cognitive) of that situation, our past memories based on developmental learning from similar or analogous situations, the narratives and scripts we have developed for describing the emotions to ourselves and others, and the available patterns of responses for reacting to the situation. Whether these are functional/adaptive or dysfunctional/maladaptive, and the extent to which they are actually thought through clearly or appear to be more 'instinctive reactions', is what makes for the complex human interplay that we call personality, society, culture, and indeed politics.

This is not to deny that, in this complex personal-social setting, the words we use, the actions that we take and the thoughts formed within the crowded mind have the power to influence and indeed initiate feeling-emotional responses – including the display of affects as one of these responses. This remains part of the folk-psychology despite the century or so of

²¹¹ See Harkins in Parker et al, 1996, pp 89-90. Similar subtle differences exists in Aotearoa/New Zealand between Pakeha (white) *shame* and the Maori experience of *Whakamaa*, which is more situational - requiring the presence of elders, family or peers: people whose opinions I care about. See Metge, 1986.

theorising about the interplay between affect and emotion. Recall of emotions can and does trigger affective display. Indeed, as we will see later, use of some primary **emotion words** we use may be sufficient to **affect** how we **feel** about situations. But in this case, talking and thinking about emotions is just another kind of stimulus that triggers an affect and a further round of feeling and emotional evaluation. The model of the primary process where an affective response to a stimulus leads to feeling, and then a consciously evaluated or unconsciously scripted emotional/behavioural response is not reversed. We merely modify it by allowing that past emotional experiences, recalled or reactivated in memory can and do stimulate an affective-emotional response in the present. Indeed our emotional response to situations has been, and continues to be modified by both internally generated and externally stimulated experiences throughout life.

Not all of this modification is an improvement when it comes to our ability to ‘read’ emotions. Sometimes the development of the formal language slows down or blocks the process of learning to read facial signals. We have the folk tale of the child who (unlike the more sophisticated adults) could not see the ‘Emperor’s new clothes’ and saw him naked and exposed. The verbal signals, which might serve as a mask for an underlying emotion, work less with children than adults. The child sees the adult emotionally naked because he knows no better.

“Before he has learned to clothe the immediacy of interfacial responses in the suits and dresses of formal language and philosophy, he is able to literally see excitement, fear, disgust, shame, joy aggression on the face of his mother and father when they are not able to receive and correctly interpret the feedback from their own facial responses.”²¹²

Parents with their greater reliance on language will sometimes believe what they are saying rather than what is emitting from their face. Children look more intently into the face – until they learn the social taboo against staring at another. Also their reading of expression is more basic: visual rather than distorted by language and culture. The full significance of this will be explored in Chapters Five, Six and Seven when we come to look at how old patterns for reading and responding to emotions such as shame can be unlearned by paying ever more close attention to the visual display.

A roadmap for emotional experience

Our working hypothesis for a theory of how we experience emotions now includes the following:

²¹² Tomkins, 1962 p 219.

- We have many different situations that stimulate emotional responses.
- As part of the response there is stimulation of skin and muscle sets in the body, particularly on the face, which results in instinctive display of various facial affects (and accompanying body language).
- This process amplifies the initial signal and so brings it to our attention. The affects serve as signals that alert us to the emotional response, which we identify as ‘feeling’.
- The affects also serve as signals to significant others in our environment. Because they are universally recognisable, these affective signals alert others to the fact that we have these ‘feeling’ responses to the situation.
- As these signals become more complex, in social settings there is potential for miscommunication through misreading of the affect-signals or them being masked or mixed with other affects. Indeed we learn personal and cultural display rules for appropriate and inappropriate expression of these signals.
- As part of personal and social acculturation we learn to recognise and label our own feelings and those of others. We develop an emotional awareness with the ability to think about feelings. With this there is the possibility for feelings to be stimulated by our thoughts. How we think about feelings influences what we feel and what is displayed.
- Experience also results in the development of patterns of response (including the feelings that arise) to similar situations. Thus we develop behavioural-emotional scripts which embrace: the affects we show, the feelings we identify, the emotions we experience, the thoughts we associate with similar experiences, the language we use to describe these (including the stories or narratives through which we define them) and the behaviour we adopt in response.
- This ‘scripting’ of emotional experience is a necessary part of learning and maturation. It operates on the boundary between thought and feeling - with varying degrees of consciousness – some scripts being triggered with little consciousness while others can be selected consciously from a repertoire as appropriate responses to the situation.
- Consciousness is thus, in this context, a process of managing the emotions: what feelings we have, and how they are displayed as facial, verbal and behavioural signals to others.
- In addition, for humans particularly though not exclusively, there appears to be a capacity for self-reflection – a more refined cognitive intervention in the process such that thoughts (fantasy, imagination or reflection) can initiate affective displays,

feelings, and emotions; and trigger emotional-behavioural scripts independent of actual external stimulus.

- Finally, among the responses to witnessing the display of emotion by another, humans (again not exclusively) have a capacity to not merely recognise, but feel with the other – a process we call empathising (or empathy).

The basic affect-emotions

In our attempt to define categories of basic affect-emotions we can identify groups, spectra or families of words (in English) which appear to be universally recognisable as representative of feelings associated with different facial affects. I propose to group these into eight categories which the evidence suggests represent recognisably distinct categories of affect-emotions or, in everyday language, ‘feelings’. Some categories appear to shade into others so the distinctions need to be regarded with caution. They are a way of separating what in the adult at least is a complex ‘field of emotion’ into what may be **useful** parts. We will explore later how useful, and the uses we can make of this hypothesis.

Two of these categories we can claim with some confidence represent distinct and universal categories for the human expression of feelings. These are:

1. **Shame:** A spectrum of various ‘**shame-faced**’ affects that shows we are feeling:
 - Humble,
 - Modest,
 - Shy,
 - Self-conscious,
 - Bashful,
 - Blushing,
 - Inferior,
 - Inadequate,
 - Embarrassed,
 - Shamefaced,²¹³
 - Ashamed,
 - Chagrined
 - Disgraced

²¹³ There is also in Old English the word *shamefast* (now lost) - like: like *bedfast* and *weatherfast* - though *steadfast* remains. ‘Shamefaced’ runs to the surface. The deeper sense of being bound or tied to shame of the Old English *shamefast* is lost.

- Guilty,
- Remorseful,
- Losing face,
- Dishonoured
- Disrespected, ('Dissed')²¹⁴
- Humiliated,
- Mortified.

These are indicative of awareness that other people can think something bad about me'.

2. **Anger:** A spectrum of affects that show we are feeling:

- Irritated,
- Annoyed,
- Angry,
- Furious,
- Wrathful
- Enraged,

These are aroused in situations where I am in a state of sustained high stimulation, where I don't want things like this to happen and I want to do something because of it. However, while this family of feelings is fairly well defined in terms of its affect, we need to be aware of the connection with the family we have called 'sad' or 'distressed', which I detail below. Both appear to be the result of sustained high levels of stimulation. Distress that is sustained without relief can easily escalate to anger.²¹⁵ Anger discharged often leads to expression of grief.

There is strong evidence for placing the expression of 'fear' in this group of relatively undisputed universals. Before we do so however we should recall the suggested link between: interest-excitement, fear-terror, and surprise-startle as reflecting different gradients of increasing arousal. There may be a case for regarding these as a continuous spectrum with a common feature of 'excitement' - feeling excited or aroused by environmental stimuli (often changing) that attract and hold my attention. The face of extreme excitement is close to that of fear and the face of terror is close to the frozen (wide-eyed) face of surprise, startle or shock. We should also recall that some tribal cultures did not clearly distinguish between the

²¹⁴ 'Dissed' is common street vernacular in the USA where it originated among black and Hispanic minority groups. It is now finding its way into mainstream youth vocabulary in Australia where it takes on some of the same overtones of political alienation – and rejection of the associated shame.

²¹⁵ See Tomkins (1991, p 58); Moore & McDonald (2000, p 150)

fear and surprise affects. For now however, it is probably worth retaining these as separate categories, while noting the underlying similarities, the shading of the intensity of affect and the common feature of these feelings as indicating a state of arousal – that our attention has been drawn to something in the environment.

With these caveats we can add, as universal categories for the human expression of feelings.

3. **Interest:** A spectrum of affects that show we are feeling:

- Interested,
- Curious,
- Engaged,
- Excited,
- Engrossed/absorbed,
- Wondering,
- Awed

These are indicative of a gradual increase in attention drawn to the environment.

4. They shade into **Fear:** a spectrum of affects that show we are feeling:

- Anxious,
- Afraid,
- Fearful,
- Scared,
- Dreading
- Terrified.

These are indicative of a rapid increase in attention drawn to the environment, which we usually class as a threat to our wellbeing; where I think something bad can happen (to me) and I don't want this to happen.

5. In turn these shade into **Surprise:** an expression of affect that show we are feeling:

- Surprised,
- Startled,
- Shocked,
- Alarmed,

Indicating that our attention has been drawn to a sudden increase in the stimulation from the environment requiring immediate attention.

Now, accepting all the problems of translating such ideas between different languages there does seem to be agreement on the ideas of feeling good and feeling bad and that at the very least we can identify these as being reflected in people's faces – if only in terms of the simple code of down-turned or up-turned corners of the mouth. It would make for a neat and

symmetrical theory if these could be seen as having opposing mechanisms in affect theory but this is not the case. Distress is seen as the response to a constant low-level of too much stimulus (perhaps in the same causally related category as anger – a response to constant high-level stimulation). Enjoyment is seen as the response to a decrease in stimulation - whenever a previous stimulus is reduced, whether this is pain, fear, anger or excitement. Let us add two more basic affects:

6. **Distress/Grief:** a spectrum of affects that show we are feeling ‘**sad**’ including:

- Sad,
- Unhappy,
- Hurt,
- Distressed,
- Melancholy
- Crying,
- Miserable,
- Anguished,
- Grieving

These are indicative of our feeling bad about the situation (often with a sense of having lost something or not having something we desire) and wanting to change it.

7. **Joy:** a spectrum of affects showing we are ‘**happy**’ including:

- Relaxed,
- Pleased,
- Contented,
- Enjoying,
- Happy,
- Laughing,
- Joyful,
- Blissful,
- Enraptured.

These are indicative of feeling good about our situation, (sometimes through a sense of relief)²¹⁶

Finally we have that cluster of expressive emotions that clearly indicate rejection of something (or someone) in our environment. It can be argued that distaste and dis-smell are

²¹⁶ Note how affect theory is (perhaps necessarily) ‘fuzzy’ here. In everyday experience ‘enjoyment’ (theoretically, extinguishment of arousal) tends to come together the other pleasant (or ‘positive’) affect ‘interest’ (theoretically increasing arousal/stimulation). What we call being ‘happy’ is often an interplay between these two. The state of arousal/relaxation of each is partially extinguished by the other - But this is the role that affect theory allocates to ‘shame’!

different in that they relate to different senses. Equally they have the common feature of rejecting intake via features of the face, the nose and mouth. Disgust is more visceral – implying a desire not just to spit but also to vomit. Contempt has been described as a co-assembly of dis-smell and anger. I prefer to group these more in terms of the common feature of rejection and suggest one more category for an affect cluster.

8. **Disgust:** a spectrum of affects that signal we are rejecting something those feelings we call:

- Distaste – spitting out
- Disgust – vomiting, throwing up
- Dis-smell – turning nose up at
- Contempt – sneering at
- Revulsion
- Aversion
- Rejecting – pushing away
- Avoiding – pulling away

These are indicative of the feeling that we strongly reject or wish to avoid something – often actively seeking to get rid of it.

It is in this sense – of the active and expression (affect) of shades of feeling across a culturally nuanced spectrum of emotion words - that I will be using the labels: ‘shame’, ‘anger’, ‘interest’, ‘fear’, ‘surprise’ (or shock), ‘distress’ (or ‘grief’), ‘joy’, or ‘disgust’ in the rest of this study.²¹⁷

With this theoretical framework in mind we can now approach a more detailed consideration of the emotion we call ‘shame’. What I have attempted to show is that we are dealing with a primary emotion, universally recognised and the one which among all such basic emotions is unequivocally distinct in both its expression and the way we conceptualise it. Well, perhaps not in the everyday world – but then that is perhaps the root of its pathology.

²¹⁷ I recognise there are other words we commonly use to describe ‘feelings’. I have already mentioned ‘Love’ in this context. ‘Compassion’ ‘pride’ and ‘empathy’ are others. Forgive me if, for now, I place these others in a different category – as complex assemblies of other more basic emotions, or as emotional processes rather than primary affect-emotions. We will look at some of these, and their relationship to shame, in later chapters.

Chapter 4 - A window on shame

*'If distress is the affect of suffering, shame is the affect of indignity, of transgression and of alienation. Though terror speaks to life and death and distress makes of the world a vale of tears, yet shame strikes deepest into the heart of man. While terror and distress hurt, they are wounds inflicted from outside which penetrate the smooth surface of the ego; but shame is felt as an **inner torment**, a sickness of the soul. It does not matter whether the humiliated one has been shamed by derisive laughter or whether he mocks himself. In either event he feels himself naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth. . . .*

In contrast to all other affects, shame is an experience of the self by the self. At that moment when the self feels ashamed, it is felt as a sickness within the self.

Sylvan S Tomkins²¹⁸

What is shame?

The above much-quoted description of shame by Sylvan Tomkins highlights many features of our culturally immature conception of shame. It casts it as a negative inner experience, analogous to outer-experiences that produce fear-terror and suffering, hurt and distress. It suggests it is an ongoing torment affecting the core of our self-image, our dignity, self-respect and self-esteem. It suggests that it is inescapable. If we don't experience it as a result of actions of others, we will initiate it ourselves. It is, it seems, inextricably bound to our idea of 'self'.

What I want to suggest is another way of experiencing shame. I want to paint a different picture, or at least suggest a different perspective from which to view it. The implications of Richard Hauser's work explored in Chapter Two suggest that it might be a powerful tool for social change. If it is to be so we will need to find a different more useful place to stand from which to work with it. There is a saying, attributed to the 3rd Century BC Greek philosopher-scientist Archimedes:

'Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough and I can move the world'.

All too often the experience of 'shame' is like being in a bog or quicksand, without anything firm on which to stand or lever off, where every movement seems to cause further sinking.

²¹⁸ Tomkins, 1963, p 118, and p133.

What I aim to do here is to find such a firm place to see ‘shame’ from differently – and permit recovery from the ‘stuck’ feeling that so often characterises the shame experience.

In Von Eschenbach’s retelling of the Grail myth, a sense of shame was ‘*a resource . . . rewarded by esteem . . . the soul’s crowning glory and a virtue above all others.*’ Shame, which once had an honoured place in European culture, today is intolerable for most individuals, groups, or society as a whole to live with. Even passionate shame-theorists who understand its salutogenic functions have advocated using ‘embarrassment’ as the class term; reserving ‘shame’ for those situations involving ‘disgrace’, perhaps feelings of guilt, and remorse.²¹⁹ We have a personal growth industry dedicated to getting rid of ‘toxic shame’ and building ‘self-esteem’.²²⁰ We find this perspective in many do-it-yourself’ publications, a range of popular ‘growth’ workshops, and a large section of the professional fields of psychology and psychotherapy. It permeates the ‘recovery’ movement where ‘Twelve-Step’ programs, built on the Alcoholics Anonymous framework, now tackle the ‘shame’ issues underlying such diverse compulsions as: alcohol, narcotic drugs, love and sex ‘addictions; co-dependency in relationships; and even ‘shame-addiction’ itself.

We have lost sight of its salutogenic function. The experience of shame is (by and large) seen as pathological; something to be ‘cured’. This pathology is implicit in the way that both affect and cognitive theorists have framed the psychology of this emotion. Shame might be a lever - a powerful tool in the kitbag for social growth as Richard Hauser suggests - but not if the only way we can see it is through the window of shame-pathology. All we will then see is the pathology of shame. We need another place to stand from which to see it – as a normal healthy functional human emotion – as salutogenic.

Feeling ‘shame’

In those moments when we become aware of the affect, there is no doubt that the experience of shame can be unpleasant. But how does it become so identified with the self? Continuing the second part his famous quote above, Tomkins suggests that our ‘face’ is felt to be a representation of our ‘self’.

²¹⁹ Personal communications on the shame@mail.lisit.ucsb.edu, November-December, 2001. Within the academic discussion group some members held the view that the public reaction to ‘shame’ was an insurmountable barrier to communicating its social functions. Others, myself included, argued that the task was to change this public perception.

²²⁰ See for example Bradshaw, 1988. For a penetrating critique see ‘*A short history of ‘getting rid of things’*’, Wise, 1999, pp 1-17.

“Shame is the most reflexive of affects in that the phenomenological distinction between the subject and object of shame is lost.”²²¹

Which sounds to me very much like what we call ‘engulfment’ in human relationships, where the boundary between self and other (subject and object) is overwhelmed. He continues:

“Why is shame so close to the experienced self? It is because the self lives in the face, and within the face the self burns brightest in the eyes. Shame turns attention of the self and others away from other objects to this most visible residence of the self, increases its visibility and thereby generates the torment of self-consciousness.”²²²

And in the next sentence:

“. . . shame is primarily a response of facial communication reduction, awareness of the face by the self is an integral part of the experience of shame.”

With all due respect this is at best tautological and at worst fundamentally wrong. In essence what is being said is that shame is an experience of self because the self resides in the face and, as shame shows itself in the face, this causes us to feel self-conscious. But all affects are experienced on the face - and the affect of shame, perhaps more than any other, is expressed in terms of hiding of the face. Watch yourself observe another’s shame. Do you increase attention to their face? In my experience, most people look away. Seeing shame arouses strong empathic feelings and we mirror the affect of the ashamed person. We break eye contact; sometimes mirroring even the drop the head, body slump and blush. Tomkins himself acknowledges some of this, but continues to assert that, as in the analogous case of self-disgust or self-contempt,

“part of the self assumes the role of judge . . . the self is experienced as part subject and part object, or as two different selves at different times. Under such a bifurcation the offending self may also be punished by the judging self. . . in contrast, when the self is ashamed of itself, the judge and offender are one and the same self. . . it is not possible to be ashamed . . . without self-consciousness.”²²³

This ignores the other arguments in affect theory that shame, along with other emotions, is innate – seen in early childhood merely at the partial extinguishment of interest or enjoyment. Only if we **define** shame as a ‘self-conscious emotion’ can we accommodate this as the ‘definitive’ description of the shame process. But this is to confuse the affective expression (the feeling) with the cognitive outcome (the narrative/script). It ignores the fact that the way we see shame is largely a function of the way our culture teaches us to see it.

²²¹ Tomkins, 1963, p133.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid. p135.

It seems to me that the way shame is defined above is not just conflating it with a specific aspect of the shame experience, but also with its pathology. I'm not suggesting that people don't experience shame as an attack on the self. What I am saying is that the frame through which we view the experience significantly influences this process, and this frame is largely culturally determined. To understand shame, and the perhaps pathological association with 'self', we will need to move beyond the field of psychology. We need to seek the social functions of shame and explore the social expression of this, perhaps the most difficult of our emotions.

The language of shame

Clearly there is validity in seeing the self as represented by 'the face'. But this is not just the natural physical face. It includes the way we select, present and maintain a 'face' in social interactions.²²⁴ The identification of shame with self in the way described above is perhaps a case of confusing the cognitive-behavioural **outcome** with the affective-emotional **process**. A pathological view of shame is the result at the end of a process in which I cognitively evaluate (develop a story or narrative) that describes the feelings I have when I become aware that the shame affect has been triggered. Let us imagine a social situation where (for whatever reason) I feel ashamed. Some situation will have triggered a shame affect and, as a result, I will feel 'shame'. But in identifying this feeling I draw on my repertoire of memories of the experience of this feeling. The feeling will activate one or more of the scripts in my repertoire for thinking about and responding to situations like this. My response will be to evaluate the situation and behave in certain ways based on the initial feeling with an overlay of scripted baggage I carry from past experiences (and previous evaluations) of shameful situations. But I am not an island. I have learned these scripts in the context of my culture. If they are learned within a culture of shame-pathology, then each experience is likely to be framed and evaluated in pathological language.

An 'inner-torment' and sense of a flawed self is only one of a wide range of possible evaluations. At one end of the shame spectrum is the feeling we call humiliation. Often my perception of this is that shame-humiliation has been imposed on me. I sense that I have been humiliated **by** someone. I often have a similar feeling with respect to guilt. Often my evaluation of such imposed shaming (whether rational, or driven by scripts) is that the process is 'unfair'. I am more likely to react with indignation (anger) than to take this on board as a

²²⁴ Erving Goffman's work spanning the years 1959 to 1979 (see Bibliography) provides a wealth of data on this topic. His concepts of 'face' (1959, 1967) and 'frame' (1974) have significantly influenced my thinking in this study.

sign of a flawed self.²²⁵ Sometimes people routinely assemble an ‘attack other’ script with shame. Other people (we will meet some of them later) react differently. They take the shame feelings ‘on board’. They see almost any shameful situation as a valid criticism of who they are. In the language we will explore in more detail later, they activate an ‘attack-self’ script that does indeed leave them feeling exposed, naked, lacking in dignity or worth. They judge themselves as hard, perhaps harder, than those they believe they have offended.

At the other end of the shame spectrum is modesty: the natural or contrived expression of making myself small or at least appearing not overly self-important. It doesn’t usually carry the same sense of being a crippling burden. When I feel modest I usually carry a sense of pride mingled with the mild shame affect. The body language of shame-modesty serves a variety of useful social functions. Observe someone who chooses to leave a lecture or meeting. How they signal with body language their respect for the others who continue their business. Often a drop of the head, slight shoulder slump, and ‘small’ movements are sufficient. I have done this many times. As a campaigner, my time in international meetings was divided between organising, lobbying, media and other activities. I didn’t have the luxury of sitting through all the speeches. I learned to move in and out, signalling respect (almost an unspoken apology) with these kind of submissive gestures. But for some people, even modesty is problematic, as overly identifying a low self-image with the self. Here there may be a pathological shyness. In what we call ‘false modesty’ people may use this as defence against attack. Genuine modesty serves a variety of salutogenic functions whether in building relationships or creating personal space in bedroom, bathroom and toilet.²²⁶

We use the different words in the spectrum to create a rich and subtly-nuanced language of shame. Following Darwin’s tradition of asking people around the world for their observations on expression of emotion, I asked my own network to identify the words in the shame spectrum and how they use them. One correspondent, **Jenny**, suggested five categories for grouping shame words and described the use of each as follows:²²⁷

□ **Shyness, bashfulness, self-consciousness, modesty:**

“Shyness and bashfulness are similar, the difference is one of duration. Shyness is a more permanent quality, a personality characteristic. I’d used it to describe my own (or someone else’s) personality and behaviour. The

²²⁵ See Sabini et al, 2001.

²²⁶ See Retzinger, 1995, p 41. (also Wurmster 1981) suggests the primary orientation of shame is not towards the inner experience (“*the organism as an isolated entity*”) but with relationships (between “*the self and self’s perception of the regard for others*”) in which shame guards the boundaries of privacy and intimacy.

²²⁷ Jenny Wallace, a professional linguist now working in China: Personal Communication via E-mail, August 2000. You and I might use them differently – reflecting, I suggest, our own personal and cultural experiences.

negative aspect of it is that it often poses problems with regard to social behaviour, with being able to comfortably handle certain social situations. On the other hand, if you manage your life to accommodate your shyness, it's not a particularly negative thing to live with. Bashfulness is a temporary version of much the same thing. Both limit the range of what you can do in the world. Both limit what the world gets from you.

"Self-consciousness is akin to bashfulness. I use it to describe temporary and transient states. Like bashfulness and shyness it has no intrinsic relationship to badness, bad behaviour, poor performance or suchlike. I can feel self-conscious and bashful and be overcome by my shyness when what I am doing, and am being observed as doing, is essentially good on my part and on the part of those affected. I only have to think of some of my sexual activities . . .

"In its extreme, shyness is handicapping - it limits me, it limits the experience of me that the world gets. I think modesty shares that quality - but that it is less extreme. It can be an unwarranted limiter. There are things people should not be modest about if they and the world are to get the best deal out (my) existence. That's all the hiding one's light under a bushel stuff, isn't it? But modest people are far better company than the arrogant. . . .

"Interestingly for me, these are qualities that . . . when younger I couldn't see in myself. As I now see them, I can also see that they've posed problems for me - which I think is interesting, as we don't see them as 'problems' for people. So, is the crucial thing about self-consciousness, bashfulness and shyness that they are experiences of discomfort / uncomfortable-ness? Long or short lasting, coming from the essential nature of your character or from the behaviour of a moment, but personal responses with a certain negativity to your own activity? And is modesty related to them as a means of accommodating potential uncomfortable-ness? A strategy for avoiding it or limiting it?

□ **Embarrassment**

"I think embarrassment is a very, very mild version of shame. A crucial shared quality in them - for me - is the 'being found out', which means it's to do with being judged by standards outside of me, by individuals other than myself, although that judgement may be more perceived than real. I think it is possible to feel embarrassment when in a completely private situation - but only just. And I think when you're doing something purely privately, if you do feel embarrassed about your own behaviour it's in those moments when you have a self-awareness that's almost like being outside of yourself, watching and judging yourself.

"However, I think even when you're in isolation you can and do feel embarrassment about things you've internalised standards about which 'tell' you to feel embarrassed. For example, I'm old enough not to feel 100% comfortable when watching televised / video-ed sex. And what I think what's interesting there is that a sexually explicit episode in the midst of a long narrative that's not particularly or overtly sexual in character induces more sense of embarrassment in me than watching television / video material that's overtly sexual in nature. I can see why there's that difference: I obviously watch with a different set of values in action. In a pornography type of context, embarrassment is not expected or appropriate, so I don't feel it (or feel very little of it). In an entertainment / movie type of context, I watch with a different set of values in operation (ones partly dating from the era of my upbringing).

“What I think is important about embarrassment is that it’s rarely what I would label in response to something socially serious. Being embarrassed can (for me) be pretty straightforwardly forgiven. And the other side of that, is that whatever action of mine led to me feeling embarrassed, it’s pretty unlikely that that action was basically ‘wrong’. Stupid, thoughtless, daft, incompetent, lazy - yes. But embarrassment doesn’t go with doing things that are fundamentally ‘wrong’.

□ **Inferiority and inadequacy**

“These are interesting words - interesting concepts. When I think back over my life to try and place them in it, I realise they are not concepts that go back very far. I sense there is a period in my life - at the beginning - when there was no space for either of these. I almost sense they are post-pubescent concepts. However, they are there now!

“I feel a definite sense of gender inferiority - which I think is very much appropriate to the reality of the world I live in (whereas I was at one time tempted to think it was a bit of a neurotic mental disposition). And much as I’d like to live in a more egalitarian world, I can see that humans make sense of their world by evaluating, comparing, and arranging in contrastive categories, and that in this incarnation I just came out in one category rather than another. I also feel some intellectual inferiority - which I think is interesting as I don’t think that’s a dimension that a lot of people would be concerned with. I came away from university very aware I’d been working alongside people who were seriously intellectually my superiors. I gained enormously from that contact with them, and it’s certainly not jealousy I feel. I think it’s probably much more akin to being a silver or bronze medal winner in the Olympics - you just know objectively that there are people out there who can do what you can’t do. I think I’m (in my 50’s) making real progress at working with that self-knowledge, but think that it’s taken me a long time not to have a problematic relationship with this.

“Inadequacy is for me the judgemental version of inferiority. Inferiority can be real (objectively measured, for example) or perceived and believed. It can be a value-free assessment. But probably more commonly I think we add judgement to inferiority and label it inadequate. And in doing that I think we attribute blame to the inadequate - as if it were possible for the ‘inadequate’ to change that state (and make themselves ‘adequate’). It’s the difference between being only 5 foot and of inferior stature for getting into the fire brigade, and ‘failing’ as a parent / partner.

□ **Shame and guilt**

“The difference that I can identify between shame and guilt is that in guilt there is a real belief in me that I’ve done something wrong according to some set of values or standards I believe to have real value. Shame can relate to behaviour which was inappropriate or inadequate (and grossly so) but which was not in any way fundamentally wrong. For example, in my relationship . . . I feel some shame that my behaviour wasn’t better than it was (if it had been, the quality of the relationship might have been better and the relationship might have survived longer). I am aware that I feel that shame because I think that I was capable of acting differently. Had I got myself together some more (got better help, used the help available better, etc) I believe I could have acted better. But I don’t feel guilt about my (very real) contribution to the demise of that relationship. I don’t believe that I actually did anything wrong. For example, I didn’t go off and get involved with anyone else. From my view of the world, I didn’t break any of the rules of engagement.

“I’ve had to think long and hard about guilt, to find something in myself I feel guilty about, to be able to work out how it fits in with these other emotions (similarities and differences). Interestingly, I find it hard to think of much - if anything - although I know there have been times in the past when I’ve felt it. I think I’m now lucky to have moved substantially on from those feelings of guilt which actually weren’t appropriate. I’ve done things in my life which some people would judge (have judged) ‘wrong’. I’ve gone through enough re-evaluation of those things, becoming comfortable with them, that although I regret some of them, I don’t feel the hostility towards them that goes with guilt.”²²⁸

□ **Humiliation**

“For me, I don’t feel this has any connection with shame, guilt or embarrassment. And it’s in a section all on its own for me as it’s an experience I have utterly as the result of other people’s behaviour (real or perceived) with regard to something about me (personal qualities, personal actions). It does share negative affect with the other emotions on the list.

There are several qualities or dimensions operating here which provide a rich matrix for the nuances of ‘shame’. The ones that Jenny identified included:

- *Positive and Negative;*
- *Extreme vs. mild - as in strength of feeling or experience;*
- *Those where hostility is aroused;*
- *Transient and temporary vs. long-lasting and permanent feelings;*
- *Innate / permanent personality qualities vs. learnt/acquired attributed (which could be un-learnt);*
- *Those creating problems for us vs. those that don’t;*
- *Those that create problems for other people vs. ones that don’t make trouble for anyone else;*
- *Those perceived positively vs. perceived negatively - by us and / or others*
- *Those which limit or ‘handicap’ us vs. those that enrich or enable us;*
- *Those that limit our contribution to the world i.e. what the world gets out of our existence vs. enriches or ‘gives’ something to the world we’re part of;*
- *Those which concern acceptable / legal action vs. unacceptable / illegal action);*
- *Private vs. public;*
- *Reactions to internal vs. external stimuli.*

²²⁸ Note that the distinction Jenny makes between shame and guilt is a reflection on different types of **behaviour** – ‘inappropriate’ vs. ‘wrong’ – not as is argued by some theorists, between a sense of damaged self (shame) and inappropriate behaviour (guilt).

A spectrum or family of shame feelings

‘Shame’ is the name we have chosen for a particular category of affective response that gives rise to feelings that (in English) we label variously on a spectrum from humility to humiliation. I suggest it may be helpful to group these into **four categories**:

- Shame-modesty - which includes feeling humble, modest, self-conscious, bashful;
- Shame–embarrassment - which includes feelings of shyness and embarrassment;
- Shame-guilt, sometimes called disgrace-shame - which includes feeling ashamed, guilty, and regretful/remorseful;
- Shame-humiliation - feeling humiliated and mortified.

However we chose to categorise them,²²⁹ all convey elements of the shame affect. In full, this expression of shame involves: a breaking of eye contact, a lowering of the head, a slump of shoulders and upper body, an involuntary loss of muscle tone at the base of the neck which results in a dilation of surface blood vessels and a rush of blood that appears as the characteristic shame blush to face, ears and neck (sometimes chest and arms also).

I suggest that there are **four major dimensions** embedded in this spectrum or family of shame-words to indicate the nuances of how we think about different shame experiences. The sequence of the four categories of shame above represents, broadly, a scale of increasing **intensity** of the shame experience. Modesty or shyness is less intense than embarrassment, which in turn is less intense than guilt or humiliation. The second, which may be related to the first, is the degree of **self-judgement** involved. Feeling modest and appropriately humble is far from the self-shaming and low self-image of shame-humiliation. The third involves the way we experience the various shame states as either transient or having **duration**. Feelings of modesty or embarrassment are, generally, relatively short-lived. Guilt or humiliation are not only more intense but tend to be longer-lived. The fourth dimension involves the degree

²²⁹ I am conscious this is not the only way of differentiating aspects of shame. For example: (1) researchers associated with John Braithwaite at the Australian National University suggest that people clearly differentiate *shame-guilt* from *embarrassment-exposure* with an intermediate *‘unresolved shame’* which it is suggested: “*has yet to be understood and integrated into the conceptualization*” (Harris, in Ahmed et al., 2001 – Chapter 8). Valerie Braithwaite (Ibid Chapter 18) suggests this appears to be associated with “*shame-displacement*”, but also with “*empathy for others, uncertainty over wrongdoing and perhaps questions about fairness.*” (2) Gilbert, drawing on the themes of shame as a function of social status or rank, and stigma-shame suggests categories of *‘external shame’* (how others see me); *‘internal shame’* (how I see myself); and *‘humiliation’* (devaluation or abuse by others – seen as unjustified or unfair). See Gilbert, 2000; also Gilbert, 1989, 1994; Gilbert and Andrews, 1998; and Gilbert and Miles, 2000, 2002. (3) There are also various suggestions for what differentiates embarrassment, shame and humiliation. For example: that embarrassment is what we feel when we have made an error in **the manner** in which we have done something. Shame, we experience when **what we have done** falls short of the socially situated standard. And humiliation is experienced when the public evaluation of the self falls due to **an act of public denigration**. Paul Stokes: Personal Communication via UCSB Shame list, 2001. Above (like Darwin) I nail my colours to the mast.

to which we sense (albeit indistinctly sometimes) that this feeling has been **imposed** on us. Not only can I feel good about modesty, but no-one has ‘laid this on me’. In Embarrassment I sense that I may have committed a social gaffe. I may feel inadequate, less than the way I would wish to be seen but this has been my mistake. With shame-guilt and particularly shame-humiliation the feeling it is not just more intense but there is a sense of disgrace - of having violated some important (some would say moral) rules and that these rules were set outside of me.

In the language of the 1970s-1980s counter culture we expressed this sense of imposed shame with the phrase ‘guilt trip’. This carried overtones of the offence being inflated by others in order to make me ‘wrong’. We learn guilt as the result of external judgement often with a real or implicit threat of punishment. With other ‘shame’ feelings I may judge or even punish myself for what I have done; but ‘Guilt’ carries strong overtones of having broken more universal laws. Initially these are rules defined by others: parents, teachers, authority figures, or ‘the law’. Later I may internalise some of the rules I learned from these authorities, my culture (or other cultures), to form my own sense of morality and moral behaviour. Either way, the distinguishing feature of shame-guilt (or disgrace shame) feelings is that they derive from a sense of transgression, for which I am, or am likely to be blamed by others.²³⁰ I may accept responsibility (accept my guilt), but there are often ambivalent feelings about the way these laws and their sanctions are imposed.²³¹ Embedded in this type of shame is an element that derives from breaking rules established with reference to a higher authority (whether this is internalised or not). With guilt (and humiliation) there is a powerful sense of the judgement of others at the core of the experience; and sometimes a sense that this has been unfairly imposed on me. I feel **guilty** (or **humiliated**). The judgement of others has become attached to my sense of self; defining who I **am**, whether I accept it or not.

Across the spectrum of shame we find not just increasing intensity of the shameful feelings but an increase in this dimension of ‘imposed shame’. With it there is also an increase in my dependence on the actions of others. I am dependent not just their judgements but I have less and less control over their behaviour towards me. It is this lack of control that contributes to

²³⁰ Sabini et al., 2001; suggest yet another way of distinguishing embarrassment, shame and humiliation by whether: I believe an audience perceives (or might perceive) a **flaw**; whether I perceive a **real flaw**; or whether the audience perception of a **flaw is unreasonable**. In this last category (rather like imposed guilt or humiliation above) the reaction is more commonly anger than shame.

²³¹ This can be complicated where religious belief forms the basis for (or was initially involved in the childhood development of) the person’s moral code. Some people grow to question (and indeed resent) the imposed ‘morality’. On the other hand a feature of fundamentalist religious belief is the absence of doubt or displays of ambivalence. The word is law. There is a tendency to project outwards onto others any internal doubts, reminiscent of Richard’s saying about fanatics destroying their own doubts by attacking others.

the intensity and character of the emotional response – and sometimes to the sense that I have less and less control over my response. Another way of viewing this is that, along with the shame, I feel an increasing sense of powerlessness. The process reduces me to the state of the child or infant vis-à-vis other more powerful ‘adults’. Hence Richard’s use of the terms ‘infantile shame’ and ‘social-’ or ‘cultural-infantility’. Needless to say adults intensely resent feeling powerless, and often react against it either overtly or passively. This feature will take on greater significance as we consider the role of shame as an underlying feature in violent behaviour.

A compass of shame-avoiding behaviours

For most people shame, in almost any form, is an unpleasant experience. It is not usually, something we look forward to. Rather we tend to avoid it. We prefer not to think about it. Indeed one of the features of feeling embarrassed or ashamed is that there is confusion of thought. We find it difficult to think clearly.²³²

The theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter suggests that we develop scripts, which are learned patterns for feeling, thinking and acting when affect-emotions are aroused. For many of us any affect feels better than shame and we develop defensive scripts to convert the experience of shame into something less punishing. Affect theorists suggest that, faced with shame, we tend to act in one or more of four distinct ways.²³³ We adopt behaviours that can be characterised by:

- **Attack other** – which include various forms of aggression (active and passive) including so called ‘defence’ or ‘justification’ of our self and our previous behaviour that may have initiated the shame situation
- **Attack self** – where we take on board (internalise) the external judgement implicit in the social situation that triggered the shame
- We **withdraw** from the situation – either physically by going away, isolating ourselves; or we withdraw into ourselves and cease to engage with the situation; behaviour we at times will label ‘apathy’
- We **avoid** it – we minimise the experience by: ignoring it, finding ways to avoid experiencing it, or distracting ourselves by a variety of activities, including many addictive behaviours.

²³² Goffman, 1967; describes the process he calls ‘flustering’ in which he links this mental confusion to the body language of shame – for which he uses the term ‘embarrassment’.

²³³ See Nathanson, 1992, p312.

Each of these responses has its place. Withdrawing from an embarrassing situation provides an opportunity to reflect without the pressure of having the feeling of shame restimulated. A certain amount of self-criticism (attack self) may be justified. Some social situations may require we simply avoid dealing with it and move on. Where there is a conscious and unjustified attempt to shame me, I may feel that to defend myself by direct counter attack is an appropriate response. All too often however the response using any of these scripts is an inappropriate 'defensive' reaction that interferes with what has been called the 'fifth pole' to this 'compass of shame' - where I use the experience as an opportunity to 'reflect and change'.²³⁴ I have found this compass of shame to be a most useful tool in seeing (and helping others to see) how shame is at the root of a number of patterns of personally and socially dysfunctional behaviour.²³⁵ It does however have a major flaw. In everyday use there is no clear understanding of the distinction between 'withdraw' and 'avoid'.²³⁶ In a sense all the poles represent shame-avoidance strategies.

Let me jump ahead for a moment. In the Chapters Five and Six I will describe in more detail some practical initiatives for 'working with shame'. One of these involved 'anger-management' classes for the NSW Probation and Parole Service. It was the men in one of these classes who, when asked to describe their patterns of avoiding shame, reframed this compass in a way that makes it much more usable and coincidentally more theoretically robust. These men suggested that they used patterns of behaviour they described as '**hide from other**' and '**hide from self**'.²³⁷ These much more clearly reflect the nature of the felt shame experience as wanting to hide, to become invisible, than 'withdraw' and 'avoid'. They give a bi-polar symmetry to the whole compass (see Figure 4.1). This way of reframing the compass of shame also reveals more clearly the **social** nature of the two dimensions involved. The patterned responses to shame, when we try to avoid feeling it, are thus a combination of personal and social **aggression** or **alienation**: with the aggression or alienation directed either outwards or inwards. The dimension of aggression (attack) has an outer-directed focus that manifests in aggressive or violent behaviour. With an inner focus it can lead to self-blame, depression and suicide. The dimension of alienation (hide) similarly has an outer manifestation in isolation and/or apathy; while its inner-directed form leads to behaviours

²³⁴ Ibid, 1992, and 1996.

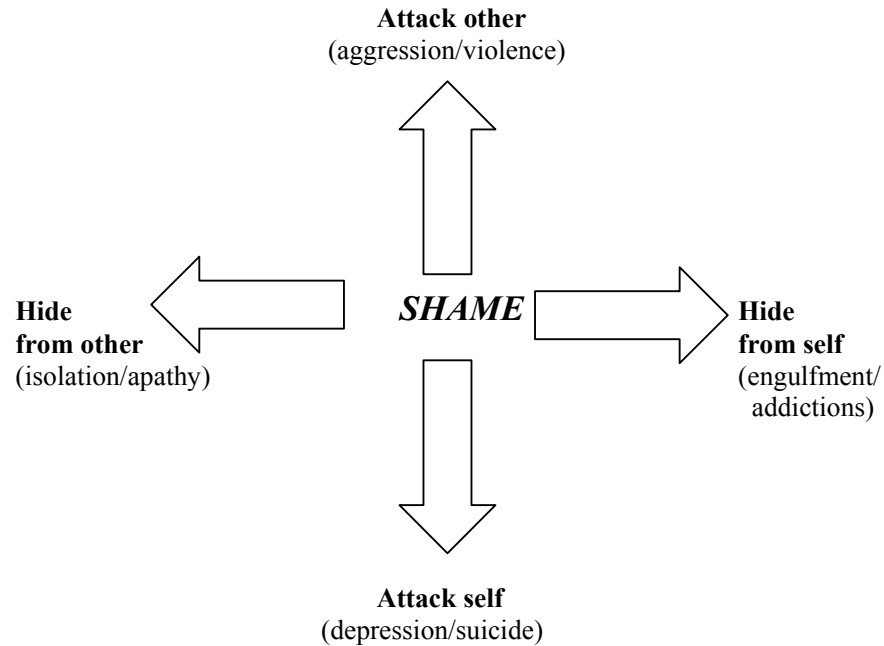
²³⁵ Strictly, as I will explain later, it is not shame itself but unacknowledged or masked shame that lies at the heart of the socio-pathologies of aggression and addiction/alienation.

²³⁶ In Australian English 'avoid' suggests 'keeping clear of' something - while 'withdraw' suggests 'retreating or going away from' it. (Macquarie Dictionary 1999) This is neither as clear nor as useful a distinction as the one that I make below.

²³⁷ This work, to be described in more detail in the next chapter, meets one of the criticisms of Nathanson's compass - that it appears 'out of thin air': apparently not based on theory, method or data. Tom Scheff, personal communication on UCSB shame list: 8, August 2002.

characterised by self-deception, addictions and patterns of emotional engulfment or co-dependency in ‘intimate’ relationships.

Fig 4.1 A compass of shame-avoiding behaviours.²³⁸



The bipolar nature of aggression is easily understood. Seen through this window of shame-avoidance, there is no greater virtue in attacking oneself than attacking others; both are ‘violent’. It is becoming more widely recognised that alienation can also be seen as a bipolar phenomenon. Some people are isolated. They have too much (physical and/or emotional) distance from others. Put another way, their personal ‘boundaries’ are too rigid to let others get close to them. On the other hand some people are unable to maintain enough distance. Their boundaries are too weak or non-existent. They are emotionally engulfed.²³⁹ This perspective allows us to see in ‘hiding from self’ a feature that unites the various ‘addictive’ behaviours whether they manifest as co-dependent relationships or vulnerability to other patterns of addiction; alcohol, drugs, sex, work, money etc. It also places shame at the centre or bridging point between engulfment (over-identification with others) and isolation

²³⁸ Webb, 2000; adapted from Nathanson, 1992.

²³⁹ For a useful description of isolation and engulfment in the language of interpersonal boundaries see Wise, 1999. pp 174-190.

(overemphasis on retaining a separate personal identity).²⁴⁰ The balance between identity and identification is a delicate one and, at least from this perspective, shame has a pivotal role to play in mediating this balance.

It can hardly have escaped attention that this compass of shame provides a clearer link than was apparent in the in the previous chapters between some Richard's pivotal ideas. We can now see how the experience of shame can be directly linked to the social pathologies of violence and apathy. Richard focused mainly on patterns of behaviour at the 'other-directed' poles of what can be seen here as bipolar dimensions of aggression and alienation. Like Richard, we can see the effects in terms of both personal (psychological) and social pathologies; but here we see more clearly how these are related to shame-**avoidance**. We noted earlier that Richard's praxis of working 'cathartically' with different groups around the violence/apathy and personal/social age scales produced a sense of shame that motivated people towards personal and social growth and social action. Here we have a theoretical framework for understanding how this might operate. We may also have a different but no less practical tool for helping people release stored emotional distress associated with shame and the dysfunctional behaviour patterns associated with all such shame-avoiding behaviours. If people come to see the behaviours as culturally learned and a function of wider problems in society (i.e. as socially rather than just personally immature responses) then, perhaps, we may also be able to motivate them to social action.

Shame – consciousness of 'self' or of an 'other'?

If 'shame' is a spectrum of emotions from humility to humiliation, what besides the display of affect (the bodily expression of the feeling) links these? What else is common to them all in either the situation that stimulates the affect or the way we respond to them? The standard answer is usually given in terms of the way shame affects our sense of 'self'. This is, I think, a peculiarly ego-centric view; understandable perhaps in view of the ego-centric nature of the culture, but at best a partial truth and one that hides something else that may prove to be much more useful.

What stands out for me is not that the idea that 'shame' emotions result from a perceived attack on the 'self'. That may be one result seen through the eyes of the ashamed person. But shame is, first and foremost, **the result of being seen**. It is a feeling about how I appear **in the eyes of another or others**. It is a sense of being found wanting in another's eyes. My

²⁴⁰ Retzinger, 1995, p 23; suggests alienation should be seen as "*either too much separateness or too much closeness.*"

reaction is to avert my gaze, to feel like hiding, to seek to be invisible, hang my head, try to make myself smaller. This applies to modesty, shyness, embarrassment, shame-guilt and humiliation. Each is a sense of being seen, literally ‘**shamefaced**’, and for a moment at least seeking to avoid that gaze. I suggest this holds even if the aim is to avoid the gaze of the internalised other of our own judgement. But what function does this serve?²⁴¹ What is happening in this moment when the affect of shame is triggered? Can we find an answer that works, not in the rarefied environment of an abstract theory about shame being the result of ‘*partial reduction of the expression of interest or enjoyment*’ but in the real world of everyday social action. Just imagine how the group of blokes required to attend an anger-management class for eight weeks (who we will meet in the next chapter) would react to Tomkins’ theory, however valid it might be, which says the equivalent of:

‘you are feeling ashamed because someone took some of your toys away!’

Above all, can we frame the answer in terms of a salutogenic social process rather than a pathological inner state?

Shame - the social emotion?

Affect theorists, following Tomkins, frame shame as a ‘negative’ sense of self. Eight categories of shame experience are identified in which the self is seen as: (i) deficient in terms of personal size, strength, ability, skill; (ii) helpless; (iii) a loser in competition with others; (iv) ugly, deformed or unattractive; (v) a defective self; (vi) sexually deficient; (vii) wishing to avoid being seen by others; (viii) feeling unlovable and wishing to be alone - fears about closeness.²⁴² But these categories are suggestive of patterns of cognitive **response** where the individual is engaging in primarily ‘attack-self’ behaviour (with some hide/withdraw/avoid behaviour). This continues the tendency, noted above, to conflate the emotion with the pathological reaction to it. A similar problem can be seen in the way that other schools of psychology appear to **define** shame in terms of the way subjects respond to the feeling with negative self-judgements.²⁴³ Here shame is again being defined in terms of its pathology,

²⁴¹ In the mythology of the legend of the Holy Grail, the idea that a sense of shame can be a great gift is introduced as a result of the Knight’s failure to ask the question variously framed as ‘who/what does this Grail serve?’ At root, it is argued, this is about learning to trust one’s inner nature (feeling) and act upon it (let it show) thereby overcoming the ‘false self’ (Godwin 1994 p231)

²⁴² Nathanson, 1992, p317.

²⁴³ Notably the works of June Tangney and colleagues. I will discuss this issue further in Chapter Eight below.

seemingly without awareness of the **cultural** pathology within which the experience is located.

Let us look beyond the personal and psychological to the social context in which this experience of shame is commonly located. Our everyday perceptions of the situations that trigger the affect of shame include many where we sense that our self-identity has been damaged. However, most if not all of these are the results of seeing oneself in the context of our relationship with others. I feel shame when I sense that something has occurred which may affect the relationship I have with one or more significant others. I am seen in the eyes of another as less than I would like to be. Shame is, at least from this perspective a **relational** phenomenon. It can be seen as something that affects the self (physically on the body and subsequently cognitively, through self-evaluation); but **it is primarily about the relationship I have with another or others**. Shame can be triggered by reflection on the self, but the origins or underlying component of the reflections almost always involve some element of a relationship. Even when the feeling appears to focus on moral questions, this can be seen as evaluating my behaviour and/or self in the eyes of some imagined other. This holds whether I see this other, whose judgement I value, as external (including deities, family, community or an ideal other) or internalised as a ‘higher’ ‘inner’ ‘nobler’ or other ‘ideal’ part of myself.²⁴⁴

Even if this is a simplification of the mature adult process that determines appropriate individual behaviour, it is a reasonable bet that we learned such moral or socially appropriate behaviour scripts through shame-based experiences involving significant others. What I want to highlight here is that, while shame in our culture is perceived as an intensely personal emotional experience with a focus on our self, i.e. our identity, it originates almost universally through our experience of the view of others. As even Tomkins, speaking from affect theory, acknowledges:

*“Man is a social animal. The presence of another face is rewarding . . . the absence . . . when . . . expected, is punishing in that it fulfils the innate conditions for negative affect in which the head is lowered in shame.”*²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Earlier, we noted that internalisation of morality has been described in psychology as a relationship between the ego and either (i) the ‘super-ego’ (loosely equivalent to ‘conscience’) or, (ii) with an image of an ideal self, the ‘ego-ideal’. In this lies a possibly useful distinction between (i) guilt and (ii) shame (see H.B. Lewis, 1971, pp 22-23). However, if correct, this view would support the implications drawn by Richard regarding shame as a more mature emotion than guilt in that it is a ‘seeking after the good’ which has been self-chosen (responsibility) rather than the ‘avoiding of doing what one ought not do’ because of ‘parental’ authority prohibition (duty). Lewis further suggests that when ‘guilt’ is evoked, internalised **threatening** (parental) figures influence the functioning of the person’s value system and there is little awareness of the relationship between the self and either the internalised ‘other’ or others in the real world. As we will see later, this sense of threat and the consequential experience of ‘fear’ along with guilt can be seen as one of the primary sources of shame-pathology.

²⁴⁵ Tomkins, 1962 p 214.

As adults, it is our ability to sense, feel or imagine how the other perceives us that is the primary source of, and stimulus for, our feeling ashamed. And, our ability to sense, feel, imagine how they view us, indeed how they may ‘feel’ about us, involves something we call ‘identification’ or empathy. Perhaps we come closer to understanding how shame can be functional (personally or socially salutogenic) or become dysfunctional (personally or socially pathogenic) through its function of maintaining the appropriate balance between identity and identification.

Shame: emotional bridges and social bonds

Earlier I suggested that one function of affect is as a signalling system. It alerts us to our feelings, and signals what we are feeling to others. In affect theory, shame serves a particular and limited function. It acts to inhibit other affects ‘*when the affect system detects an error in signal processing.*²⁴⁶ This implies a role as a social regulator. It is suggested that it applies to the partial extinguishing of either interest or joy. However, this regulatory function may not be limited to the so-called ‘positive’ emotions. In adulthood we often engage an emotion designed for one biological purpose for other social purposes. We saw how disgust can be applied not just to food, but also to people we find ‘distasteful’. I can recall intense shame within my preschool peer group (and even more so in primary and occasionally secondary school) over my displays of tears – seen as socially inappropriate. ‘Boy’s don’t cry’ was the message and I soon learned to stuff (actually sniff) these feelings back inside and mask the affect of distress as best I could. It seems to me that shame, if it acts as a social regulator, acts on any and all of the other emotions to call into question the social appropriateness of the affect-display; whether this is of fear, sadness, excitement, happiness, disgust, or shame itself.

It also seems to me that shame acts to inhibit not just other emotions but acts to call into question any aspect of my behaviour, my interaction with my environment, where this is perceived by others to be inappropriate. It is a wakeup call that invites me to become socially aware. Feeling ashamed is intimately bound to the presence of a social other: however it might be triggered, whatever the intensity of affect displays, and whichever conscious or scripted reactions we use to respond to it. It is our response to a threat to the ‘social bond’ or ‘interpersonal bridge’ between people.²⁴⁷ This does not discount the possibility of self-generated shame. Indeed with maturity people learn to anticipate reactions of others and to internalise the observing ‘other’. Shame can then be triggered by awareness of actions that

²⁴⁶ See Nathanson, 1992 and 1996 – and earlier discussion in Chapter Three.

²⁴⁷ Scheff (see 1997a) uses the term ‘social bond’; Kaufman (see 1985) uses the term ‘interpersonal bridge’ for the same or similar purpose.

would result in disapproval of this internalised other-self. However, for most purposes shame signals that my behaviour is, or is likely to be seen as, inappropriate in the eyes of other people. In my culture, where there is little distinction between my 'behaviour' and my sense of my 'self', it is 'I' who will be seen in a bad light. As less than the person I wish to be in their eyes (or my own), in a way that lowers their opinion of me.²⁴⁸ It is this 'eye of the other' that appears to be the distinguishing feature of shame and an indication of its social-psychological function.

Thus **shame can be seen most clearly as an innate, functional, emotional response to perceived threats to our social bonds** with other people. For me this captures the essence of the shame experience. It refocusses our attention on this emotion as a bridge between the personal and the social. Shame is not merely an 'affect-auxiliary' with the limited function of signalling a partial reduction of 'positive' feelings (for which we pay a huge price in terms of its' co-assembly with many other emotional experiences). Nor is it just a signal of the state of our personal self-image. It is the pivotal human emotion in monitoring, maintaining, repairing and developing our inner world of values and the social structures we create to support and give meaning to our lives. It is pre-eminently **the** social emotion.

This is not to deny that in many cultures shame is seen as an extremely 'negative' emotion. Feeling shame is a very painful experience and usually avoided. However, at the affect level it can be purely functional. It sends me a signal about how I am being seen. How I **may** have acted (or even be thinking about acting) inappropriately, in the eyes of another. Simultaneously it sends the other a signal that, at the instinctive level, I'm aware of this - that I am not 'shameless'. That I'm aware my behaviour may affect the relationship and I care about this! And, as important, the shame signal triggers an empathic response in the other person, which has the potential for healing the relationship.

Now this doesn't always work. Indeed in many instances it doesn't work. The reasons for the failure are as many as the pathologies of shame. It is worth considering these in the light of the primary function of the shame affect and ask what is it that we do to disrupt this affect signalling system? If it doesn't appear to be working for us as individuals or as a society, what patterns of behaviour have we adopted that so disrupt it. How did we learn these and weave them into the patterns of social interaction that we call our culture?

²⁴⁸ I can also be ashamed of 'mine' – see for example the way parents can be ashamed (believe others will think badly of them) because of the behaviour of their children; or how in some cultures one person's 'shame' becomes the shame of their extended family.

Shame in society - from micro to macro sociology

Tom Scheff has developed this theme of shame as a reaction to threats to social bonds in a series of publications spanning over 20 years. He has explored some of its implications and grounded these in the wider framework of emotion theory, and macro- and micro-sociology²⁴⁹. He suggests that social bonds are more secure when emotions, in general, are acknowledged,²⁵⁰ and shows how unacknowledged shame leads to shame-rage spirals and violence.²⁵¹ He also explores how shame intensifies shame feelings and can lead to passivity and withdrawal – the classic patterns of alienation.²⁵² He elaborates on this to explore the personal and social consequences of unacknowledged shame in patterns of withdrawal, depression,²⁵³ and particularly, the micro-macro patterns of violence from marital quarrels to world wars.²⁵⁴

Underpinning this approach is a systematic exploration of the emotional dynamics that can be revealed in interpersonal interaction and the way this provides cues to underlying and often unacknowledged shame. Analysis of language used by clinical patients in therapeutic contexts suggests there are two related patterns by which people avoid acknowledging shame - ‘overt, undifferentiated’ and ‘bypassed’ shame. In the one case the person may experience psychological pain in the context of a perceived threat to the social bond. They feel and show strong emotions but fail to acknowledge or even recognise this as ‘shame’. In the other, the person appears not to feel the pain; but patterns of ‘rapid’, ‘obsessional’ speech and talking slightly off topic suggest that the shame has been ‘bypassed’.²⁵⁵ Four things stand out from this research. First: the prevalence of shame markers was much higher than expected, outranking markers for all other emotions combined, suggesting shame was a dominant emotional aspect of the sessions analysed. Second: shame sequences were frequently preceded by coded references to anger. Third: both patient and therapist tended to avoid use of ‘shame’ (and even embarrassment) directly. Fourth: the shame markers often arose where the patient felt distant from or exposed to perceived criticism or judgement in the eyes of the therapist. This can have profound implications for therapeutic, counselling and other psychological and human relations work, which we will explore later.

²⁴⁹ See Scheff 1990, 1997a, 2000, 2002.

²⁵⁰ Scheff 1997a

²⁵¹ Scheff 1994, 1997c, 2001e; Scheff and Retzinger 1991. See also Retzinger 1991, 1995.

²⁵² Scheff 2000; Scheff and Retzinger 2001.

²⁵³ Scheff 2001c

²⁵⁴ Scheff and Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, 1994, 1997c, 2001d.

²⁵⁵ Scheff and Retzinger build on the work of Helen Lewis (1971) and her analysis of detailed transcripts of interactions in therapeutic contexts. The Gottschalk-Gleser method (Gottschalk et al, 1969; Gottschalk, 1995) allows analysis of transcripts against lists of words that are correlated with emotions such as anger, or shame. For list of shame and anger codes see Retzinger 1991).

The linguistic-marker approach is not without controversy. It has been criticised as so broadening the range of indicators that everything becomes shame-based.²⁵⁶ However, the dilemma we face (clearly expressed in one of the interviews reported in Chapter Seven below) is that, in a dysfunctional shame culture, people can either fail to acknowledge shame as the basis of their problems, or come to feel that everything is shame-based. The approach I adopt in this study is an attempt to get around this shame-ambivalence by reframing the primary shame experience as salutogenic. I explore what would be the salutogenic outcome of acknowledging ‘shame’ affectively as well as verbally (and hence cognitively). The result, as we will see, is to reframe much of what is currently called ‘shame’ as the emotional residue of ‘unresolved shame’ – the residue of sequences where it was not acknowledged.

Seeing shame, or to be precise unacknowledged shame, at the root of issues that brought people into therapy reveals the way shame-anger sequences can spiral out of control in personal relationships.²⁵⁷ The framework of micro-sociology²⁵⁸ then allows us to draw parallels between these processes that lead to violence in relationships between people and those that lead to international violence.²⁵⁹ Micro-sociology has parallels with the idea of a ‘wholistic approach’ to social issues and the integration of the psychological and social sciences that runs through Richard’s work. In exploring violence for example, Scheff seeks to identify the psychological dynamics that underpin the breakdown of relationships at the personal level. He then explores whether and how these operate at ever increasing scale from the inter-personal to the inter-national.²⁶⁰ The micro-sociological analysis notes how the pattern of perceived shame-humiliation appears to be prevalent at all levels where violence becomes a problem.²⁶¹ The analysis further suggests that it is the failure to acknowledge shame that sets up a pattern of shame-rage spirals that lead to escalation and breakdown sometimes to violence on the scale of World War. In this framework

“shame is both cause and effect of protracted conflict. It is a signal of the alienation. . . the lack of understanding between (people). but a signal that is uniformly ignored and denied. It is not shame that causes interminable conflict but its denial. Continuing shame is also a consequence of unending conflict . . . through disrespectful words and gestures, shame and anger which leads to further disrespectful gestures and so on around the loop.”²⁶²

²⁵⁶ Tangney et al. 1992.

²⁵⁷ Retzinger, 1991; Scheff and Retzinger, 1991.

²⁵⁸ Scheff, 1990.

²⁵⁹ Scheff, 1994.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Scheff 1997c.

²⁶² Scheff, 1997a, p 217

Scheff argues that, whether dealing with micro- or macro-sociology, we need to consider three key dimensions of the system: (i) solidarity or alienation, (ii) communication and (iii) the management of emotions. This body of work lays the foundations for suggesting shame as the master emotion.²⁶³ He traces the social construction of shame from the early psychologists' idea of the 'inferiority complex' which underpins the way that shame is seen as part of the polar dimension of shame–pride and, as such, linked to the issue of 'self-esteem'. In reframing shame from a sociological perspective he notes that:

'Most of one's personal ideals are held in common with most other members of one's society. Personal ideal are largely social ideals . . . and, more subtly, the interior theatre of the self in which both shame and embarrassment occur, is modelled on social interaction. One becomes ashamed by seeing oneself in the eyes of others, whether the others are real or imagined'.²⁶⁴

Implicitly or explicitly various other writers locate shame as a function of society especially where feelings of superiority and inferiority with respect to social rank are the norm.²⁶⁵ Even where people are social equals there are subtle distinctions accompanied by a felt need for acknowledgement of one's status. Erving Goffman observes that shame often arises out of our sensitivity to disparities in the amount of deference we receive in social interactions.²⁶⁶ He locates 'shame', usually identified as 'embarrassment', in many of the seemingly superficial interactions of different sectors of American society (and by implication at least in other English speaking cultures). Through use of concepts such as social 'actors' in 'frames' and their 'face' interactions with others, he explores in detail the various ways that individuals select and present a 'face' as a preferred image of themselves in specific situations and are either allowed to maintain this or offered alternatives as part of the process of sustaining workable social harmony.²⁶⁷ Thus he regards shame as a normal human reaction to perceived social status and its acknowledgement in social situations.

'One assumes that embarrassment is a normal part of normal social life, the individual becoming uneasy not because he is personally maladjusted but rather that he is not . . . embarrassment is not an irrational impulse breaking through prescribed social behaviour, but part of this orderly behaviour itself'.²⁶⁸

So, shame whether experienced as embarrassment or humiliation is inherent in social situations – a signal of our humanity. Yet every 'instinct' in our culture pushes us towards

²⁶³ Scheff & Retzinger, 2001

²⁶⁴ Ibid p6. The origins of this are traced through the works of Mead, Cooley and Goffman. See also Scheff, 2000, 2002; on the social nature of the self.

²⁶⁵ See for example: Gilbert, Op. Cit.; Eales, 1988, 1989; and Morrison, 1996.

²⁶⁶ Goffman, 1959, 1967. See also Scheff 1998.

²⁶⁷ See Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1963a, 1963b 1967.

²⁶⁸ Goffman, 1967 p 109, 111 – cited in Scheff & Retzinger, 2001.

denying this fact. Therein, I suggest, lies the root of much of the pathology associated with shame. This is not just a psychopathology. It has broad social and cultural roots. Studying the patterns of ‘acceptable’ social behaviour over centuries we can observe: the growth of: individualism (individuation) and identity; increasing shame; and decreasing awareness of shame which has occurred almost without awareness of the process.²⁶⁹ Correcting this involves taking up the Hausers’ challenge: to achieve both personal and social growth. It can be posed in terms of three challenges:

- Rebalancing our cultural concepts of the individual and the collective:
- Redefining our balance between identity and identification:
- Tackling personal and cultural violence and alienation through a more mature awareness of the function of shame.

Shame and catharsis

But we are still faced with the problem that shame, as currently experienced, is profoundly pathogenic. What is going on for people and between people when they feel ashamed?

Though the work by Lewis and subsequent analysis by Scheff and Retzinger was initially based on videotapes of sessions with clients, the emphasis is primarily on the **verbal** cues for unacknowledged and bypassed shame, and only secondarily considers the facial affects. Earlier work by Scheff tackles the issue of affect more directly and in a way that has distinct connections with the analysis of the polar dimensions of aggression and alienation we explored in relation to the compass of shame. He notes how the early work of Freud explored the affective-emotional dimension of his patients’ process in therapy, before later abandoning this in favour of theories on primary drives and more speculative interpretations of sexual content of the pathologies. He builds on his own experience with re-evaluation counselling (RC) to revisit this idea of affective catharsis - as the direct **discharge** of previously unresolved emotions.²⁷⁰

The fundamental axiom of RC is that past experience where strong emotions are aroused, but not affectively discharged, is the root of chronic ‘distress patterns’ - what we might describe as pathological scripts. These are emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses that are dysfunctional, about which the individual is unable to think clearly. Hence the need for

²⁶⁹ See Elias, 1939; and Salumets, 2001. A similar pattern can be seen in literature: see Fermie, 2002. Hanson (in Lansky and Morrison, 1997) traces a similar expanding ‘shame-about-shame’ in philosophy from Aristotle to Kant. We will return to this topic in Chapter Eight below.

²⁷⁰ Scheff, 1979.

processes that allow the discharge of these emotions in order to regain a clearer perspective.²⁷¹ Critically, Scheff highlights the distinction in RC practice between emotional ‘discharge’ and ‘re-stimulation’ of emotions. In discharge, the ‘client’, having re-experienced and expressed the emotions associated with present or past issues, is left feeling relieved and more able to think clearly about (re-evaluate) both the source of earlier distress, and the patterns of behaviour employed to react to it. Re-stimulation involves re-experiencing and expressing these emotions, but without the relief. The client is left feeling doubly distressed, from both the past experience and the present re-stimulation of it.

I have encountered too many people, particularly men and boys, whose experience of grief/loss or trauma counselling has resulted in this sense of “*it just left me feeling worse*”. Often they are encouraged to revisit the feelings on the assumption that repressing these is unhealthy. They have an instinctive initial defence against painful feelings. In some counselling (where the distinction between ‘discharge’ and ‘expression’ of emotions is not clearly understood) there is a collapse of these defences such that the client is overwhelmed by intense feelings. Effective ‘discharge’, as I have experienced it, is a different process.

Scheff highlights the concept of ‘aesthetic distance’ as a point of balance where the client is able to feel and express the emotion without being overwhelmed by it. In many cases therapeutic interventions fail because the client is either over-distanced (i.e. unable to access the feelings associated with the issue - effectively alienated from his or her feelings); or is under-distanced (engulfed by them). The aesthetic balance is described as ‘like having one foot in and the other out’: able to feel and express the feeling while at the same time observing oneself doing so. This clarifies and formalises some of the significant features of RC counselling practice which stress the need for actual discharge/expression of emotions (through laughing, crying, shaking, sweating, shouting or yawning) but by ‘working light’ - allowing the client to control the pace and depth of the discharge process. The role of the ‘counsellor’ is to support the client in sustaining the (aesthetically distanced) discharge by guiding his or her attention to or away from the source issue(s) by various techniques. Often referred to as working ‘on’ and working ‘off’ the source of the distress.²⁷²

This question of over/under-distancing is a reflection of the earlier consideration of alienation as isolation from, or engulfment by difficult emotions. It suggests also that shame, as the master emotion, may be at the heart of the process. It further suggests that the failure to acknowledge this shame may have a part to play in some difficulties encountered working

²⁷¹ Jackins, 1982a, 1982b.

²⁷² Jackins, Op. cit.

with any of the other emotions and with shame itself. We saw earlier how affect theory suggests laughter is a response to the rapid extinguishment of any emotion.²⁷³ In RC practice the lighter form of any of the major ‘negative’ emotions: anger, fear, grief, or shame will be discharged as laughter. With the exception of shame each of the others has a specific mode for discharge of the deeper layers of this ‘distress’. Anger comes off as shouting and/or hot sweating; fear as shaking and/or cold sweat; grief as crying and/or deep sobbing. It has been suggested that deep rhythmic laughter is the form of discharge for shame.²⁷⁴ I have my doubts. This is undoubtedly effective in my experience for the lighter forms of shame-embarrassment but has so far not been reported within the RC community as effective for deeper shame issues.²⁷⁵ My suspicion is that because shame is paid so little attention, is so little understood and so poorly worked with in all therapeutic modalities at present, we may be missing a more subtle form of discharge for shame and one which is, as yet, harder to work with. My suggestion would be that the form of discharge might be less overt, less voluble than for other emotions. I would be looking for direct display of shame affect, particularly blushing, with feelings of facial heat (as well as body surface heat) as a signal indicator.²⁷⁶ But more work is needed here to clearly differentiate the body heat and ‘flush’ of anger from the more subtle ‘blush’ of shame.²⁷⁷

For now the critical point to note is that part of the reason why, in our culture, shame is so often recalled as an unpleasant and unhealthy experience is that (once it fails to operate salutogenically) the residue or burden of this ‘unresolved’ shame is difficult to discharge. We may be able to discharge the other emotions that are ‘bound’ to the shame burden but the shame core is harder to release.²⁷⁸ Not only is it held to be private, secret, and bound to the self but we lack the processes, whether in social interaction or in the cloistered world of ‘therapy’ for effective discharge of this burdensome residue.²⁷⁹

²⁷³ See Chapter Three, Figure 3.4.

²⁷⁴ Scheff, 1979; and personal communication 2002.

²⁷⁵ Paul Whyte, Pamela Mears and Rex Stoessiger (leading practitioners in the Australian RC Community): personal communications, 2002.

²⁷⁶ I have observed some work on discharge of shame as body heat as part of Brendan Nicholls’ experiential *Mastery* Program, Sydney 1998.

²⁷⁷ This is the subject of future work with colleagues in the Australian RC community. As well as deep rhythmic laughter and blushing; the idea of facial hiding, eye movements and body posture might provide fruitful starting points for light and/or ‘contradictory’ shame affect discharge.

²⁷⁸ For discussion of this issue of shame ‘binds’, see Kaufman, 1989.

²⁷⁹ Goffman, 1959, 1963b, 1967; suggests that in social interaction people often assist in helping another ‘save face’. The embarrassed one is offered an alternative ‘face’ where the group rejects the initial one he offers. If he accepts the alternative he may then be accepted. But often not without carrying some residue of shame (which is unacknowledged) especially if the ‘face’ he must now wear is of lower status than the one he would prefer.

Shame and ‘empathy’.

Earlier I suggested that when shame is shown it triggers an empathic response in those who witness it. Let us explore this idea of empathy further. What do we mean when we talk of ‘empathy’? Are there differences in the ways that people ‘feel empathy’ for another? How does the feeling of empathy relate to behaviour: to action that meets the needs of the person displaying the emotion that triggers our empathy?

In our culture (especially where people are involved in personal development) empathy has come to be regarded as a capacity to be valued uncritically. This has not always been the case, nor is it universally accepted.²⁸⁰ Sometimes confused with sympathy, it has also been seen as a form of ‘emotional contagion’: a loss of control of the boundaries that keep my feelings separate from yours. Also, the word sympathy carries overtones of a feeling having been ‘exacted’ from me. My favourite definition of empathy is from Alec Dickson - that it is ‘*sympathy plus*’ - a feeling **with**, not just for another.²⁸¹ A more academic definition is:

*“(The state in which) an observer reacts emotionally because he perceives another experiencing or about to experience an emotion.”*²⁸²

In this definition, expression of any emotion can be the trigger for an empathic response. It also encompasses any emotional responses. These include reproducing the feeling we observe (or expect) and/or feeling very different/contrasting emotions. In everyday use we tend to think of empathy as involving a similar response to that observed - ‘positive to positive’ or ‘negative to negative’. Happiness triggers joy (or a combination of interest and enjoyment); while fear, sadness or shame trigger either the same or some combination of these ‘negative’ emotions. Part of this is the result of mirroring. Empathic observers take on aspects of the other’s facial affect.²⁸³ However, the theoretical definition also embraces the idea that we may respond to one affect with an entirely different one. For example we may respond to anger with fear; or to fear with contempt. In all cases we are responding to a variety of situational cues including: the visual, the verbal, our appreciation of the situation, and our imagining how the other will feel. We are also reacting to our own ‘empathic’ feelings, with an overlay of our own scripts for managing these feelings.

However, the process by which we experience the feelings of another is unclear. Some writers suggest it is primarily an affective response (a consequence of identification with the

²⁸⁰ See Preston, & de Waal, 2001; and Davis, 1990.

²⁸¹ Alec (see Chapter One) argued for empathy as the basis for a ‘community-service-based’ education system - what he called ‘the humane application of knowledge’.

²⁸² Stotland et al, 1978, p 16.

²⁸³ Nathanson, 1992, p.108; suggests that this empathic response is a function of all the affects – to the extent to which we are willing to mimic the facial display of another’s affect.

other and the awareness of one's own feelings) and that this leads to 'awareness' or conception of the other's feelings.²⁸⁴ Others stress a process of cognitive understanding:

*'... sensing the client's inner world of private personal meanings as if it were one's own, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality.'*²⁸⁵

In terms of personality development and socialisation, the ability to feel and be affected by the attitudes and emotions of significant others is seen to an innate or early-learned ability. It is acquired even before the infant is able to understand the signs of emotional expression.²⁸⁶ However, as Richard's framework for measuring personal and social age suggests, it develops very differently in individual personalities.

Empirical research measuring empathic responses throws up some interesting features. One is that birth order in the family of origin is significant in determining the situations likely to produce empathy. First-born people, and those who are the only child in their family of origin, respond empathically to people who differ from them in terms of status. Later-born people (with early experience of growing up with other children close to their own age) show more emotional arousal when the model is a peer or perceived as similar to self. The research also suggests that instructions that encourage people to 'imagine' what the other is feeling tend to produce higher scores on tests that measure the empathic response than do instructions to 'observe' or where no instruction is given.

The other feature that stands out from these studies is that over-identification with a person can destroy empathy. Those who score highest on measures of empathic response are those least likely to take 'helpful' action in response to the emotional display. For example, nurses who scored highest in measures of intensity of feelings aroused were those most likely to be found in the corridor outside the ward discussing the cases with other nurses.²⁸⁷ An elegant, staged experiment involved monitoring people's reactions to a 'student'/actor dropping books and papers and becoming agitated as a result. Observers who 'empathised' most strongly were less likely to help pick up the papers!²⁸⁸ The research suggests that people's capacity to 'imagine' how others will feel (correctly I think described in the literature as 'fantasy') is a significant factor in achieving high empathy scores – defined as feeling the other's emotions as their own. Implicit in this is a value judgement that 'high' empathy is desirable. Yet we have evidence that there can be such a thing as 'too much' empathy - which inhibits practical

²⁸⁴ E.g. Katz (1963) - cited in Stotland, 1978, p 13.

²⁸⁵ Rogers, 1967. Stotland, 1978 (p 13 and 15) suggests support for this 'emotional detachment' as a feature of empathy in the work of Mead, Cline and Richards; Hatch; Kerr and Speroff, and Mahoney.

²⁸⁶ Attributed to Sullivan (1953) in Stotland, 1978, p14.

²⁸⁷ Stotland, *Ibid* p 80.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid* pp 84-86.

helpful action. High-empathic individuals may need to be helped to achieve sufficient emotional distance to be able to function effectively.

There has been less work done on people at the other end of the empathic response scale. Studies of people with histories of child abuse and neglect have used empathy response scales in an attempt to develop predictors for this behaviour. Results appear to be inconclusive.²⁸⁹ There appears to be a suggestion, significant in terms of the thesis being developed here, that the subject group failed to show ‘orienting responses’ to various test scenarios depicting pleasant and unpleasant situations; unlike the ‘normal’ responses of the control group. This was interpreted as indicating that ‘abusers and neglectors’ (sic) were **not attending** to the scenarios.²⁹⁰

It seems that we are again confronted by the issue raised earlier - that of aesthetic distancing of feeling. People can be isolated from (under-empathic) or engulfed by the display of feelings of another (over-empathic). Far from being a universally desirable response, if it is to be useful empathy needs to find the same kind of ‘aesthetic’ distance – a ‘feeling with’ but not being engulfed by their emotional reaction to the feelings of others. It seems that failure to attend to the (affective) signals on the surface may result in over-distancing and a lack of empathic response. Emphasis on (cognitive) imagining of another’s feelings may lead to empathy - but also a tendency to under-distancing and over-identification that inhibits the ability to undertake practical supportive action.

This is becoming a recurring theme. It runs through the consideration of: (i) the compass of shame, (ii) the maintaining of healthy boundaries between self and others, (iii) the balance between isolation and engulfment, (iv) overt unacknowledged and bypassed shame, (v) the consideration of aesthetic distance in cathartic discharge and (vi) here in relation to useful or distressing empathic responses. At its core is the question of balance between self and other; between identity and identification. In the language of the social change theory in Chapter Two, between personal and social age of individuals, groups and cultures. And the evidence points to shame as the emotion that mediates this balance.

²⁸⁹ See Disbrow et al., 1977.

²⁹⁰ Stotland Ibid, p 95.

Feeling ‘guilty’: a mask against ‘shame’?

If we see shame as the unifying descriptor for a spectrum of feelings with common affect then guilt is clearly not a separate affect-emotion. It is a ‘cognate’ – a way of thinking about and interpreting shame in context. The context will activate memories of how this feeling of transgression/disgrace shame we call ‘guilt’ was experienced in the past, and the associated scripts and emotions that came to be co-assembled with it.

The compass of shame suggests we have two basic ways (four directions) for responding if we wish to avoid any of the clusters of uncomfortable feelings we have grouped under the heading of ‘shame’. We run away and hide, or we defend/attack. In reality we may combine several of these avoidance strategies. Rather than see the compass as four single points or directions, we might more usefully see it in terms of four quadrants or zones. Some people tend towards aggressive **and** self-hiding (they blame other, deny responsibility, and/or hide in addictive patterns). Others tend to hide from others **and** take blame on themselves etc. At any time or in relation to circumstances an individual can place themselves anywhere on the ‘field’ with their proximity to the centre being a measure of their acceptance of the shame element involved.²⁹¹

In terms of emotions associated with these behaviours, we will often display ‘fear’ or ‘anger’ or some combination of these with or without other emotions. What we are not showing, not acknowledging, is the core of shame. The ‘flight/fright or fight’ response to an adrenalin rush is the common everyday response to shame, and particularly to shame-guilt. While fear of consequences may lead to a moral code for adult behaviour, the reality is that the way we learned guilt often teaches us to (initially) deny our responsibility for our actions, to ourselves and to others. I envy children raised in ways that teach them to instinctively respond otherwise. Only later perhaps do we accept ‘guilt’ and show the shame, whether from inner motivation or the inevitability of being found out.

Now, if we consider this shame-guilt avoidance process in terms of its affect: what will be visible on the face? I suggest that the initial instinct-driven flash of shame will be visible, but that it is often unseen or, if seen, ‘unnoticed’. It is so brief that if we blink we might miss it. Furthermore, our culture teaches us to mask it, either instinctively or as soon as we become

²⁹¹ We will explore what happens when people do place themselves on this ‘compass’ of shame in Chapters Five and Six below.

aware of it.²⁹² What then becomes visible is usually not shame - at least not shame alone but shame masked in varying degrees by either anger or fear or both.²⁹³

Early on in my exploration of this issue I asked both Don Nathanson and Tom Scheff about the nature of guilt. Nathanson suggested that it was a co-assembly of **shame plus fear**. He suggested that the experience of guilt is:

*“A specific co-assembly of shame affect (as in awareness that we have done something that does not fit our personal schema for our best self) with fear that we will be punished for this transgression. The physiology of fear blanches the cheek and stiffens the neck, thus erasing the blush of shame and the loss of tonus in the neck and upper body. One can be quite guilty without a red face or bowed head.”*²⁹⁴

He saw it as cognitive rather than affective:

*“The experience of guilt is not possible until the individual is capable of learning 1) that there are rules in society and 2) that violation of these rules can bring punishment. Although shame affect is visible from early infancy, guilt is not possible until about two years of age, when these two pieces of learning have been absorbed. I view guilt as the result of the fusion of the two innate affects shame and fear, accompanied by (cognitive) knowledge of the type described. After age two, guilt as a separate script veers off on its own developmental path and comes to feel quite different from the usual scripts for shame that is un-associated with this specific realm of fear. It is in this sense that Tomkins called guilt ‘moral shame’, not to imply that shame experience is devoid of moral structure, but in the specific manner I have just described.”*²⁹⁵

This suggests that guilt is **shame and fear** combined in a way that masks the visual display of the shame affect. It pushes the individual towards a more cognitive evaluation of the experience and/or the use of one or more of the scripts of aggression and alienation outlined by the compass of shame. I suggest this is a sufficient condition for much of what we have discussed in terms of social or psychological shame pathology.

Scheff took a different stance but the conclusion is very similar. He suggested that guilt is **shame plus anger – which is inner-directed**. He described it as:

*“. . . a way of not expressing shame, i.e. bypassed shame . . . a shame-anger sequence pointed at the self – were it externally expressed it would be seen as ‘resentment’.”*²⁹⁶

This clearly locates guilt on the ‘attack self’ pole of the aggression/violence dimension of the shame compass. But he further and more significantly locates it in a broader social context, suggesting that guilt needs to be seen in the context of the dominant ideology of

²⁹² It also teaches us not to pay attention to it – note how we look away when someone is embarrassed.

²⁹³ In the chapters that follow I will expand on this, and add other affect displays such as: grief, disgust and even faux interest and enjoyment to these ‘masks of shame’.

²⁹⁴ Don Nathanson, personal communication, E-mail, August 2000

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Tom Scheff: personal Communication, Santa Barbara, June 2000.

individualism, as '*the social emotion of individuals* (whereas) *shame is the emotion of social relations*'.²⁹⁷ It is hardly drawing a long bow to see in this the roots of much of what we know as alienation.

It can readily be appreciated that the further one moves across the shame-affect spectrum from humility towards humiliation, the greater the potential for the situation to be seen as 'a threat'. Because of the way the shame-guilt section of the spectrum is socially constructed as a moral transgression, with explicit or implied association with punishment, guilt is more likely to co-assemble the emotions of shame and fear. It is not inevitable, merely more likely. The issue is not that guilt per-se lays fear over the top of shame (thereby leading to both affective and cognitive masking) but that the co-assembly of these emotions is the likely result in a culture where these are so closely associated. Fear and shame tend to come together in the way we think of them; and we learn to think of them in this way because that is what our culture teaches.

Outside of the rarefied world of shame researchers who ask the deeper questions, shame is often and closely associated with guilt and self blame. We can, if we choose, follow Richard Hauser and label this as a 'guilt' culture. His view is that guilt is an inevitable consequence of a paternalistic culture in which some 'higher authority' defines our duties and the rules we live by. Failure to live up to these rules attracts blaming, stigmatisation and punishment. And this holds whether the pattern is imposed externally by another, or by myself through imagining a higher self or superior moral code - and whether I accept this 'imposition' or not.

Whether we use this 'guilt culture' label or not, the challenge is to understand how, and what happens when shame and fear become co-assembled in this way. What might be the result in a 'shame culture' where they were not so closely assembled? One where shame and fear are more clearly separated and reserved for their own specific, natural functions. What we call Western Anglo-European culture, has not progressed far beyond the emotional dynamics of shame-guilt – characterised by the masking of shame with fear and/or anger and the socio-pathologies of aggression and alienation. If we were to call this a 'shame culture' then we would have to agree with Richard Hauser that, for the most part, this shame culture is 'infantile'. Like the guilt culture we might wish to replace, shame has not progressed far from the way we learn it as small children. In fact it is arguable that very small children might have a more innate and less culturally distorted perception of what shame could be about.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. See also Scheff, 1988; where he suggests guilt is an internalised and individual emotion whereas shame is a force for group identity.

Fear of shame

In everyday use ‘fear’ and ‘shame’ clearly have a point of connection in that they signal an emotional state where I perceive myself ‘threatened’ in some way and I want to do something to stop it happening.²⁹⁸ It is also easy to see how anger can also be mobilised when such action is frustrated - and be directed at either the perceived source of the threat or at myself. The expression of ‘fear’ can be an appropriate behavioural response when the threat is physical one - a threat to my person that I wish to remove by the action of withdrawing from the situation. ‘Shame-fear’ is a response to a different kind of threat – one that originates in the **social context** of perceiving myself as ‘threatened’ by how I am (or may be) being seen by other people.²⁹⁹ The everyday experience of shame as ‘an attack on the self’ (sometimes by the self) is very real but it is, I suggest only half the story. It overlooks the origin of the experience in the real or imagined perception of the other: critically, as we will see, in the **eyes** of another. Shame is the response to being seen by others in situations where we feel that we are, or will be judged negatively – in basic language, seen as ‘less-than’; and in the case of guilt, as ‘bad’.

Being human merely adds layers of complexity to this via the capacity to think. We develop narratives based on the language we have learned to use to describe this experience. In our culture these tend towards ways of describing the self to ourself based on the perception we have of others’ judgements. We can also imagine situations where we were or may be feeling ashamed, and how we might react to these and/or the consequences of them. We can, and do, develop scripts with varying degrees of what we call ‘morality’ to guide behaviour to avoid being in such situations or how to react when we find ourselves in them. We can even ‘internalise’ the whole process. We see ourself in a bad light through a process where we imagine ourself (sometimes a ‘higher’, ‘better’ or ‘inner’ self) observing and judging our human and fallible self as ‘shameful’.

²⁹⁸ I am still searching for an alternative to the description of shame as a response to a ‘**threat**’ to the social bond as this too reflects the way we assemble shame and fear. Jane Pennington has suggested ‘disruption’ but this, like affect theorists descriptions of shame, focuses on the outcome rather than the core feeling or perception.

²⁹⁹ Some researchers see this as inevitable. Paul Gilbert suggests that anxiety and fear are often part of shame. For example: *animals in subordinate positions are fearful of those above and there are similarities in submissive fear and shame responses in humans*. He suggests shame and social fear/anxiety have a common root in neuropsychology with common sympathetic and parasympathetic effects. He advocates *an integration of social anxiety and shame literature if only because the former is more advanced*. (E-mail communication, UCSB list, July 2001).

Even if ‘imagined’ in this way the experience of ‘feeling’ the shame can be very real. Experiencing shame (real or imagined) is perhaps one of the most discomfoting experiences. In part this is because it is so often accompanied by feelings associated with the other emotions. Indeed it has been recognised that shame ‘binds’ to most of the other emotions. I can be ashamed of feeling angry, scared/fearful, sad/grieving. Even aspects of enjoyment/pleasure can invoke feelings of shame. And I can be ashamed of feeling shame itself. I can also be angry, fearful, sad etc over feeling ashamed. Some of the situations that create shame also evoke disgust and self-loathing and fear, anger and grief. The shame - {other-emotion}- shame spirals appear to be endless. Shame-rage spirals are considered to underlie many if not all instances of violence. In my view, there is a compelling case for seeing shame-humiliation as one of the more significant factors in triggering violent behaviour.³⁰⁰ For an emotion supposedly hard-wired to interrupt the affect of enjoyment, or to signal its interruption, it seems that shame is in need of its own circuit breaker to end such ‘toxic’ spirals.

The fear of shame is, in this context, greater than the fear of death. Men have been willing to face certain death in war rather than face the shame of being seen as ‘cowards’ in the eyes of their fellow soldiers.

Men have exposed themselves repeatedly to death and terror, and have even surrendered their lives in defence of their dignity, lest they be forced to bow their heads and bend their knees. The heavy hand of terror itself has been flouted and rejected in the name of pride. Many have had to confront death and terror all their lives lest their essential dignity and manhood be called into question. Better to risk the uncertainties of death and terror than to suffer the deep and certain humiliation of cowardice.³⁰¹

A more general observation on the human condition from a penetrating study of violence based on work in the US prison system suggests:

‘(P)eople feel incomparably more alarmed by a threat to the psyche, the soul or the self than they are by a threat to the body. People will willingly sacrifice their bodies if they perceive it as the only way to avoid ‘losing their souls’ ‘losing their minds’” or ‘losing face’.’³⁰²

Now it is reasonable to ask, if (in everyday experience) both these threats evoke an element of fear, why are shame and fear such markedly different ‘feelings’ when seen

³⁰⁰ Earlier we noted Scheff and Retzinger’s work in tracing this pattern from micro to macro situations. A similar case is made by Gilligan (1997) exploring violence in the context of the US prison system. Poulson (2001) in an analysis of each of several recent acts of indiscriminate violence (Columbine, USA; Port Arthur, Australia; Dunblane, UK) that reveals patterns of humiliation of the offender(s) as contributory factors in each case. We take this up further in Chapter Eight below.

³⁰¹ Tomkins, 1963, p133. In passing we should note that this is a gendered comment – it applies specifically to men far more than to women and their shame experiences.

³⁰² Gilligan, 1997 p 96.

in terms of the theory of emotions outlined in this study? Why should social threats be perceived so differently from physical ones? Why should shame be the appropriate salutogenic response to one and fear to the other? And, as important, what happens when they are not used appropriately?

The first thing to notice is that we can **see** the difference – in terms of the facial affect. Shame **looks** very different from fear. Like other emotions, shame is our feeling response to an affect and this affect has a number of distinct features. Feeling ‘ashamed’ shows in terms of breaking of eye contact, lowering of eyes, a drop forward of the head, slump of shoulders and upper body, loss of muscle tone at the base of the neck, a dilation of the blood vessels and rush of blood to face and neck causing the characteristic shame blush. To varying degrees, in terms of intensity and/or visibility, these elements are the common across the whole shame spectrum. Fear on the other hand has a very different face. There is a widening of the eyes, a pulling back of the head, a stiffening of the upper body, a tensing of neck muscles causing a constriction of blood vessels and a blanching of the face. Notice how, on all counts, these run completely counter to the corresponding elements that characterise the facial affect of shame.

The empathic response to fear is also very different from that to shame. I am unlikely to respond to a display of fear with an empathic feeling of shame.³⁰³ My response is likely to mirror fear with fear, or to react by becoming angry, distressed, disgusted, (even interested and amused) depending on circumstances and on which of my scripts is activated in the process. Now observe as I witness another’s shame. I will usually show a mirror-empathic (shame) response. Sometimes, instead, I may show anger, fear etc. but these other (non-mirror) affects can be seen as shame-avoidant reactions – part of my scripted pathology due to my discomfort around shame. Observe more closely, and an initial mirror reaction to another’s shame is likely to be visible before I can mask it with these other affects. I am likely to (briefly) drop my eyes, look away, lower my head and display a body slump: even a brief blush. These signal that I know some of what the other is feeling – and usually wish they not have to feel it; at least not on a sustained basis. The key difference is that shame usually produces an empathic response that includes shame: fear usually doesn’t. This shame-empathic response seems to have elements with potential for bridging the social gap between us; whereas my response to displays of fear or anger is usually to maintain or increase the emotional and social distance.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Unless I am the source of another’s feeling of fear, and then not always.

³⁰⁴ In the next chapter we will observe that victims of crime in restorative processes are willing (if not to forgive) to move on and not expect the offender to remain in a shamed state once this shame has been shown. In the following chapters we will explore in some detail what happens when people show

It is noticeable that in everyday language (at least in Western English speaking cultures today) we often use fear words to describe situations that potentially might trigger ‘shame’. For example ‘I’m afraid I can’t do that’ signals that I sense my refusal may damage the relationship. Some of this is understandable. For many people, their sense of identity, their self-image, is being threatened in situations where shame is triggered. For people (like me) whose early experience in the family of origin leaves them fearful of emotional (and physical) abandonment there may be a chronic binding of fear to shame in difficult social situations. It is worth asking how cognitive co-assembly of shame and fear affects the signals we send to others (and to ourselves). If shame is the emotional firmware for social bridge building, how does the display of shame affect work? Why is the display of shame (so vastly different from fear) a more appropriate response to these social ‘threats’? If, as I assume throughout this exploration of emotions, the evolutionary and salutogenic function of affects is as instinctive signals to myself and to others, then how does the affective display of shame when I ‘fear’ the judgement of others work to repair the social bonds? And why does the affective display of fear not serve the same function? The simple answer is that it doesn’t. But understanding why and the detail of how these emotions work affectively in interpersonal and social contexts is becoming an important question.

What is evident is that fear is commonly co-assembled with shame. Work on traumatic memory systems shows these often involve a mingling of emotions, with the central affect being anxiety that is felt as:

“ . . . somewhere between a dull pervasive tension, a feeling of unsafety and unease . . . to terror.

Shame is common and expressed as humiliation, or utter exposure. Anger is often intense and felt not only towards the other but towards oneself, so that revengeful hate is linked to destructive and suicidal ideas and in extreme cases the traumatic memory system is ‘embodied’ with thoughts of physical abuse that are both wished for and repellent, rejected.”³⁰⁵

A key example of this is what has been called the ‘*guilt game*’ where, alongside the idea of having caused damage to another, the person sees him/her-self as a ‘*burden*’ – feels compelled to make repeated acts of reparation, carries a feeling of ‘*indebtedness*’ and feels ‘*stifled*’³⁰⁶.

unmasked shame - how it works to trigger empathic feelings of connection, and how we react differently to displays of anger or fear.

³⁰⁵ Meares, 2000, p 81. Note the similarity with the compass of shame here.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

But it is not just in ‘traumatic’ situations that this co-assembly occurs. In everyday situations even the language of fear can displace ‘shame’, and get in the way of resolving relationship difficulties. A friend recently shared how she felt ‘scared’ over the prospect being seen to be interested in starting a relationship with a ‘new’ man after the break up of a long-term relationship. Words like “*I’m afraid, . . . scared, . . . terrified*” littered the conversation. What was she afraid of? Not about personal threat, but about “*being rejected*”, that she “*might blow the chance by appearing too interested*” and about how she would “*be seen*” especially in the event of a sexual encounter: how he might not like her body.

“You know what I miss about (previous partner); he liked my body just as it was!”

What did she want? At bottom the desire was:

“. . . for someone who will accept me as beautiful just the way I am.”

Now, it is easy to see that if she were rejected, this man would not meet her fundamental need for acceptance; and learning this sooner rather than later would be better than living with the fear, anxiety and uncertainty. Is ‘fear’ even remotely appropriate in this situation? More to the point does it assist her in preparing for the possible face-to-face encounter? Embedded in this is the emotion of shame: shame-modesty, shyness, embarrassment and, at least in imagination, shame-humiliation; all of these unacknowledged. What would be the effect of seeing this situation through the window of shame rather than fear? What would be the effect of approaching the face-to-face encounter aware of and willing to show modesty, shyness, or embarrassment? It might lead to a more open and honest encounter: a more ‘real’ relationship in that moment and perhaps beyond. Exploring this with my friend allowed her to think more clearly on the choices and gave her the freedom to take the initiative rather than awaiting his call.³⁰⁷

The point I want to make here is that the association of fear (and/or anger) with shame is pathological, particularly where it leads to the masking of the signal of shame to the other or to oneself.

*Fear and anger were designed to serve as responses to threats to our survival. To our **survival** – not to our pride, status, position, manhood or dignity. Yet somehow we have developed in our minds a crucial linkage between affronts to our status of even minimal measure and the very sense of survival. We respond to an affront with biological defences appropriate for assaults. We experience these affronts as though they were threats to survival.*³⁰⁸

This is not just psycho-pathology; it is also a socio-pathology. It is inherent in the way we structure our society to increase rather than decrease the instances of these affronts to our

³⁰⁷ Conversation with M.B. September 2002 – name withheld by request.

³⁰⁸ Gaylin, 1984/1989 p 26 – emphasis in original.

status. Social life is built around sensitivity to our perception of ‘due deference’³⁰⁹ - how we expect and either show, or fail to show, ‘respect’ for others in our language and behaviour. Much of society is ordered around status (and hence shame, embarrassment and often humiliation). This contributes to the pathological association of fear and anger with shame and, critically, the way these other ‘survival’ emotions mask what would be the normal expression of shame.

*“The words fear or anxiety are often used to mask shame. ‘Social anxiety’, for example is usually about shame and embarrassment signals. . . . (F)ear and anxiety work best if restricted to a situation that might endanger life or limb, rather than one’s standing in the eyes of others. . . . (F)ear is a whole different physiological system, discharging as cold sweat and shivering. The physical discharge of shame is marked by good humoured, relaxed laughter about one’s self.”*³¹⁰

As discussed earlier, I have a problem with this view of shame discharge. ‘Relaxed’ laughter often signals the end-point of the discharge process - achieved **after** having discharged the shame/embarrassment. A feature of the discharge process for embarrassment (also for light fear and surface anger) is what I would characterise as ‘nervous’ laughter.³¹¹

The last refuge from feeling shame?

Guilt is in my view, a cultural artefact: an aspect of shame that is intimately bound to the cultural framework through which we experienced processes characterised by being blamed, judged, labelled (as guilty) and threatened with punishment. It is culturally bound to fear and anxiety and as a result, pathological rather than salutogenic in its functioning. This is not the commonly accepted view. Others have defined it as moral shame. It is often defined as a sense of transgression that results from attention to behaviour (rather than shame which is associated with attention to self-identity). It is also defined as the mature form of shame - in that it is part of the process of individuation (separation of personal identity from collective identification). However, whatever we call it, I suggest we have a problem when shame becomes co-assembled with fear, or with any of the other emotions where these mask the display of shame; if only because these masks lead to the shame being unacknowledged and so contributing to social alienation and violence.

In an effort to disassociate guilt and fear, Gaylin suggests that guilt proper should be seen as separate from ‘guilty fear’:

³⁰⁹ c.f. Goffman cited earlier.

³¹⁰ Tom Scheff: E-mail communication on shame@mail.lsit.ucsb.edu July 2001. .

³¹¹ This is what is observed in Re-evaluation counselling. As discussed in Chapter Three this is as predicted in affect theory, where rapid discharge of any state of emotional arousal will trigger the affect of laughter.

*“which is ‘fear – neither more nor less’ . . . initiated by the knowledge of having done something wrong for which one can expect punishment. The emotion is fear and the evasion or avoidance of punishment is greeted with relief in the presence of this emotion.”*³¹²

It is hard to see how this helps when, on the other hand, he sees:

*True guilt is an excruciatingly painful emotion. Guilt sees us as both the one to be punished and the punisher. It is ourselves against ourselves. Or more exactly, ourselves against an image of ourselves the way we would like to be. It is the violation of or failure of that image which produces the sense of guilt. (For which we must have) developed a sense of ideal behaviour, . . . incorporated figures with which to identify and introjected a value system appropriate for such an identity. (Guilt is) . . . the trouble arising in our mind from our consciousness of having done contrary to what we are barely persuaded is our Duty . . . a way of putting ourselves before an internalised tribunal which measures our offence, pronounces our condemnation and inflicts our punishment.”*³¹³

It is hard to see in this description of ‘true guilt’ how one could not feel fear. The reality is that the everyday experience of guilt is all too often associated with fear of punishment – and often expressed as an explosion of anger, outwardly directed at others who can be ‘blamed’ for the situation, or inwards as an attack on the self. These are the very scripts that are part of the pathology of shame-avoidance as seen in the compass of shame and the shame-rage spirals that accompany unacknowledged shame. Even if I can find ‘true guilt’ as defined above, the expression of it will manifest as shame-affect if it manifests at all – and if masked, the mask will usually be seen as anger or fear.

Richard points to yet another aspect of this pathology of guilt.

*“Adults sometimes regress into childish guilt patterns if they are struck by severe distress. For example parents of children who are handicapped or die, sometimes feel that this is really a punishment for some earlier misdeed . . . that their debt is being paid for by their child’s life.”*³¹⁴

A similar pattern may lie behind what has been called ‘survivor guilt’ experienced by people who survive trauma in which others they identify with have died.³¹⁵

There is another sense in which the confusion of shame by the guilt sequence (imposed blame, feeling ‘guilty’, confession and punishment) may represent pathology. Guilt can actually be a defence against shame. I vividly recall preparing for one Youth Justice Conference where the young offender insisted he would prefer to go to court, *“take my punishment and get it over with”* rather than face the *“humiliation”* of having to face the

³¹² Gaylin, 1989, p67.

³¹³ Ibid. Note how reminiscent this language is of Richard’s conception of guilt in terms of the expectation of punishment and failure to comply with externally imposed duties.

³¹⁴ Hauser, Ua, p 69.

³¹⁵ The ‘guilt’ felt by some Jewish survivors of the Holocaust is an example here.

victim in the presence of his extended family. Tomkins describes how he had treated children:

“in whom it seemed clear that the dread of the angry, unloving shaming face of the parent was so much greater than the dread of spanking and other punishments, that these punishments were sought by the child to reduce the dread of the disapproving or frightening face. Since the face of the parent is more loving following the discharge of aggression, some children provoked this discharge of aggression via a more harmless channel such as being sent to his room or spanked so that they were spared the dreaded facial interaction (or) guaranteed a period of freedom from facial attack for a period of time following the punishment.”³¹⁶

Guilt can be the last refuge for the person who seeks to avoid the experience of, and responsibility for, the feeling of shame.

Before we throw the baby out with the bathwater, how might we see guilt in its best light? Paradoxically, the co-assembly with anger acts as a mechanism for restraint on anger; a willingness to blame self rather than other for the situation. To attack self may be a restraint on the **external** expression of violence though, seen through the frame of the compass of shame, this is hardly a salutogenic outcome. By distinguishing particular actions as unworthy, wrong or disgraceful in a **general** sense, guilt can assist the development of more universal moral codes for behaviour. Albeit steeped in the ideology of her time where guilt was viewed as the more mature form of this emotion, Emma Jung points to the way that *“growth of consciousness proceeds simultaneously with an awareness of guilt.”³¹⁷* As such this infant/child/dependent form of the shame emotion has a place in development – but one that, I suggest needs to be transcended for maturity.

Some people still believe that guilt is necessary. They believe not only they, but also the rest of us are subject to a higher, perhaps divine law. They have a point. In so far as social ignorance and social immaturity will continue to exist, so some people may need and find useful this reference to external and higher power.³¹⁸ Bertold Brecht suggested, in asking the question: ‘is there a God?’, the question we should first ask ourselves is, just depending on the answer, would our behaviour change? If it would not, he suggested the question was irrelevant. If it would change, then the fact is we need a God.³¹⁹ Replacing ‘God’ with ‘Guilt’ highlights the cultural dilemma and the challenge of this thesis – to find an alternative emotional basis from which to generate personal and social growth such that reference to external authority and reliance on blame, self-condemnation, and punishment as the basis for responsible personal and social action becomes irrelevant.

³¹⁶ Tomkins, 1962, p 220. We will see a similar pattern in one of the men we will meet in Chapter Six.

³¹⁷ E. Jung, 1970, p 181.

³¹⁸ Witness success of ‘Twelve-Step’ recovery programs - to be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

³¹⁹ Brecht, 1966 p 112.

From guilt to shame culture?

In its day, guilt has served to maintain social order. It has been a cognitive-behavioural and emotional prompt towards maintaining and developing ‘moral’ standards. It has provided the cultural-emotional underpinning of social structures for law and justice that now extend from local communities to international relations. Perhaps now it has outlived its usefulness. The personal and social pathologies that come with it now outweigh the benefits and threaten us with a range of personal, social and ecological crises on a global scale. Perhaps something has changed in the underlying nature of human relationships that makes guilt, as Richard seems to be suggesting, a dangerous irrelevance – something to be transcended by a more mature awareness of its roots in the social psychology of shame.

If this transcendent change is to take place then, the theory of micro-sociology suggests that the emotional dynamics of shame at the interpersonal level may provide a model for their application at increasing levels of complexity in human interaction throughout society and culture. Accordingly the next steps in this study will involve us looking more closely at the details of shame at this small, micro- scale of interpersonal behaviour – as **embodied** in thought, feeling and action.

In practice it takes a lot for the individual to step outside of the ‘guilt culture’ with its associated fear of punishment. An individual will need to have first internalised a value system that rejects the imposition of authoritarian rules, and yet still value the democratic processes by which societies and cultures create imperfect and evolving norms for acceptable social behaviour. S/he will need to be engaged in the process of social education of both the young and adults, with particular emphasis on resolution of conflicts (and unacceptable or ‘offending’ behaviour) without recourse to punishment-based systems and institutions that rely on either violence or alienation as means of social control.

For the Hausers, guilt was an ‘infantile’ response embedded in a paternalistic culture. Shame offered an alternative to blame guilt and punishment. Richard saw offending behaviour as due to social ignorance, and shame as an opportunity to compensate for past behaviour rather than be punished for it.

‘The will to compensate for something one feels ashamed of having done is much more hopeful and dignified way of dealing with social ignorance . . . than letting oneself be burdened by crushing guilt. There is a terrible pessimism inherent in the acceptance of evil which is thought by some to be innate in man

*... so deep rooted and hard to get at that it may require a complex religious or psycho-analytical process.*³²⁰

Does guilt serve any useful function that could not also and better be served by reframing it in terms of the culture, language, and the affective expression of shame? To the extent that shame itself is also burdened by the associations with fear and anger, as a result of the way we learn it though family and culture, the answer is probably no! Unless we develop a more mature awareness of shame in terms of both its personal, emotional expression and the social forms through which we mobilise, develop and regenerate our experience and expression of this emotion we will have changed little. And yet, just understanding shame as the ‘ringmaster’ of the other emotions can give us a handle on where these others are coming from when they arise in social situations. Sorting them out so that we are aware of the association, rather than these being unconsciously ‘bound’ together, is to develop ‘emotional facility’; an ability to feel, recognise, and allow the expression of these appropriately according to the social situation.

If this is so a necessary first step is, I suggest, to find ways to unmask shame. We need to ‘take off’ the masks of anger, fear, (or disgust, grief etc.) so that the underlying shame can be expressed – affectively expressed. If this can be done then others will be able to see the signal of shame and we might begin to see how shame can function to mediate the social situations where today anger and fear are aroused and the aggression/alienation behaviour scripts are commonly activated.

Closing the window on shame theory.

The frame for ‘shame’ we have developed here allows us to see this as the class term for one of the more significant human emotions with the primary social function of alerting us to the state of our social relationships. It is pre-eminently the social emotion. Also, in ways we will explore in more detail in later chapters, it acts to repair damage to these relationships.

Critically, we have focussed on the affect of shame – how it is expressed in body language and particularly how it is displayed on the human face. The way we think about shame is more problematic. Often we don’t think. We use patterns of response that we learned within a culture that has itself learned patterns of response that systematically interfere with the

³²⁰ Hauser, Ub: *Guilt and Shame*, p 1.

normal functioning of shame. Critically, an aspect of these culturally scripted patterns is distortion or masking of the facial display of shame. In doing so we block or distort it's salutogenic functioning. As much as any cognitive processes, it is this masking of shame that leads to the residue of unresolved emotion(s) associated with what is commonly thought of as 'shame'. In fact the everyday perception of shame as 'toxic' or unhealthy is not based on the experience of shame itself, but these residues of unresolved shame. In the frame I have developed above, shame is less an emotional state, more a process. It is an interactive process of perception and display of shame, and emotional responses to shame between people. It is interpersonal, not something attached to the self-image of an isolated individual alone.

Albeit, without this detailed frame for understanding shame, Richard was pointing to some key features that are relevant to the analysis, particularly when we come to consider the way forward. His definitions of guilt and shame point to their relationships to duty and responsibility; and to authoritarian vs. egalitarian social structures. He identified the close relationship between shame, apathy and violence. He suggested that shame could be activated in group-work by evaluating personal and social age (broadly a group's maturity in terms of identity and identification). He discussed how this evaluation was often a trigger for cathartic discharge (mainly through anger and grief); and how the sense of shame that then emerged was a primary motivator for both personal growth and emergence of social activism. He lacked the framework that affect theory provides, did not appreciate the critical role of unacknowledged shame, and did not have access to the concept of a compass of shame-avoiding behaviour as a way of directly linking his apathy/violence scales to his work on shame. Thus he failed to appreciate how violence and apathy are just the outward manifestations of bipolar dimensions of aggression and alienation - both driven by unacknowledged shame. This is hardly surprising. The linkages between these in the current academic literature are often more implicit than the explicit form outlined above. Much academic effort is still being devoted to work at the cognitive level, distinguishing guilt and shame (and privileging the former as the more mature emotion);³²¹ or seeking biological and neurological explanations for changes in level of arousal.³²²

This brief review of the theoretical field has identified the failure to acknowledge shame as a principal factor contributing to personal and social pathologies across a broad range of issues. However, most of the literature focuses mainly on cognitive aspects, particularly on language patterns that indicate overt or bypassed shame, rather than the non-verbal body language of the affect. What I think warrants further exploration is the way that shame is either visually

³²¹ See Tangney et al Op.cit. .

³²² See Nathanson (Op. cit) and discussion groups at the Tomkins Institute.

displayed or masked. If, as I have suggested, it is the visual display that is critical to the salutogenic functioning of the shame interaction, then it is critical we pay attention to what happens in that moment. What happens when the unmasked shame is displayed? What happens for both the shame-faced person and the witness(es)? How does this differ from display of the other affective masks? It is these questions that will be explored in the following chapters.

Richard highlighted the distinction between shame and guilt in terms of the cultures through which these emotions operate. He located the differences in broad cultural terms based on his conception of the transition from 'paternalistic' to democratic or 'fraternal' society. Guilt results from failure to live up to how others define my duty. Shame arises from my sense that I have failed to meet my own standards of responsibility. In this framework, guilt carries the burden of centuries of association with fear and related anger, distress etc. We need not agree with him that Western capitalist society is an example of a 'guilt culture', or that we are in transition to a 'shame culture', to recognise that this co-assembly represents a potential source of psycho-social pathologies that are combining to create crises on a global scale. Working to break this common cultural association of shame with fear and other emotions might lead to shame operating more effectively and allow us to build a less violent and alienated society. However we can also see how shame, even if unburdened by the associations of guilt, still carries its own cultural baggage. The task is, as we identified it at the beginning of this study, to understand how we might develop a more mature shame culture.

I have not so far attempted to detail what happens when shame is unmasked. There is little in the academic literature on how the process of building and strengthening social bonds occurs. I have suggested that this is the result of an empathic response by those who witness the display of shame, but this begs as many questions as it answers. Why, for example, does display of fear (so often associated with shame and often masking it) not also produce such an 'empathic' response? Why do we need a separate (and on every count distinctly different) shame display when we 'fear' loss of connection with, or disapproval of others? There are many questions embedded in this, which will have to await the practical exploration in the following chapters. The affect-psychological and psycho-sociological theorists have provided many elements of a theoretical framework for understanding shame. The task now is to translate the theory into practice - to begin to communicate what shame is, how it operates, and doesn't, and how it could operate if . . .

But ‘Shame’ is an experience. The words we use to describe it are at best an approximation to truth or the ‘reality’ of the experience. What I have tried to do is foreground and re-frame some of the discoveries made by others that contributed to the way I have come to view shame. The frame emerged as a result of the experience of trying to make sense of the emotion we call shame, and the challenging idea that it might be a doorway to a more socially mature culture. Above all it emerged, in the form above, through trying to share these ideas with others as they emerged. What I discovered very early on was that talking about a way of framing shame as salutogenic often created more controversy than consensus. My frame on shame generally, and particularly on the issue of shame and guilt, differed markedly from both the popular, ‘common-sense’ view and many of the prevailing academic views on shame. So, rather than try to justify by explaining this way of re-framing shame, I decided that the best way to both communicate (and also explore test, validate and modify the emerging framework) was to create opportunities for others to experience shame and, with them, observe what happens. In this my focus of attention was on that moment when shame becomes visible. What do we notice and how do we make sense of the experience?

This is the subject of the next chapter. It is time to stop looking from the outside. Close the window on shame theory and enter the room of shame experience. To explore what happens, what we see, feel, think, say and do when we stand inside and work with this perspective on shame.

Chapter 5. Working with shame – reframing the experience

*The range of what we think and do
is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice
that we fail to notice,
there is little we can do to change
until we notice how failing to notice
shapes our thoughts and deeds*
R.D. Laing, Knots.³²³

A communication challenge

The previous Chapters suggest a frame through which to view shame as one of the primary emotions with both personal and social salutogenic functions. So far this is a theoretical perspective, possibly interesting and certainly challenging to the ‘commonsense’ view of shame in our culture. The challenge now is to indicate how this might be applied in practice to make a difference in the real world and begin to create a more mature shame culture.

At a meeting with Tom Scheff and Suzanne Retzinger in June 2000 I asked a question about the future direction for work in this field. What, I asked, needs to be done over the next five to ten years if we are to make a difference? Suzanne suggested the priority was to tackle shame in the context of local level education and community building. Tom suggested the major problem was one of communication. The emotional-relational world (and the role of shame within this) was, he suggested, invisible to most people.

“We need to spend less time on academic discovery and tithing a percentage of our efforts to communicate with the wider public – to get beyond jargon to the common roots of shame talk and ordinary language.”

It is this challenge that I will take up here. But what are these common roots and this ordinary language? The frame through which we have begun to explore the shame experience is clearly far removed from the everyday reality where most people will use a variety of code words to avoid speaking of shame. Where it does surface it is spoken of mainly in terms of its pathology. In any case what language are we to attend to? The verbal? The visual? The challenge is not to describe how people see shame today but how they respond when faced with an opportunity to reframe the experience. As an action-researcher

³²³ Laing, 1970.

my task was to create the opportunity for this reframing, and in the process to observe and capture the detail of both the process used and the participants' experience of it.

Reframing shame as a salutogenic experience

What emerges from the analysis in the previous chapters is a theoretical framework for a salutogenic social psychology of shame that views this emotion through the lenses of behaviourism, affect theory, linguistic analysis and attachment theory. It suggests shame is one of the core emotions we identify by universally recognisable body language or 'affects'. These affects operate functionally as signalling systems – signalling to both the 'self' and 'others' our emotional state and/or change in level of arousal. In this framework:

- Shame is the common name we give to a feeling associated with a wide range of situations (whether real or imagined) where I sense there is a break in the connection (the social bond) between me and significant other people.
- The appearance of the affect will be visible before I am conscious of it. Indeed, I may remain relatively unaware of it, or I may be aware of it but ignore or mask it.
- Largely as a result of our cultural frame for these experiences, there is a powerful tendency to think of shame as pathogenic, toxic or unhealthy.
- As a result we learn ways to avoid showing it. We hide or mask it with other emotions, usually with one or more (or a combination of) other affects: fear, anger, disgust, grief, surprise or amusement.
- In the language we use to describe the feeling, 'shame' is often replaced by other words from the shame family (humility, modesty, embarrassment, guilt, humiliation etc.) or code words from the 'anger' or 'fear' (or other emotion) families that avoid shame completely.
- Unable to acknowledge shame, we then act-out through one or more of the behaviour patterns (scripts) of the 'compass of shame' that are activated by these other 'masking' emotions. In individuals, the result is behaviour that can be identified in terms of two bipolar dimensions: Aggression (attack other, attack self) and Alienation (hide from other, hide from self).
- The result is both personal/emotional, and social/cultural pathology. Unacknowledged shame lies at the root of both personal and social crises: aggression/violence, depression/suicide, isolation/apathy and engulfment/addiction.
- At the root of the personal/social pathology of shame is the failure not only to acknowledge the feeling of shame (verbally) but, particularly, to show (display visually) the affect of shame. Shame is masked by the affects of fear, anger or other emotions.

- This masking aborts the normal functioning of the shame-signalling process. When we allow others to see our shame it triggers an empathic emotional response that normally leads to repair and/or maintenance of the social bonds. Showing other emotions produces different empathic responses according to the affect being shown which, generally, tend to increase the separation/disconnection rather than rebuild/strengthen the bonds.
- The aborted or ‘unresolved’ shame process leaves a burden of usually unpleasant feelings (particularly distress, fear, self-directed anger, and disgust), which we often call ‘our shame’. We carry these feelings, along with the story of the shameful situation as a personal/psychological burden, often as a ‘secret’.
- These residues of ‘unresolved shame’, often associated with other emotions, are then (in our highly individualistic culture) bound to our concept of ‘self’ with potentially long term effects on both self-image (self-esteem) and relationships.
- This confusion of shame with the emotional residues of unresolved shame, sustains and reinforces the cultural frame through which we see shame as pathogenic. It replicates itself in the way successive generations learn it and becomes ‘a self-fulfilling prophesy’.

The moment of shame

As outlined above, our shame culture is identifiable as infantile, or at best juvenile, rather than adult or mature.³²⁴ If we are to understand the emotional-relational patterns that sustain this cultural immaturity it seems to me that we need to focus on the moment when shame first becomes visible as an affect. This is the one moment when the complexity of personal shame experiences can be reduced to an observable phenomenon. Affect is less dependent on subjective interpretation, and is therefore a point of common ground through which we might explore the experience. It is also the moment where one of two different paths can be taken. If shame is not masked, the affective signal can function to alert us to the potential damage to the connections/relationships (social bonds) with others. It invites us to question whether our behaviour might have contributed to this. It provides an invitation for us to reflect and change – to correct without invalidation. It also, instantly (often before we are aware of it) sends a signal to these others that we are, at some level, aware of the potential damage to the relationship. It signals that we are not ‘shameless’. Witnessing this affective-shame signal will (normally) trigger an empathic response. The other people feel some of what we feel. Their attention is also drawn to the threat to the relationship and this (normally)

³²⁴ See Chapter 2, Fig 2.3 where anti-social behaviour is correlated with juvenile shame.

contributes to the healing of any damage to the relationship - a rebuilding or strengthening of the social bond. Of course this process of reconciliation is never guaranteed. Other factors may intervene to disrupt stages of the salutogenic process. In particular, at the critical moment when we feel shame (when we become aware of the affect) a learned, 'scripted' response that masks this signal may be consciously or unconsciously activated. Similar disruption can occur our shame display activates the witness's shame-aversive scripts. They may not notice our display of shame, or react 'unempathically' to it. If the restorative process leading to rebuilding the social connections is aborted we can expect some degree of 'shame' pathology to result.

Now, the circumstances in which the functional rather than dysfunctional processes of this shame signalling system are likely to operate include:

- Awareness: both self-awareness and awareness of and by the other. What each of us notice because without this noticing the affective signalling system cannot function.
- A social/cultural framework that is supportive. One that will encourage the expression of the emotion, particularly the affect. One which is perceived to be safe, non threatening. One where I might 'expect to be met'.³²⁵ One where, because I have a healthy relationship with my own shame, I can have a healthy relationship with another person's.
- Critical to 'safety' is having a sense that my 'self' will be respected. That the focus will be on my behaviour, what I did, not who I am as a person. With the focus on 'the act, not the actor', there is scope for correction without invalidation.
- That (and this is so rarely present) our culture will have raised me, and the other person, to understand that shame and the expression of shame is a normal healthy functional process that works to build social connectivity: that it is the primary 'social' emotion.

Communicating Shame: theory and practice

This is clearly a tall order. Just outlining it in the way I have done here, indicates that explaining it, even if I could boil down the language to something less academic, would require a significant shift in the frame of reference through which most people have thus far constructed their understanding of shame. Often the first steps of even naming shame and recognising it in affective terms require such a suspension of belief that the rest of the

³²⁵ For discussion of 'being met' and 'support' in the language of Gestalt therapy see Lee and Wheeler, 1996; and Wheeler, 2000.

sequence cannot be heard, let alone comprehended.³²⁶ It is also far from being the accepted view within the academic community. A vigorous debate continues over many aspects of the above.

The issue is not whether the above is the only or correct way to frame the salutogenic shame experience (and by extension an analysis of its pathology); but whether the shame experience can be re-framed so that it is experienced as salutogenic by ordinary people in everyday life and culture. This is a long-term project and I suspect, indeed hope that much will be learned along the way that adds to and improves on the framework above. As I indicated earlier, the theory and practice went hand in hand. The theory emerged from the process of creating opportunities for such experiences (and then trying to find a framework through which to describe the common features of what emerged); as much as the experiential program emerged as a vehicle for communicating the theory. Some of this will be apparent from what follows but it is inevitable in the process of writing that the fine detail of the interactive nature of these elements of praxis will be blurred if not lost.

Shame is an emotional experience. How can we create opportunities for people to have this experience in a way that allows it to be seen and understood differently? My answer was to create a series of workshops called '**Working with Shame**'. These have eventually consolidated as a program built around five core exercises that progressively explore and unmask the shame experience. In keeping with the 'Hauser' tradition these are driven not by explanation but by questions. As described in the action survey approach in Chapter 2, the development of the workshop has largely been one of identifying and refining the questions that work to expose both the cognitive and affect-emotive features embedded in people's own salutogenic experience of shame.

Starts, steps and stumbles.

I propose to describe the process by which the workshop evolved. In this way I hope to illustrate both the scope and perhaps some of the limitations of the process and provide opportunities for others to explore aspects that I may have missed.

³²⁶ A colleague in one of my men's groups commented after the most recent 'shame' workshop (Blue Mountains, February 2003) that he had heard me (and others in the group who had 'done the workshop') talking about shame for over a year but in fact hadn't 'heard' at all. Until he had the workshop experience he had no (salutogenic) frame of reference within which to locate what was being said. (T.C. personal communication February 2003).

The Restorative Justice experience

The initial approach to identifying the framework and language through which the emerging salutogenic perspective on shame could be communicated was informed by my work in the field of restorative justice. This began in 1998 and continued until late 2001, prompted and supported by Terry O'Connell, formerly Senior Sergeant with the NSW Police Service Restorative Justice/Social Change Unit, now director of Real Justice Australia.³²⁷ It involved work with the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice as a Restorative Justice Conference Convenor through 2000-2001. It included organising a training program, facilitated by Terry in 1999, for a group of 25 men in the Blue Mountains NSW on 'Restorative Justice in the Community'.³²⁸ This training highlighted the pivotal role of the acknowledgement of shame by both offender and victim in the healing of emotional hurts caused by offending (criminal) behaviour. It also highlighted many of the practical details that had evolved by trial and error in the development of the Wagga Wagga 'Restorative Justice' experiment. Some of these have proved invaluable in my work since. An example is the difference between asking 'feeling' and 'thinking' questions. Ask many people, particularly men and boys, what they are feeling; and the answer will often be halting, limited, confused or embarrassed. Ask what they are or were thinking; and both the thoughts and the emotional state at the time can often easily be inferred if not openly described.

The restorative justice script has been adopted as the framework for a wide range of conflict resolution processes. It involves asking simple questions³²⁹ such as:

- Tell me what happened/what you did?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who was hurt/affected by what you did?
- How do you think they were hurt/affected?

³²⁷ As noted earlier this provided access to the concepts and practice of 'reintegrative shaming' in the context of 'restorative justice' - see: O'Connell, 1997, (Also unpublished draft MA Thesis, personal communication January 2000); Braithwaite, 1994, 2000; Mugford and Braithwaite, 1994; Retzinger and Scheff, 1995; Scheff, 1998.

³²⁸ Webb, 1999.

³²⁹ Note how the questions invite concrete descriptions of behaviour. We rarely ask 'why' questions. These rarely elicits more than 'dunno' or 'because'. As noted above invitations to describe 'thinking' usually leads to disclosure of the feelings (as descriptions of what is or was 'going on for' people at the time - or more usefully as affects).

The ‘victims’ and ‘supporters’ are then brought into the process to describe how they became involved, their thinking and how they were affected. The sequence is designed to allow unfolding of both the story and the feelings of each of the actors in the process. Once all the facts/perspectives (and the feelings) are in the open, there is some common understanding of the circumstances of the case and the willingness of the offenders to take responsibility for the behaviour and harm caused. The conference can then proceed to seek practical outcomes that are agreeable to both victim and offender parties. Again the offender(s) are asked first

- Do you think you need to do something to repair that hurt?
- What would you like to do?³³⁰

All parties are then engaged in seeking an appropriate outcome that makes appropriate compensation for the hurt caused to the victim and (ideally) at the same time helps the young offender to get on with his/her life.³³¹

The result is a ritual process that keeps the focus on behaviour (the actions) not on the personality (self image) of the people involved –on the act, not the actor. It also creates a sense of safety that allows the expression of emotions; in particular one where shame can be acknowledged – not merely spoken but felt/experienced and, critically, **shown**. The result is that the shame-affect signalling system and the empathic response can be seen, felt and acknowledged – expressed visually and kinaesthetically as well as verbally.³³²

I have had this experience many times now. There is a point in the conferencing process when the masks drop. Shame becomes visible, briefly, sometimes so briefly that if you blink you can miss it. In this moment **both victim and offender** touch the core of the shame that has brought them to this place. Shame unites them. The pathways into this place can be very different. For the offender there is shame at having offended: at having hurt both the victim and his/her own family and supporters. For the victim there is the shame of being victimised, often masked by anger (or distress). The shame can be unmasked by allowing expression of the surface emotions within the safety of the conference. The victim’s shame is often triggered as an empathic response to the visual affect of shame on the face of the offender. Almost always from this moment on the conference takes on a different tone. Gone (or at

³³⁰ An invitation to responsibility – See earlier reference to Jenkins re: ‘invitations to responsibility’.

³³¹ Like any script applied to real life drama, things don’t always go to plan but Restorative Justice Praxis - developed through parallel experimentation, and exploration of theory to support and refine it– provides a reliable framework for the process.

³³² See Retzinger and Scheff, 1996; Scheff, 1997b, 1998; for exploration of the emotional dynamics of conferences and implications for intra- and inter community conflict resolution.

least markedly diminished) is the desire for retribution or punishment.³³³ The emphasis is on moving on, helping the offender get on with his/her life and symbolic reparation of the hurt to the victim by forms of sincere apology. The result isn't always forgiveness. This may come later, but there is more understanding and acceptance.³³⁴ This is what makes such conferences into 'ceremonies of reintegration' –reintegration through shame.

Let me illustrate this with two examples.

Case study 1. - I didn't teach you to deal drugs in School – did I?

Terry O'Connell uses this conference (which I observed at his invitation in 1999) to illustrate the positive outcomes that conferencing can achieve, as an alternative to juvenile courts. Three teenage boys had been caught supplying cannabis to friends in their high school playground. The conference involved: the three boys; both parents and a younger sister of one boy; both parents of a second; a friend of the mother of the third; the school head (principal), deputy head (both male) and a (female) teacher of Physical Development and Health Education (PDHE); plus a Police Youth-liaison Officer and Terry as the conference facilitator.

What I want to focus on is the point in the conference where the offence has been acknowledged. The boys have expressed remorse and shown distress [sadness, some crying] at the upset the incident has caused their parents and the school. The parents have shown similar distress (sadness, embarrassment); and the school staff have shown their (somewhat disciplined/controlled) disappointment using language that acknowledges they value the pupils but disapprove of the behaviour.

Sitting at the back of the room I am feeling acutely uncomfortable! The language emerging on the one side is that of a formal breach of rules (law) with the potential for sanctions, which elicits feelings of fear-shame (guilt) and sorrow (distress) on the other. An acceptable outcome in terms of apology is always on the cards but how valid long term, and where is the healing here? It looks more like what Terry, in the training sessions, calls 'messy morality'. The adult outrage over the offence is based more on the embarrassment to the school and the 'breaking of rules' than any real harm done by the boys' actions. But this 'shame-anger', if it exists, is not being acknowledged.

³³³The powerful nature of the empathic power of this shared shame experience was really brought home to me when I participated as the 'victim' in two conferences for young people who had burgled my home – ironically while I was out doing preparation for conferencing another young offender.

³³⁴ See Ziegler and Cameron, 1999. Also training video (www.realjustice.com) on this made for TV documentary that brought together two young men jailed for murder, with the family of their victim.

Then, in the middle of a mild ‘lecture’ on the wrongs of the behaviour, the PDHE teacher says [with a tone that carries noticeable anger]:

“ . . . and what’s more you did it in the week just after I’d given you the class on drugs!”

The effect from where I saw it was dramatic. The embarrassed look that passed between the head and his deputy spoke silent volumes.

*{you mean we/she stuffed up – the kids got the wrong message?}*³³⁵

Now for the first time in the conference we had affective shame on both sides of the conference. There was the boys’ shame - over the embarrassment to themselves, their parents and the school. There was their parents’ (and siblings) shame: felt for themselves, their boys/brothers, and for school and its staff who had been placed in ‘an embarrassing situation’. Critically, there was also the teachers’ shame-embarrassment: that the class on drugs might have triggered the very behaviour that led to everyone being there that day.

From that point on there was a different emotional climate in the room. Seen in terms of the affect: for all the participants it was universally lighter, [enjoyment, excitement] and the interactions warmer and friendly – quite unlike the reserve shown at the start of the conference. As convenor, Terry skilfully and gently nudged the participants towards what was undoubtedly a creative outcome. The boys volunteered to work with the teacher to develop ways of communicating the school’s concerns about drugs to their classmates. But the hard, emotional work based on understanding the role of shame had been done. The unspoken acknowledgement of **shared** shame created a space for the boys to take responsibility for others and have a sense of pride in making a real compensation for their behaviour and importantly, repairing the relationships with the school staff.

Case study 2: He doesn’t show his emotions – just like his dad!

This is a conference I facilitated in 2000. Six months after her handbag had been violently snatched the young woman and her fiancé are facing the young offender, now 18, and his family (maternal grandfather, father, stepmother, uncle and girl-friend). Also present are the

³³⁵ As explained in the Preface, I use { } to indicate unspoken or inferred language and highlight notes on visible affects with [].

police liaison officer and an off duty security guard who apprehended him after hearing the victim's screams.

The young person has no actual recollection of the moment of the offence. He recalls the day, leaving for work and abandoning the journey, looking in shop windows and then being bailed up in a car park with the bag close by. A somewhat tortured history has emerged in small pieces over several weeks of pre-conference preparation, including:

- A history of hereditary illness affecting the male side of the family;
- The early traumatic death of the boy's mother at age 8 and a pattern of prolonged depression and emotional withdrawal by father from family;
- Recurrent bouts of depression around the anniversary of this death affecting both father and son;
- Prescribed anti-depressant medication use by the young man at around the latest anniversary (which was also the time of the offence) despite (as it emerged only in the conference) a history of periodic blackouts and habitual 'recreational' use of cannabis by the young offender. Neither the boy, his family or the prescribing doctor were aware of the body of evidence linking violent antisocial behaviour with use of the anti-depressant (Prozac) alone or in combination with cannabis.³³⁶

Clearly any outcome required attention to drug advice and counselling. This would indicate that the young person was taking responsibility for ensuring his own future safety and the safety of others. The extent to which he could show this 'responsibility' would determine the reaction of the victim - who is adamant that the outcome should acknowledge that she, not the young man, is the 'victim'. The conference has proceeded to the point where the outcome is staring everyone in the face. A drug-counselling program, perhaps with an overlay of some 'community service' as a concession to the victim's need for some notional 'punishment' for the offence, will look fine on the record but there is no emotional commitment to it. Up to this point the conference is, as the young man predicted at our first meeting, a process he sees as 'humiliating'! He had earlier suggested that he'd almost prefer to

"go to court, take my punishment and get it over with!"

³³⁶ See Josefson, 2001. I was alerted to this by colleague, who reported his personal experience as a psychiatric nursing officer at a NSW Jail where a number of inmates similarly had no recollection of their violent anti-social behaviour while taking anti-depressant medication. (S.C. personal communication, September 2000). It is recognised that SSRI anti-depressants may adversely interact with other protein-bound drugs such as cannabis.

As with the case above, the shame affect is triggered by expression of anger. The turning point comes when the fiancé, in frustration at what he sees as resistance by the young man (who appears unemotional and not fully engaged), displays anger, and accuses him of not taking it seriously. Almost shouting, he says

“... and you won't even look at us!”

At this point the grandfather intervenes and says quietly that he and the family are not making any excuses for the boy but,

*“we know him – he doesn't show his emotions – **look at his father**”*

The unemotional father immediately drops into a display of shame-embarrassment. This triggers an empathic response from his son, most of the offender's family, and the victim and fiancé who all show a similar shame-embarrassment affect. A few seconds later the young man leans forward and [shame-faced] says very quietly

*“Look, I really am sorry. The reason I can't look at you is because I know what I've done to you”.*³³⁷

From that moment on the task was easy. All the victim(s) wanted was that the young man get on with his life and take responsibility for his behaviour, especially the drug use. The young man volunteered to take part in a 'Can-Stop' program (for young cannabis users) and to follow up on initial contacts made with a local Drug and Alcohol Counsellor. His uncle (a recreational cannabis user himself) agreed to go with him to the program. Of course his father was not happy at being 'shamed' in front of strangers - though he appreciated the outcome.

It is this emotional turning point that seems to me so vital in starting the process of emotional healing, without which the formalities of restorative justice conferencing only marginally differ from those of the courts. It is the reintegration via shame (a phrase that I think better and less controversially describes the process than 'reintegrative shaming') that is at the core of this alternative approach to crime and the culture of the social institutions that make up our largely ineffectual criminal justice system.³³⁸

³³⁷ His shoulders are slumped, elbows on knees, hands clasped in front. He hangs his head looking at the floor and alternates this with raising his eyes to look at the 'victims'.

³³⁸ As noted earlier Braithwaite's phrase 'reintegrative shaming' (used in contrast to 'stigmatising shaming') can be misunderstood. In many quarters it still arouses a strong emotional reaction where people reject any suggestion that there is legitimate use for shame or shaming. [The affects of 'rejection': disgust, contempt; and anger are noticeable]. Hence my preference for 'reintegration through shame' – making visible what is there and allowing the emotional process to function salutogenically.

Men's group work

The experience above led me to consider how this work around shame (as a focal point for change) might be applied to the broad field of men's emotional work. In the introduction I described how I had been involved for some years in men's group work. At the practical level I had set up a number of men's groups, spending several months with each helping the members to work through some of the initial obstacles to accessing and working with the feelings behind the story of their lives.³³⁹ I had also been coordinating coalition-building initiatives among people seeking less stigmatising approaches to working with men who use violence and had developed an evening experiential education session on anger and violence for the NSW MHW. Part of this involved demonstrating how powerlessness and shame is often 'covered up by anger, fear and grief.'³⁴⁰ My question was how might it be possible to apply the salutogenic shame thesis to this work? In particular could a process be developed that would allow men to identify for themselves, in their own language, an alternative perspective on shame?

The context of this work is important. The primary challenge to working with shame (or other emotions) is to create the safe environment within which it can be expressed (i.e. experienced as a feeling in the body) and examined from this experiential base - not merely talked about and thought about. If, as I have argued above, shame is inherently a social emotion then it is probably best experienced in social/group rather than inter-personal context with an individual counsellor or therapist. For this reason the approach adopted was to seek opportunities to work with relatively large groups, at least ten and up to thirty-five people. These numbers would also help in gathering together a range of perceptions, experiences and reactions so that the focus was on the collective rather than the individual perception of shame.

In the deep end - anger management programs

In August 2000 a colleague asked me to take over an anger management class he would be unable to continue facilitating due to illness. The clients of the Probation and Parole Service program had completed six of ten two-hour evening classes with, as my colleague put it, '*almost zero engagement*'. There was no set program. My colleague, and the Probation Officer who had run the class on week six, had drawn on a variety of sources for activities

³³⁹ There are a variety of men's groups in Australia. An indication of the type I work with can be found in Vaughan, 1996, p 8-9.

³⁴⁰ Webb, 1997a, and 1997b.

designed to explore the emotional roots of anger and violence but with little success. It was an opportunity to try something different.

Later I will explore some of the details of the program that I developed and ran for a series of these classes through 2000 and 2001. This initial four-week opportunity laid the foundations for a program for managing anger based on working with shame - recognising the unacknowledged shame that often lies hidden behind uncontrolled anger-rage and violence. It also provided my first opportunity to explore ways to present some aspects of the emerging shame theory to a decidedly non-academic audience.

With just four weeks to run I used three of these to develop practical tools for ‘managing’ anger.³⁴¹ The approach was question driven and practical, recognising some of the realities of ‘street’ life. This stimulated engagement of the group, much to the surprise of the Probation Service and much to my relief. It also provided some opportunities to develop awareness (akin to Richard’s observation training) of both the physical manifestations (the body language of anger) and the ways that men can very accurately, if intuitively, ‘read’ the body language signals of others, while being relatively unaware at the time of these signals in or on themselves.

The work with shame as an emotional driver for much of the ‘angry’ behaviour was broached in the final session. I started with an exploration of the way men often hide some feelings, often for good reason.³⁴² The question was: “What comes with or is covered up by your anger?” In earlier work exploring anger and violence I had found this question allowed men to see how anger often provided a cover for feelings of: *fear*, *sadness* and *hurt*, *powerlessness* and *humiliation*.³⁴³ ‘Humiliation’ was drawn out on this occasion in response to the question: “What do you feel when you feel powerless?” There was some initial reluctance to renaming humiliation as ‘shame’. Humiliation was seen as ‘embarrassing’, used in the sense of **being** shamed. For this group, feeling shame or ‘ashamed’ also had elements of ‘accepting guilt’ (something they were reluctant to do) hence

³⁴¹ The content of the ‘tool-kit’ was adapted from Donovan (1999). For process, I drew on the ‘Narrative’ approach of Jenkins (1990) which sees much of the negative, self justifying narratives of men in violent and abusive relationships as ‘restraints’ which interfere with underlying goals of having significant and respectful relationships

³⁴² This exercise, based on the work of Dale Hurst (see Webb, 1998), will be described in more detail later. It explores the way men construct a ‘shell of masculinity’ to hide some ‘soft’ feelings behind a ‘hard’ exterior.

³⁴³ Peter Milne: Personal Communication, Auckland NZ, October 1997; suggested that the normal cascade of emotions obscured by anger included: *hurt, fear, and powerlessness*. In the experiential ‘Men, Anger and Violence’ programs (Webb, 1997b) ‘shame’ emerged as the emotion underlying all of these, and in one group was linked to *feeling disconnected from other people*.

feeling powerless and humiliated. I then used a few not very probing questions around what they did when they felt shame before offering the compass of shame as a diagram on the whiteboard.³⁴⁴ The ‘attack other’ ‘attack self’ poles were easily recognised as common patterns of response but there was confusion over the difference between ‘withdraw’ and ‘avoid’ as the other two poles.³⁴⁵ I suggested that shame might be the opportunity for a fifth response – ‘reflect and change’. We then explored the issue of pride and self-respect, which the men framed in terms of:

‘self-control’, ‘having the skills to handle situations’ ‘having self-awareness’.

A ‘shame cycle’ was seen as involving:

‘insult’ ‘humiliation’ ‘revenge’ and ‘losing respect for the other person’

– i.e. imposed or externalised feelings. ‘Pride and self respect’ on the other hand involved consideration of:

‘What do I want?’, ‘What is important to me?’ ‘Asking for what I want’.

In talking about respect, one man said bluntly

“I can feel shame about what I’ve done – don’t try to make me ashamed of who I am!”

The program concluded with the men identifying who were the significant people in their lives, how these had been affected by their anger and things they would like to change.

My thoughts following this first program were that there would be real problems approaching this issue through the cognitive path. Exploring feelings via thoughts is hard for many people and harder still for some of these men to grasp.³⁴⁶ An exercise exploring their patterns of thoughts, feelings and actions associated with rising anger showed significant confusion between thoughts and feelings. On the other hand drawing out **behaviours** associated with anger was much easier. Working at the physical level of body sensations and actions offered scope for approach to feelings via affect. However, there was also strong resistance to anything that they labelled as *‘touchy-feely stuff’*. The approach would need to draw on the idea that actions were the symbolic language often preceding thoughts and words³⁴⁷ but keep this grounded in a practical ‘tool-kit’ approach to developing pride in self-management skills. There were also ethical issues here. The anger management program was ‘educational’ not therapeutic and any work which explored the expression of strong emotions, especially shame, would need careful handling in a context where there was such a clear power differential between facilitator and client.

³⁴⁴ As originally outlined in Nathanson, 1992.

³⁴⁵ See discussion on this in Chapter Four.

³⁴⁶ See discussion on Alexithymia in Chapter Three.

³⁴⁷ See Gilligan, 1997, p 61-62

Creating safety for this work with an established men's mutual support group is relatively easy. With my own men's groups there has been a longstanding understanding that we come together to create a space for emotional disclosure. In one of these, much had been shared over a period of seven years – yet, surprisingly, little deep work on shame. The time would come some nine months later when we would explore it in detail at a weekend retreat on the NSW mid-north coast. I will discuss the results of this exploration below. Safety issues aside, for me this was the hardest of the groups I have worked with; in part because, unlike the others, I had nowhere to hide. These men knew me intimately and I had the greatest respect for the personal growth and emotional work all had done. If there were flaws in the process these men would find them.

In the meantime the Probation Service asked me to develop and facilitate a program for the next group of 'anger management' clients. This was structured as an eight-week program with the first four weeks devoted to the basic 'tool kit' based on: awareness, interruption and safe release of anger. The second half of the program was then to explore the way that masculine culture hides 'unacceptable' emotions, the patterns of behaviour that arise as a result, and how these can be reframed in terms of respectful communication. I planned to devote the whole of the session on week six to an exploration of shame. The intention was to use the 'shame compass' as a way of connecting the common patterns of violence and alcohol (and/or other addictions) with the way many of the men isolated themselves from significant relationships when unable to deal with the issues that aroused anger. I also planned to create an opportunity to explore shame and pride and for the men to share elements of their stories around which they carried shame.

Men and boys – who's afraid of shame?

While the early weeks of this anger management program were running, and while I was considering how to do this 'shame work' with appropriate safety in the group, an opportunity arose to pilot some of the ideas in another, very different setting. In early October 2000 I was one of a core group of four men facilitating a 'Pathways to Manhood' (PTM) program in Southern NSW. The PTM program is a national initiative exploring ways to assist boys in their teenage years and their families to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ PTM is predicated on the idea that our culture lacks appropriate community rituals for marking life transitions. It seeks to learn from but not transpose rituals drawn from other cultures for work with young mainly white Australian teenagers. Elemental forms for 'rites of passage' are worked out between the facilitating group and the adults present and, inevitably, modified by the contribution of the boys. Such rites of passage, while ostensibly focussed on the boys, also represent significant changes in the men's relationship with their boys.

The program involved a ‘bush weekend’ experience for a group of 13 teenage boys aged between 14 and 18, each accompanied by his father or another significant male adult. Eight of these boys were with a ‘mentor’: a man who had been vetted, trained and paired with him on a mutually voluntary basis by a Canberra-based program established to provide long-term adult male support and friendship to boys who were in difficulty with their families or the law. The weekend PTM program involved a series of activities through which the men and boys explored aspects of masculinity. These were both practical and symbolic, reflecting aspects of the male archetype³⁴⁹ and presenting the boys with an overnight outdoor challenge³⁵⁰ after which they were welcomed into the company of men.

Ideas for exploration of ‘shame’ were developed initially with the other organizers and then discussed with the other adults. All the men involved had either formal or informal training in and experience of working with emotions. However, for many this was the first time that they had explored shame, and for all it was a novel experience to approach this from a salutogenic perspective. A number of concerns and fears were raised by the men - expressed in terms of ‘safety’ of opening up such a ‘sensitive’ issue with teenagers. Fortunately, the men’s movement has developed a cadre who have the ability to recognise our own feelings and when we are projecting these onto others. It became apparent that the issue of shame raised many fears **among the adult men** present. Their past experiences with shame were closely associated with fear and distress. Paul describes this in terms of needing to be asked, who was he fearful for?

Paul:³⁵¹ *“When you wanted run the shame workshop with the Pathways to Manhood boys – I had to ask Don: ‘Look I’m not sure if this is just my stuff. I’m not sure if this is me in a protection role as a facilitator, or **my** fear of going to this place of shame with these young guys.’ I needed someone outside of myself to ask the question of me because I was so confused about the answer for myself. When Don did ask the question I came to the realization – I think I already had it as a deep knowing – that it was my own fear around shame that stopped me walking towards that process”.*

The challenge for the adult men thus became one of contributing to an experience that might help frame this emotion differently for themselves and the next generation. They made a number of suggestions for additional exercises, and refinements to the planned program. Following the workshop several adult participants have been closely involved in the subsequent development of the program and associated research. Of particular importance were ideas for exploring shame in terms of the gross body language. At the start of the session

³⁴⁹ Adapted from the work of Moore and Gillette (1991) which explores the masculine archetypes of ‘King’, ‘Lover’, ‘Warrior’ and ‘Magician’.

³⁵⁰ Modelled on the North American idea of a ‘vision quest’.

³⁵¹ Paul Henley, interview January 2002. We will meet Don in the next Chapter.

the men initially adopted the role of ‘servants, peasants or slaves’, an inferior role; while the boys were encouraged to adopt the superior role of ‘masters’. The boys herded the men up the hill into the workshop space, playing this role with some enjoyment. Once inside, the roles were reversed. The program then explored superiority and inferiority as a vehicle through which aspects of shame and pride could be experienced kinesthetically and observed visually before being discussed cognitively.³⁵² Critical to the success of this session was the idea of mapping the compass of shame on the floor; allowing active participation in exploring what could be seen and felt as participants stood on and moved between the five positions. The ideas for what to do after this were less successful but the whole event indicated some ways that this work could be done kinaesthetically.³⁵³

The spotlight of attention.

With the benefit of this experience I returned to the anger management program with fresh ideas for four exercises that would permit exploration of the affective as well as cognitive aspects of shame. In preparing to try these with the class in November 2000, I still faced a dilemma over how to introduce the topic. In particular, how to create a situation where one of the group could model the spontaneous affect of shame so this could be seen and its elements identified by the others. The challenge was to find a respectful way of doing this that did not abuse the power differential by ‘shaming’, even unintentionally. Anything that involved recall of intense shame or humiliation would be unacceptable, and would likely trigger its masking in any case. I needed an example of shame embarrassment that was ‘light’ enough to be ethically acceptable and yet would trigger a display of shame affect that was sustained long enough for it to be noticeable and explorable in terms of its key features. The men were still very resistant to the idea of ‘role playing’ so asking one of the group to show what it was like when thinking of shame was not a good option. My plan was to ask for a volunteer to share some of his story following the safety of the paired sharing exercise; and hope that some of the affect would be visible in this context. In the event the class provided the opportunity for this to occur in a way that was quite unexpected. It has also provided a way of doing this in subsequent groups and highlighted a critical feature of shame with significant implications for a wide range of social change work.

³⁵² In Chapter Four we discussed the ‘social rank’ and ‘due deference’ perspectives as the social basis for shame.

³⁵³ Initially I had planned to explore: shame and pride, a paired sharing of shame memories, the visual display of shame and the compass of shame. I am indebted to Bradley Fox-Lewin for the idea of the playful exploration of superiority and inferiority, and deeply indebted to Paul Henley for the suggestion that the compass of shame could be explored kinaesthetically.

The class had one man who consistently arrived late. We had negotiated an agreement where anyone arriving ten minutes after start time would find the door locked and have to negotiate entry by agreement of the group. This man, we will call him Kris³⁵⁴ consistently managed to arrive just before this deadline. For this week's class I had re-arranged the room with the seating more as a semi-closed circle than the 'open-horseshoe' of chairs facing the white board used previously. Two seats were left to one side of small opening in the circle at the front. I sat on the other side of the circle. This change was immediately noticed by the class, who asked:

'What's going on?'

I replied we'd be doing something different.

"What?" they asked.

Jokingly I said:

"Wait and see!" and added *"Blink and you will miss it!"*

The {*"Uh-Oh"*} was almost palpable.

"Where's Kris?" I asked.

'Late as usual.' 'It's only seven minutes past – he'll be here just as you shut the door.'

'Ok, like I said, blink and you'll miss it!'

Kris arrived at eight minutes past the hour, rushed across the room signed in, grabbed a cup of tea, re-crossed the room and sat in one of the two empty seats at the front of the room - and looked around to find a dozen pairs of eyes firmly glued on him! He immediately blushed bright red, looked away, looked down, looked behind him as if seeking somewhere to hide, got up and moved to the other chair and, finding everyone still silently looking at him, said:

'What?'

Having reassured him he'd done nothing wrong and with his permission to explore what had just happened I asked the class:

"What did you notice?"

In this short sequence was almost everything that we would explore about shame in the next two hours, including the 'empathic' feeling that the other men had watching Kris's embarrassment. I have found that in order to demonstrate the affect of shame, all that is needed is to focus the spotlight of attention on an individual. No blameworthy behaviour, no

³⁵⁴ A Pseudonym.

deep revealing of hidden secrets of the soul, simply this spotlight that triggers a sense that the individual is being seen more intently than is usual.³⁵⁵

The body language of alienation, shame and empathy

Fired with this early and dramatic engagement of the class in exploration of shame's body language, I decided to see if the compass of shame had a 'street' validity. How would the men identify the various ways they acted when faced with shame and what language would they use to describe these? I also wanted to encourage them to observe how these different behaviour patterns were reflected in their body language. In a previous class we had explored how anger often conceals fear, grief, powerlessness and shame. Sheets of paper labelled with these words were placed in the middle of the floor with shame on top. Asking what we do to avoid these feelings rapidly yielded the 'attack' response – variously described as ways of:

'Defending/explaining myself', 'Making me right', 'Making it the other person's problem' etc.

As well there were the overt attack-behaviours:

'Getting angry/violent' etc.

One man said:

'I don't attack others I attack myself'

This opened up discussion about self-blame, the feelings of depression – in extreme cases suicide etc., and self-pity, feeling sorry for self, and interestingly:

'I blame me before others do'.

To which others commented that,

'Attacking yourself is often a good defence – it stops others attacking you.'

We wrote ATTACK OTHER and ATTACK SELF on two pieces of paper and placed them opposite each other on the outer rim of the emerging compass. I then asked:

“What else do you do – what do you do when you can't attack?”

The men referred to Kris's experience at the start of the evening:

'It's like what happened tonight – he just wanted to hide – wanted the floor to open up and swallow him! He even changed seats to get away from the attention.'

³⁵⁵ Later we will see how this spotlight of attention can operate at the cultural level when we consider the quite dramatic changes that occurred in the industrial relations culture of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

This theme of **hiding** provided the hook for looking at the ways the men go away from situations that are difficult, hard to handle and potentially shaming – how they withdraw physically or emotionally. One said:

‘I end up alone, isolated, shut out from the family’

‘Who or what do we hide from?’ I asked.

‘Anyone or anything I can’t handle’

‘Does it always involve going away?’

‘No you can still be there – but not-there’. ‘Like you’ve gone away, you are not there’ – ‘it just washes over’ etc.

We wrote HIDE FROM OTHERS on a piece of paper and placed it on the floor where the Nathanson version of the compass would have placed ‘withdraw’.

‘What else do we do?’

‘Well it’s go to be hide from myself’ said one man.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Well I go out and get pissed - go down the pub and have a drink so I don’t have to face it!’

We labelled the other pole HIDE FROM SELF. The word ‘avoid’ was never mentioned in this context. Rather, **all four behaviours** (represented by attack-other, attack-self; and hide-from-other, hide-from-self) **were seen as ways we use to avoid shame**.

I then stood on the compass and, moving between each of the points, spoke briefly about my own pattern of avoiding shame and other uncomfortable feelings. I talked of my patterns of anger and aggression. How if that didn’t work I’d go and hide. How I’d used and abused drugs at one period of my life as a way of avoiding having to deal with myself and how much time I’d spent in the black hole of depression when I couldn’t hide from myself any more. I then moved and stood in the centre, owning that the core of all of this was shame. As I did so I was aware of feeling myself instinctively display the shame affect. I have no detailed recollection of the men’s responses other than that there was intense interest in this process. I then invited the men to try this for themselves – to stand and recall and notice:

“What do you notice as you stand in each of these positions?”

Almost silently the men each chose their dominant pattern and then moved around the compass. I will describe more of what happens in this process later. Up to this point I had no idea where to take this other than to engage the group in a collective exploration or debriefing. But as the men resumed their seats, one man, we will call him Dave³⁵⁶, seemed

³⁵⁶ Again, A Pseudonym.

reluctant to finish. I asked him what was going on for him and he walked to the starting point in ‘attack other and began talking about his pattern, moving around the other points with a piece of the story for each. After a few minutes I interrupted him and asked the group:

“What do you notice?”

Along with the comments that recognised similar patterns in themselves were:

‘He’s avoided the shame.’ ‘He’s staying away from the middle’.

I asked him:

“How far are you willing to walk towards the ‘SHAME’?”

He started talking again about his patterns of avoiding shame.

“What do you notice?” I asked the group

‘He hasn’t moved.’ ‘He’s talked himself out of it’.

Addressing Dave again I asked:

“How far are you willing to walk towards the middle?”

This time there was a quick couple of steps to get there and a half defiant look at the group – a little boy : *{See I can do it!}*.

“Ok, but don’t rush it, it’s not getting there that counts - it’s about noticing what happens when you start to move - and feeling it!”

This time he took a small half-step towards the middle and dropped instantly into shame affect.

“What did you notice?” I ask the group.

They described the body slump, head drop etc.

“What do we call that?”

‘That’s shame!’; ‘He’s embarrassed.’

“What do you feel?” I asked Dave.

He talked about feeling uncomfortable and then started to explain what came to mind. The affect disappeared.

“What do you notice?” I asked the group.

‘He’s gone away’ ‘Talked himself out of it again’.

Gently I drew him back to the earlier feeling as he started to move. The shame affect returned [eyes down, head down, body slump]

I asked Dave:

“Can you hold that for a moment?”

And then I asked the group:

“What do you feel when you see that?”

The responses, and remember these are ‘hard’ men, are words that can best be described as ‘the language of empathy’:

'I wouldn't want to be there, but I really feel for him'. 'I know what that feels like'
etc. and then comments like *'I think he's bloody brave to do that!'*

I then asked Dave:

“What do you feel when you hear that?”

His first response was to raise his head slowly and look through moist eyes at the group, like he couldn't quite believe what he'd heard, then slowly a smile spread across his face, he stood erect looked around and said:

'Thanks guys!'

“What do you notice?” I asked the group

They remark that

*'He's smiling',
standing up straight/tall',
showing self-respect',
looks proud.'*

“Is that up-himself pride, or genuine?”

'That's genuine.'

“How do you know?”

'Because you can still see a bit of the shame there!'

Now I had a way of really working **with** shame!

Chapter 6 The Working *with* Shame workshops

I have no great quickness of apprehension or wit . . . my power to follow a long and purely abstract train of thought is very limited . . . [but] I am superior to the common run of men in noticing things which easily escape attention, and observing them carefully.'

Charles Darwin 1872³⁵⁷

A closer look at shame

This Chapter builds on the hit and miss approach of the previous one. What I want to show is the detail of the workshop I subsequently developed as a vehicle for people to experience the salutogenic functioning of shame and to illustrate this with the language of some of the people who participated in this workshop. In this way I hope to illustrate a number of features of the process as people move from a pathogenic to a salutogenic perspective on shame. The final chapters will start to draw out some of the implications of this – building on the personal experiences to identify elements that may be relevant for community intervention programs to deal with some of the personal and social pathologies and how we might develop a more mature cultural awareness of shame.

Research methodology

Following the initial approach described in the previous chapter, the workshop approach was subsequently developed in a number of settings.³⁵⁸ These included

- Similar sessions with a further 25 men as part of another three Anger Management programs between October 2000 and March 2001.
- A two-hour workshop for 24 men at the Sydney Men's Festival in January 2001
- A similar workshop for four men and three women at the UWS Social Ecology residential in March 2001.
- A two and a half hour workshop for 35 men at the Australia and New Zealand Men's Leadership Gathering in Perth in April 2001.
- A half-day workshop for 12 men from my own Men's group at a residential weekend on the NSW Mid-North coast May 2001.
- A three hour workshop for 15 men at the Tasmanian Men's Leadership Gathering Hobart April 2002.

³⁵⁷ Darwin, 1998, quoted in front piece.

³⁵⁸ To see these workshops in context of the other elements of the study see Timelines chart on page iv.

- A two-day workshop for 35 male and female community professionals on working with shame in community programs for stopping violence and addictions, Moruya, NSW South Coast May 2002.
- A half-day workshop for men and women drawn from the personal growth (men's and women's groups), social action and environmental campaigning movements; Blue Mountains, February 2003.

The professional development notes on these various initiatives include data on the structure, proposed and actual questions, and recollections of the collective responses of the different groups. Care was taken to avoid any personal identification of individuals in keeping with the agreements on confidentiality. However objectively these notes are made, they are of course are subject to my own bias.³⁵⁹ There is a need for additional data that captures elements of the workshop experience through the eyes and in the language of the participants. The 'gold standard' for exploring shame as an affective emotion would be detailed audio and video recording of the facial affects and the language used as the workshop exercises unfolded. This has not been feasible at this stage of the research. The development of the workshops was, as indicated above, dictated very much by opportunities in which the primary objective was to offer the experience to people who might initially be sceptical and often fearful of anything associated with 'shame'. Negotiation of prior consent to be part of a recorded session for research purposes was neither feasible nor appropriate. There is little point in video evidence unless this can capture some of the fine detail of the affective responses. This would require significant technical equipment and supporting professional filming expertise that was not available at this stage and would, in any case, have been a significant intrusion into the process.

In the culture of men's gatherings, workshops are usually offered in 'open space' formats. They are outlined in poster format, briefly orally explained to the gathering, allocated time and space, and then run with whoever turns up at that time. Prior written and informed consent is not only not feasible, but inappropriate. The culture is one of offering the work for the benefit of the participants not the presenter. Framing this as 'research' would inevitably distort the reactions of those who chose to participate and act as a further barrier to others participating. Even tape recording of sessions was ruled out.³⁶⁰ There is an inevitable distortion of what people choose to share in the presence of the invisible and indelible witness of a recording machine. Recruitment of a study group willing to engage in the workshop

³⁵⁹ With later workshops, men who I had worked with previously assisted in taking notes and recording recollections afterwards; giving some independent verification of the observations.

³⁶⁰ Even men in my own men's group decided, after lengthy discussion, that they did not wish to have the workshop session recorded.

process under research conditions remains a goal for the future but was not feasible within the limitations of this study.

What was feasible was to offer an opportunity for people to engage in the ongoing process of development of this work **after** their participation in the workshop. In February 2001 clearance was obtained from the University Human Research Ethics Committee for recruitment of volunteers from the workshops for semi-structured interviews to capture their recall of some of the details of the workshop experience and to assess the longer-term impact of reframing shame as a salutogenic process.³⁶¹ For some colleagues who were involved in the early initiatives, this has been much like a collaborative study group. In addition to interviews capturing their recollections of the workshop experience(s), this group has also contributed ideas on both the theory and practice. In this category are Andy, Don, Paul, Geoff and David who you will meet below. Others have since volunteered to share recollections of the workshop by questionnaire and/or interview. Participants in the later workshops were supplied with a formal invitation to share recollections and reflections in questionnaire format.³⁶² All later participants were given a detailed script as a manual covering some of the basic theory and how to set up and facilitate the workshop's five key exercises.³⁶³ The description of the workshop that follows is based on this script. Participants have been encouraged to use and adapt this in their own work and share experiences so obtained. This collaborative work is ongoing.

In addition, I have used notes on interactions with other individuals that illustrate examples of some features of shame. These notes were taken at the time or made immediately afterwards and shared with these people for their verification and consent to be used as part of this study. Names used in the sections below have been changed when requested by participants to preserve anonymity. There has also been E-mail correspondence extending over some 2½ years with other academic researchers and people involved in the Australian, New Zealand and US men's movements.³⁶⁴ This material has been helpful in charting the way that ideas presented here have developed in response to questions and challenges. Where this material appears in the study permission has been obtained from the authors for its use.

³⁶¹ University of Western Sydney, Human Research Ethics Committee: Approval No. HREC 01:26.

³⁶² See Webb, 2002: Part 1B.

³⁶³ Ibid, Part 1A.

³⁶⁴ These include: Shame studies list at UC Santa Barbara: shame@mail.lsit.ucsb.edu ; the Australia and New Zealand Men's Leadership Gathering list anzmlg@peerleadership.com.au ; The NSW and Tasmania Men's Health and Wellbeing Association lists: nswmhwa-list@peerleadership.com.au and Tasmen@peerleadership.com.au ; discussion groups I moderate on stopping violence and men's work strategies: stoppingviolence@peerleadership.com.au , menstrategy@peerleadership.com.au , and a network of personal correspondents based in Australasia, Europe, USA, and China.

An experiential education workshop.

As outlined above, the workshop was designed as experiential education. The aim was to develop a framework of simple exercises and, within these, the key questions that would allow people to experience shame as a salutogenic process. In introducing these workshops I make the point that if we view shame through the window of its pathology, then what will dominate the view is the pathology of shame. We need another frame through which to view it. Shame is experienced physically (as felt), and visually (as seen) as well as how we think and talk about it. A large part of this other perspective must involve experiences that allow us to notice what we observe in and on ourselves and others, as well as the language we and they use to describe these observations. What are our thoughts and feelings? What do we notice about our body language and that of others?

With the initial men and boys weekend I had the active input, support and participation of the adult men who were there with their sons or boys they were mentoring. Workshops conducted in the context of men's festivals and gatherings also provided an opportunity to engage men who were familiar with emotional work. Both these contexts had a further advantage in that there were inbuilt support structures for processing any personal issues that might arise as a result of the workshop. Even so, for many, if not most people shame is recalled as an unpleasant experience often associated with feelings of vulnerability and potential harm to self-esteem. The introduction and protocols outlined below are important not just for the way they provide a framework for personal safety and confidentiality of what is shared but also, as we will see later, in establishing the appropriate 'emotional distance' from which to do this work. In Chapters Two and Four we explored briefly the question of catharsis in relation to affective emotional work. We have learnt much about the importance of 'working light' and avoiding restimulating overwhelming feelings. Emotional engulfment leaves people not only unable to work with and re-evaluate such feelings, but feeling bad as a result adds another layer of such feelings to past pathology. To date, the response to the workshop has been overwhelmingly positive. In ways that are still being explored, it suggests that, without being intentionally therapeutic, the experience has produced long-term changes in people's perception of and reaction to shame. The description of the five key exercises that make up the workshop are therefore offered with an invitation to readers to try these for themselves in any area of group work where they might be appropriate.

Each of the five exercises has within it many aspects of the perspective on shame we are encouraging people to observe. Progressive training in observing what goes on in those

moments when shame is activated allows more to be seen at each stage. However, it is important to structure the workshop so that participants can complete the process. The workshop comes as a package that builds towards a pivot in exercise five where a radical reframing of shame becomes possible. With experience, and once the operating basis for this pivot is understood, the workshop can be condensed (with a focus on Exercises Four and Five) when less than the proposed 2½ hours are available, or expanded if more time is available. For some people who have experienced the workshop more than once, each time adds yet further layers to the experience of each exercise.

This is a workshop based on invitations - invitations to try certain activities and in particular to respond to certain questions. As will be apparent by now, these questions, while not set in stone, have been crafted by trial and error – by observing the visual as well as the verbal feedback from participants in the earlier workshops. The form and content of the workshop has been moulded by the participants. Such is the nature of action research.³⁶⁵

Each exercise also has a focus on a specific aspect of shame so that:

- Exercise 1: superiority and inferiority - is about exploring shame as a function of status and due deference.
- Exercise 2: shame and pride - is about the appreciating that both of these have ‘positive’ as well as ‘negative’ aspects. Both can be salutogenic as well as pathogenic.
- Exercise 3: paired sharing of shame experiences - is about the secrets of shame and the importance of ‘mutuality’ and ‘support’ in work that uncovers these.³⁶⁶ The debriefing of this exercise is also about exploring:
 - Shame as affect – signal and display;
 - Acknowledged and unacknowledged/bypassed shame;
 - Masks of shame – anger, fear, disgust/contempt and distress/grief;
 - Shame and guilt – the effect of blame, judgement and fear of punishment;
 - The shame spectrum – common affective features from different triggers leading to a diverse family of shame words.
- Exercise 4: the compass of shame - is about the way personal ‘attack’ and ‘hide’ patterns of shame-avoidance also manifest as social and political issues of aggression and alienation.

³⁶⁵ Another example of use of Richard’s ‘social action survey’ tool.

³⁶⁶ This is based on the approach trialed in the MHWAs anger/violence workshop (Webb 1997b) which was, in turn, significantly influenced by the script developed by Healing Awareness Australia for paired-sharing in the Love, Intimacy and Sexuality workshops.

- Exercise 5: Unmasking the shame - is about the empathic response to unmasked shame - seeing shame as a process involving signals between self and other rather than a burdensome feeling carried by the self alone.

Throughout, the emphasis is on the experience. The exercises and questions are crafted to maximise the potential for reframing the experience of shame, but what each person takes from this is their own experience. In the final analysis the meaning I attach to it is not the issue. What matters is the meaning the participants make of it and what they subsequently do with this. We will explore some of this meaning through the stories of others later.

Finally: a repeat of the earlier caveat. The workshop form and content emerged from praxis, from doing and attempting to understand. I can no more claim that the experiential exercises were designed to illustrate different aspects of the theoretical framework than I can claim the theory emerged from the exercises. The process was one of praxis – theory and practice, with much trial and error on both sides of this equation. What gave it direction and a focus were some of the action survey and social action principles that have guided my work in so many other areas.

Practicalities

The workshop has been designed to work with between seven and forty people. The optimum number is between 15 and 25. It can be run with groups of: men, women, or mixed-gender groups, of any age and background and in a variety of contexts. The basic requirements include:

- A closed meeting space large enough to seat participants in a circle, either on chairs or comfortably on the floor;
- About two to three hours, preferably uninterrupted;
- Six sheets of plain paper (A4 or A3) and felt markers.

Additional sheets of paper (up to 25), and a white board or flip chart and an overhead projector may be useful but not essential.³⁶⁷

The workshop is governed by a protocol of confidentiality. The exercises, and the collective (group) responses to, and reflections on these can be shared. The personal details of participants and what they choose to share in the workshop about personal experiences of

³⁶⁷ On some occasions use of visual aids can impede the flow and the exchange of ideas. The workshop has a balance between auditory, visual and kinaesthetic educational material.

shame should not be disclosed outside it. The safeguards for confidentiality of personal experiences are discussed in detail as part of the introduction to the workshop.

The facilitator's script outlines: the introduction to the workshop; the instructions for each of the five key exercises; the key questions to be asked; advisory notes for the expected responses; and suggestions on how to maximise the experience for participants in each exercise.³⁶⁸ It is assumed that facilitators have some experience in working with groups, in using open-ended questions as the basis for experiential education, and being capable of 'going with' the unexpected while maintaining momentum through a planned and tested sequence of activities that build on each other.

The script identifies the invitations and questions that have been found to be most effective. They are not set in stone. Variations that work are of interest. In the training version of this workshop participants explore some variations, including some that don't work, as well as why those suggested do. Some options for extension of this workshop and a program for facilitator training are outlined below.

Introduction to the workshop

Participants are invited to sit in circle and share a brief round of personal introductions.³⁶⁹ The purpose of the workshop and agreements between all people involved is then outlined. These are important in creating the framework of safety and choice. I stress this is to be an experiential education workshop which will explore various aspects of shame; how we experience it and how we make meaning of the experience, both personally and collectively as a group. The objective is to expand our understanding of this emotion. It will involve an invitation to participate in a series of exercises where each of us if is free to choose to participate or not. Indeed, at all stages we are free to remain, or leave, or sit out and observe. During the process I make suggestions and ask questions. Again, each person is free to participate or decline to respond as he or she chooses. While the workshop will be exploring our feelings it is not designed as therapy. I am not a psychotherapist and each person is responsible for his or her emotional wellbeing. I am available to meet with people who have emotional issues after the workshop. I identify a couple of experienced people assisting who are available to provide personal support for participants if needed. So far they have not been needed for this. Participants are informed that the workshop has been developed through a

³⁶⁸ Webb, 2002, Part 1A.

³⁶⁹ Usually sharing their name and, briefly, what attracted them to the workshop and what they hope from it.

number of similar groups and is still developing. It is part of doctoral research program and at the end of the workshop there will be an opportunity to participate in this research on a strictly voluntary basis; there is no obligation or pressure to do so. The exercises are intended as practical tools. Participants are encouraged to try them out in other settings and share the outcome with the group involved in this research. A copy of the workshop script is provided at the end so there is no need to take notes.

A key part of creating the safety for this work is the agreement on confidentiality. Each person will take away his/her own personal experience and the experience of how the group makes sense of the experience. But it is important that no individual be identified or identifiable in anything that is said or written about the workshop.³⁷⁰ In particular details of anyone's personal story about shameful experiences are shared on the basis of confidentiality. Neither the details of the stories or the people present should be disclosed outside the workshop. Each of us is free to discuss our own experience of the workshop but not the past or present experience of anyone else. The aim here is to look at how we experience shame and related emotions: our responses and the language we use to describe these. It is not to capture details of a personal nature or anyone's shameful history. **It is what we observe, and what we feel that we are exploring and the sense or meaning we make of this - not the personal stories.** Each of us is free to choose what and how much we share. We are also free to stop at any time. There is no need to finish a sentence. This is particularly important if part of the story involves something illegal. Some people are under statutory obligation to report certain information where it concerns safety of others. Participants are advised not to disclose such information. A useful tool here is the practice in some co-counselling work of using "*blank*" to replace details of incidents as part of the sharing.

Each person is treated with respect. I endeavour to do this at all times and ensure that no one is treated disrespectfully. Integral to this is acknowledgement of each contribution. The major developments of the workshop have come from following contributions that were unexpected – not part of my prepared script or my expectations. That said, it is easy to get 'sidetracked'. **The workshop is based on the cumulative experience of five exercises. All of these need to be completed within the time available.** The workshop is an introduction to re-framing shame. It inevitably means many aspects that might be raised will only be explored briefly, some not at all.

³⁷⁰ All people identified in this study have given permission for their recollections to be used. Where requested pseudonyms are used and details have been de-identified.

Finally, participants are invited to raise any concerns about the conduct of the workshop and the research. If they are dissatisfied with the outcome they are invited to raise these with the University Ethics Committee. I give details of how to do this on request.

The workshop exercises

Exercise # 1: Superiority, inferiority and equality

This exercise explores the feelings of ‘Superiority’, ‘Inferiority’ and ‘Equality’; their body language and inter-actions between them. It is designed to provide a light, playful introduction to the workshop; yet one which reveals many aspects of shame in terms of stimulus, affect and response. It lays the foundations for validating direct experience, observation, and the process of exploring a collective understanding of emotion as ‘affect’.

I ask participants to stand and divide into two groups. The first group are invited to see themselves as ‘superior’ – ‘high status’, ‘the tops’, ‘lords of the manor’. They are invited to feel it and adopt the attitude and posture of superiority. The second group are invited to see themselves as ‘inferior’ – ‘low status’, ‘the lowest of the low’, and to feel what this is like and adopt the attitude and posture of inferiority’. The exercise then proceeds in five steps:³⁷¹

Step 1: I invite people to move around the room, to feel and observe.

“What do you notice about yourself, about others in your group and people in the other group?”

Step 2: I invite the groups to switch:

“Inferior become superior; superior become inferior”.

And again:

“Move around. What do you notice – about yourself and others?”

Step 3:

“Now both groups become superior. Move around the room – what do you notice?”

Step 4:

“Now both inferior – what do you notice about yourself and others?”

Step 5:

“Now find that place between superior and inferior – a balance between these. Move around the room and notice – notice what you notice about yourself and others?”

I then invite people to resume their seats and when settled ask

³⁷¹ I usually allow about a minute for each step.

“What did we notice?”

Discussion of this exercise aims to draw out the main features observed and felt by participants through open questions such as:

“**What did you notice . . . ?**” “Anything else you noticed . . . about yourself . . . about other people?”

The focus of attention is on:

- Patterns of interaction – positive and negative;
- Body language;
- Facial expressions and eye contact;
- How people **felt** in each state.

The main points to be drawn out include:

In general: The ‘Superior’ group adopt relatively stiff, upright postures – head high, chest out and often aggressive eye contact. The ‘Inferior’ group adopt crouched/slumped posture – particularly lowered eyes and avoid or make only furtive eye contact. Asked what he noticed one man said

‘Socks – I really spent a lot of time noticing people’s socks – made me conscious of how much I was avoiding eye contact.’

Superior to Inferior interactions: I watch for and draw out examples where the ‘Superior’ group ‘stand over’ ‘Inferior’ people forcing submissive responses. They may look directly at the other people (in both groups) and generally have no reservation about making eye contact. They tend to focus attention on the ‘Inferiors’. They have little contact with others in the ‘Superior’ group. There is some solidarity but also a sense of competition. Whereas, the ‘Inferior’ group avoid physical and eye contact, glancing up but breaking eye contact when it occurs – even with other ‘Inferior’ people.³⁷²

‘we can be ashamed of our shame’

Participants often describe the relationships in this part of the exercise in the language of power/powerlessness.

Superior to Superior interactions: There is often some competition in approach/contact and eye contact.

‘testing - to see who can be more superior – who has the goldest watch!’

³⁷² It has been interesting to note that, in this process, there is usually little spontaneous solidarity within the oppressed class – Marx please note! See also Scheff, 2001b.

Inferior to inferior interactions: often continuation of the avoidance of physical and eye contact as above. There is little solidarity and some fear:

‘Even though we were all the same I had a sense of an ‘outside’ threat.’

Balance: Note that the instructions are to find a (personal) balance not some abstract posture of ‘equality’ yet this is often how people label this stage. People report: feeling more comfortable and that there are respectful interactions. The facial affects include smiling (sometimes for the first time in the exercise). The body language is more open and there may be physical contact (again often for the first time). This can start with handshakes, followed by touching, hugs, laughter, relaxation and enjoyment.

This simple exercise creates quite complex interactions and a lot of detail that people can recall **as a group**. The discussion will have added many observations that individuals can recognise but might not have recalled themselves.

The power of this exercise to trigger many aspects of shame can be seen in some of the following:³⁷³

Don³⁷⁴ *“{When superior} I noticed my body with my head up and tilted back, my shoulders back, no smiling, standing or walking slowly. I even had a look of distaste. When Inferior my head was down, eyes down, shoulders hunched, a tendency to shuffle, making myself small, with side glances . . .”*

Dale³⁷⁵ *“When superior I remember having an erect posture, confident, isolated, rather tense. Others seemed the same, but I didn’t notice a lot during this role-play. The problem throughout is forgetting to notice. I was easily distracted by the subjective experience. The other group were dejected, slumped, shifty, avoided eye contact and proximity, made way for the superior. . . . Superior people cruise through the others like tuna through a sardine shoal. No real communication.”*

When Inferior?

“Didn’t feel as good. I became shifty and tended towards the periphery of crowd.”

When both groups superior?

“Tended towards competitiveness . Frequent dominance displays.”

Both inferior?

“Mutual avoidance. No camaraderie, but a little more relaxed.”

³⁷³ These “attributed” comments and others quoted below are from interviews in some cases conducted several months after the workshop and are considered reflections and recollections. As noted above, confidentiality prohibits directly attributable/identifiable quotes from the workshop itself.

³⁷⁴ Don Bowak: interview December 2001. In extracts below Don’s comments come from written reflections and interview notes accumulated over a two-year period. In a few instances comments on a particular topic have been inter-cut – and verified by Don as an accurate recollection or reflection.

³⁷⁵ Pseudonym: written response to questionnaire April 2002.

Balance?

“When equal there was a sense of relief, at ease, friendly, communicative, some touching. I definitely prefer ‘equality’ above ‘superiority’ and ‘inferiority’ in that order.”

Mark³⁷⁶ *“I found that it was easy to feel and act inferior – it was about fear. Although I was ‘acting’ inferior, I could empathize with other inferiors. I was trying to communicate the effects of being inferior and submissive to the ‘superior’ group, mainly fear and hurt. {Superior} felt more incongruous than inferior, I found I had to act more aggressively, distance myself from the fear in the eyes of the “inferiors”. {When both were superior, I noticed} competitive feelings and posturing {and when both inferior}, feelings of disconnection with others. In ‘equality’ there was warmth, connection, feeling loved and respected.*

“{The} body language overall was enough to feel that the situations were being played honestly, if a little clumsily. . . . I was aware that I was denying and suppressing my feelings of being unworthy while in the Inferior group – due to feeling ashamed of those feelings. Eye contact is important for me so all being inferior was uncomfortable. I felt relief when all were equal and connecting.”

Andy³⁷⁷ *“In the inferior thing I didn’t want to look at anyone – whether they were superiors or other inferiors – umm - I was withdrawn into myself and - yeah I guess that felt either that I’d done something wrong or even if I hadn’t there was a good chance I’d be blamed for doing something wrong [laughs].”*³⁷⁸

“Whereas in the superior group I didn’t really care – you know I was - umm - umm – I think I felt magnanimous – you know like I looked upon the inferiors with some sense of pity – umm – condescension – and – the other superiors were [pause] – I felt Ok with them but I didn’t engage with them much either. Then {when all superior} I felt like we were all part of some exclusive club – there was a lot of strutting . . . some edge of wariness between us as we didn’t have the plebs to look down on.

“All inferior? – umm – I think I stayed withdrawn - Little direct eye contact – almost no solidarity – certainly no competition [laughs] Pull your head in - that way it won’t get kicked.”

“Finding a balance in between the two?”

“I think a sense of relief – I know I felt that.”

At this point in the interview a marked affect of shame [including blush] became visible on his face. We discuss how the recollection has triggered an old pattern in which he finds it

³⁷⁶ Mark Muirhead: written response to questionnaire, November 2001.

³⁷⁷ Andrew Langley: interview March 2002

³⁷⁸ Andy’s dominant pattern is ‘attack self’ – as we will see in the commentary on Exercise 4 below.

hard to see himself as 'equal'; rather always comparing himself to others and that this is a pattern around which shame is carried.³⁷⁹

Geoff³⁸⁰ *"I remember thinking – Oh yeah it would be just a mental exercise – but when you start enacting or taking on these roles – you actually do shift – it is scary how easy it is to take on the role of superior and/or you know – inferior – how quickly it becomes not a role play but actual [laughs]."*

"Feeling of superiority?"

"Err – it's – It's difficult to language - because - it is more of an attitude that you adopt - and then it reflects in the body language – umm almost like a sense of better than - - I'm trying to think how it feels. It is a pride – self generated – feel positive about yourself – not necessarily happy – I guess you are happy that you are not . . . not on the other end of the spectrum – dunno if pride is a feeling – but it's that kind of – closest I can describe it – and the body language – posturing."

"So what is the posture?"

"Oh – kind of umm – chest out, upright – more – maybe even louder in language – much more positive and assertive – speaking in a way that is more than – more than a request it is a demand – it is almost like you don't even anticipate a negative [laughs] response. Unusual!"

"So from that position – what do you see in the inferior – what do you notice?"

"From that position I notice that there is a kind of 'kow-towing' – a passive acquiescence – there's um I don't know if it is fear but it is like a forced humility – so you don't really get that they are embracing it but they are not in a position to respond or threaten back so it is – Err – experienced like a weakness I guess – a vulnerability – one that can be exploited."

"How does that make you feel from that superior position?"

"It was amazing for me – I actually have a sort of dark side that kind of enjoys it – a shadow self that is kind of – um – really goes in for the kill [laughs] - tend to lose the compassion and really want to exploit – a kind of switching off. There's that 'higher self' that knows that is not appropriate – but there is also a part that kind of getting off on it – dunno if it is ego but a kind of a false pride part that doesn't mind having a 'less than' around. . . . I shouldn't speak generally – but there is a part of me – a part of myself that doesn't mind having the upper hand – that kind of enjoys exploiting the weakness in others at times. It is a part that made me such a bastard in terms of siblings – I used to really see it in my (family) – It was amazing when I got the upper hand of my older brother for instance."

"So what happened when it switches and you have to take on the inferior role?"

"Resentment – loss of – like a loss of energy – you really feel, like, de-energised – de-motivated, passive [pause] kind of deflated – and just definitely not happy – not feeling good – and some anger but because it can't be expressed it is covert."

³⁷⁹ This is a common response among 'shame-bound' people - reported by other people who have run the workshop. Jane Pennington, Personal communication April 2003)

³⁸⁰ Geoffrey Smith: interview, March 2002. Later comments include notes from a supplementary interview in Sept 2002.

“Uh huh – and from that position what do you notice about the superior group?”

“Arseholes! [Laughs] Umm - resentment – and almost like a hoping that they will fall – that wishful projection of you know - That they were getting off on it – maybe my projection – they really seemed to be lording it over and enjoying it at the same time – I also noticed they were – you know, easy to slip into that role. I found it myself easier to slip into the superior than the inferior role. They also talked amongst each other. The inferiors tended not to collaborate – whereas the superiors tended to collaborate and gang up – particularly if someone wasn’t acting in an inferior role when they thought they should. It was very easy to get allies on time whereas it was very hard for the inferiors to get any peer support.”

“Both groups superior?”

“Having no inferior person around – made it harder to feel superior. Obviously the talking and the walking upright – but without that polar opposite – no one to scapegoat. . . . In order to be superior I have to be more superior. I did a lot of that in high school. I went out of my way to attach myself to the most powerful – what I perceived as the most superior group - so I wouldn’t get picked on, only because I was felling inferior. I actually hung out with a bunch of arseholes so I was in the ‘cool group’ and not on the receiving end of their abuse and ridicule.”

“All being inferior?”

“Interesting! Everyone tended to look down so there wasn’t – umm – a kind of seeing - no interactive posturing like in the first group everyone was kind of withdrawn and doing their own thing and spiralling inwards – so that I didn’t feel that sense of equality – definitely no competition for who could be the most inferior.” [Said with wry grin].

“And the feeling?”

“Kind of powerlessness – an apathy – hopelessness – really wasn’t a lot of hope – dismay – actually remember feeling sad but more kind of resigned.”

“All being equal – neither superior nor inferior?”

“There was a kind of relief – from previously being inferior – it wasn’t long before there was an equanimity – definitely a time when I felt the most relaxed. You could actually be yourself – drop the masks – they fell away – felt more comfortable and gave others permission to be how they were – so all that judgement and stuff fell. {When all were superior} I was judging who was more superior and even in the inferior I was judging who is really a sucker for abuse. The judgement stuff fell away {when all equal}.”

“The only time when people actually smile or touch each other . . .?”

“Yeah – hugging. There was kind of feeling of euphoria – you almost felt like you were rescued from the nazism or the oppressed – like a joy when you were not in that position – a kind of relief.”

“The exercise as a whole?”

“A good icebreaker – it did get you out of your head very quickly and got a full range of experiences in a very short space – in that sense very useful. Gets you out of the left-brain – into your body. A good lead into it – I think it would be difficult to go straight into some of the other things.”

The most common question used by the facilitator throughout the workshop is ‘**what do we notice?**’ The concluding part of the first exercise and bridge to the next involves reading of the poem by RD Laing³⁸¹

*The range of what we think and do
is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice
that we fail to notice,
there is little we can do to change
until we notice how failing to notice
shapes our thoughts and deeds.*

I stress that much of this workshop will be about noticing. Observing closely what we see, hear and feel in ourselves and others. Some of it is subtle. Blink and you will miss it!

Exercise #2 – Pride and shame

This exercise is undertaken sitting in the circle following directly from Exercise #1. It invites participants to respond to the words ‘Pride’ and ‘Shame’. It explores the way we (collectively and hence culturally) view these words – particularly the way ‘shame’ is predominantly seen as a ‘negative’ emotion rather than eliciting a balance of positive and negative reactions, which is the common response to ‘pride’.

Step 1: Pride: I suggest to the participants:

“There are two words that are difficult for people, (for men in some ways and for women in others). I’m interested in finding out what you think about each of these. What do you think, what words come to mind when I mention these? Try to catch the first thought, and notice any feelings you have. The first of these is - ‘**PRIDE**’. What comes to mind when you hear ‘pride’?”

I then collect responses round the circle.³⁸² When asked, the group will observe that there is a balance: Pride is seen in both positive and negative terms.

“Can we have too much or too little pride?”

Too much is seen as ‘*hubris*’, ‘*false pride*’, ‘*arrogance*’, ‘*up himself*’ ‘*coming before a fall*’ etc. Too little is seen as ‘*lacking self-esteem or self respect*’. I then explore what people noticed about others (or themselves) as they gave their responses; the positive views on pride vs. negative views on pride and the different body language that accompanied these.

³⁸¹ Op. cit.

³⁸² I acknowledge each: particularly any unusual or interesting ones, and especially validate where the person says he/she didn’t/couldn’t think of anything. This is particularly important with responses to ‘shame’ – see next step, below.

Step 2: Shame:

“Now the second word - ‘SHAME’. What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘shame’?”

Here I expect that the language will be predominantly about negative reactions to shame, some positive elements around morality, and confusion about guilt and shame.³⁸³ When the group is finished, I ask:

“What do we notice?”

And then draw out the negativity and lack of balance between the positive and negative here.

“Can we have too much shame?” “Can we have too little?” “What do we call a person with too little shame?”

‘Shameless’.

“How do we feel around such people?”

‘Usually uncomfortable, often unsafe!’

“Why?” -

‘We sense they don’t recognise our feelings or that they’ve been inappropriate.’

Step 3: I then invite **discussion** with “What do we notice?” and invite people to observe closely as people talk about ‘shame’. “Blink and you will miss it.” I aim to draw out:

- Feelings around shame – many about self image, wanting to hide/disappear etc.;
- The observable affect of shame – the break of eye contact, forward drop of the head, slump of upper body, perhaps a blush in some cases;
- That much of our experience of shame is in the past – how much the way we experienced it as we were growing up and in our adult lives was unpleasant, negative.
- How, in our culture, shame is seen as negative, unhealthy, ‘toxic’, something to be got rid of, ‘healed’.
- Yet we recognise that some balance is needed (just as we saw the need for balance in ‘pride’) and comments on what might that balance be.

Fig 6.1 shows a sample of responses from one of the workshops. Note how all the ‘shame’ associations are negative with a strong presence of the elements of self-blame, judgement and punishment associated with guilt. Interesting here also are two responses associating shame with fear and four indicating the mental confusion commonly reported as an aspect of shame which, as indicated earlier, may be a shame-fear response.

³⁸³ It is not uncommon for people to try to substitute other words rather than use shame, go blank or express ‘confusion’. I acknowledge and validate when a person says he/she didn’t/couldn’t think of anything with ‘It is sometimes hard to think about this’ or ‘confusing isn’t it?’ This confusion/inability to think clearly is a common feature of feeling shame.

Fig 6.1 A sample of responses to Pride and Shame.³⁸⁴

Pride	Shame
<i>In your face</i>	<i>Embarrassment</i>
<i>Bad sinful</i>	<i>Public humiliation.</i>
<i>Comes before a fall</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<i>Not enough pride</i>	<i>Secrets</i>
<i>Roosters</i>	<i>Responsible for doing the wrong thing</i>
<i>Judge</i>	<i>Me and deep shame</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>Judgements, self and others</i>
<i>Like the pride of lions</i>	<i>Retribution,</i>
<i>Proud of/for me</i>	<i>Sex, masturbation</i>
<i>Powerful</i>	<i>Sadness</i>
	<i>Fearful, fear</i>
	<i>Blanked out, vagueness,</i>
	<i>Can't think, I forgot</i>

Fig 6.2 Responses to Pride and Shame – positive and negative³⁸⁵

Pride - positive	Pride - negative
<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Full of yourself</i>
<i>Belonging (2)</i>	<i>Not good</i>
<i>Protection</i>	<i>Too Proud</i>
<i>Encouraged</i>	<i>Fear of fall</i>
<i>Proud/involved</i>	<i>Pride before a fall</i>
<i>Doing /achievement (4)</i>	
<i>Satisfaction (2)</i>	<i>Danger/fear</i>
<i>Pleasure</i>	
<i>Happy</i>	<i>Pride/shame/contempt</i>
<i>Smiling</i>	
<i>Warm</i>	<i>Molasses smile</i>
<i>Lions (pride of) /majestic</i>	<i>Arrogance</i>
<i>Warmth/comfort</i>	
<i>Fullness</i>	
<i>Feeling good/confident</i>	
<i>Humility</i>	
Shame - negative	Shame – neutral/positive
<i>Embarrassment (4)</i>	<i>Childlike/innocent</i>
<i>Feeling bad</i>	<i>Relief</i>
<i>Ugliness</i>	
<i>Inferiority</i>	
<i>Fears</i>	
<i>Sorrow</i>	
<i>Sadness (2)</i>	
<i>Personal</i>	
<i>Suppressed</i>	
<i>Crumpled inside</i>	
<i>Withdrawal</i>	
<i>Full blame</i> <i>Yuk!</i>	
<i>Regret (2)</i>	
<i>What can I do?</i>	
<i>Helplessness</i>	
<i>Isolation</i>	
<i>Separation</i>	
<i>Anger</i>	
<i>How dare you!</i>	

³⁸⁴ A group of 15 men: Men's Gathering, Camp Connington, Tasmania, April 2002.³⁸⁵ A group of 14 men and 14 women community professionals: Moruya, NSW, May 2002.

In Fig 6.2 the group's responses are separated into positive and negative for each of 'pride' and 'shame' by reference to the tone of voice and facial affect with which they were delivered. For example, 'embarrassment' was coded as negative because the speaker's affect showed it was distasteful, unwanted, distressful etc. Again note the overwhelmingly negative responses to shame – even after the group has been 'primed' by the previous discussion focussing on the way pride involves a balance of positive and negative aspects. In this mixed gender group we see more associations with distress/grief, powerlessness and helplessness. Here there are no admissions of mental confusion, though in most other settings this has been a common response from one or more people when asked to think about 'shame'.

Reflecting on this exercise, Andy recalls framing pride in terms of a balance between arrogance and self-esteem but still saw shame as negative.

Andy: *"Pride had lots of negative connotations for me – a lot of childhood and teenage conditioning about not being arrogant – not being 'up yourself'. Umm – and certainly by the time of the workshop I was someway down the track towards reclaiming pride – enabling myself to feel pride about who I am*

"And 'shame'?"

"Umm - Still pretty much a negative thing – to the point of being disabling. Umm . . .

"Disabling in what sense?"

"Disabling of um healthy functioning. Ummm – [long pause] - Yeah! Umm – that I don't – not worthy, not deserving."

Bill's story illustrates how so much of this negative association has its origins in family of origin.

Bill³⁸⁶: *"I think of it as 'being ashamed'. I'm ashamed of things I've done in my life particularly with respect to relationships and not being up to my parents' expectations – their expectations of me – that would be a pretty core thing. I can be ashamed of being wrong in relationships and not out-worldly successful and not being good enough in social relationships, but much more in terms of my father's expectations. My father was a successful war hero – I feel that sometimes I don't match up. (When) I was quite young I used to help my father on the farm – more of a work-mate than a son. I remember failing to do things to his expectations – like driving the tractor into the dam or dropping a bale of hay onto him from the loft and the like – really it was failing at doing things beyond my capacity. But the deepest - it's a silly thing - I went to get the cows and couldn't find them. I came back and told dad, and was told to go back and look again. So I went back and they were there – just out of sight – so when he asked me where they were I said, "Through the old gate". Later he went out to fix it and realised I'd lied to him. My punishment was that I wasn't allowed to go to my cousins. He was deeply shaming around this. It seems pretty pathetic . . . Because the shame, the embarrassment of not finding them would mean admitting that I hadn't found them in the first place. There was an*

³⁸⁶ Bill Powell, interview December 2001

expectation for me to be grown up. I couldn't admit fault . . . I adored him - thought the sun shone out of him - I was with him all the time. He was proud of me [Pause] I was scared of him really - scared of his criticism. . . . I felt ashamed - I think he enjoyed his superiority. I think he - perhaps he was jealous of me. He expected me to be better than him. He didn't feel proud of his profession. Maybe that's why he criticised me so heavily. I don't know but I'm very critical of myself. My mother was very critical of me - she died critical of me. Only I'm not critical of either of them. I feel I understand them. I remember my uncle praised his children at every opportunity - it drove my father nuts.

“Pride? - and Shame?”

“‘Pride’? ‘Father’ would be the first word that comes to mind - then ‘mother’. [Pause] What came up {just then} - I feel I'm not proud of myself. I wish I could say “me” - but I don't think that. ‘Shame’ - well - I would say ‘me’. [Laughs] I was too proud to accept advice from anyone. I can't tell you how many times I made wrong decisions in the face of a little birdie telling me not to go in that direction. There are a couple of things I'm proud of - they seem pretty ephemeral . . . for example, baby-sitting the grand kids. There's something shrunken about shame you know - it made me feel shrunken - [He tells a story from when he was CEO of a company] - (I remember) sitting in a taxi and feeling ‘free of shame’ - having the experience of it - I felt I'd achieved something I'd be proud of [Pause]. Something my father would be proud of!

“The lost cows - what would have made a difference?”

“What was needed was for me to say ‘Dad I found them - they were there all the time’ and for him to say ‘It's OK, it doesn't matter’. Instead of having the void - the feeling - yes it's a feeling - this shrunken feeling inside. That's why the taxi experience was so important - then I was not feeling it. I remember having some of the best sex ever after that.

Note how Bill's comparison of himself with his parents defines his views on pride and shame, even though he understands how these ideas can be ‘handed down’ from one generation to the next. Pride is framed in terms of ‘not-shame’. There is also an association of shame with fear. Though the particular instances of shame seem trivial, the very trivialness adds another layer of shame. He describes it as ‘pathetic’. Often, deeply shaming things seem to have two layers: felt shame associated with the incident, and shame about feeling shame over something that is judged to be trivial.³⁸⁷ As a result of the workshop experience, Bill recognises that verbal acknowledgement of the ‘shameful’ mistake and parental forgiveness are critical to whether ‘shame’ is resolved at the time, or carried as a burden in memory.

Geoff: *“My immediate reaction - it is weird, definitely a programmed response - but my immediate reaction is that pride is bad. . . . And then - after that initial*

³⁸⁷ Gilligan, 1997, p 111; describes something similar in his work with violent offenders in the US Prison system.

response I start to think there is good pride and bad pride. Good pride in accomplishments – in ourself – then what I consider as destructive pride - in nationalism – nationalistic fervour and ‘us vs. them’ mentality that results in genocide and – giving yourself permission to treat another group as second class human beings. Then I start to look at how many times I’ve had genuine pride in – like in my accomplishments and how difficult it is for me to accept compliments. Even to this day it is very difficult. Even when someone says something nice about my clothing – it is ‘Oh I got that at (name of charity store)’ or [Laughs] – ‘I got that on sale’ – or ‘I kind of picked it up’ – never just ‘thanks’ – always trying to have to explain or belittle the compliment.”

“What comes up around shame?”

[Pause] “I don’t want it – [laughs] - Don’t get any on me – To be avoided at all costs. . . . Then I start to actually – I mean – I have difficulty – even when you say it – that just like pride there is a good and a bad - I still tend to, I guess, derive most of my experiences around shame as negative - a very negative connotation. I still wrestle with that concept of there being a good – a good shame. Umm – Yeah – hence my common use of the word. Maybe I read too much Pia Melody or John Bradshaw about the toxic shame. I guess it is for me because it was the first time that I – They actually say that instead of you **did** something wrong – you **are** something wrong – that is really how I was made to feel a lot in my upbringing – really that whole thing of - err - of - err - They churned out ‘God didn’t make perfect creatures’ – he made a flawed unit and I was one of them – with the reject slip stamped on my forehead [laughs] – just there to be pointed out – err mm – so I really related to that when I read it – I guess it was the first time I actually felt when I read that literature or did the first ‘Being your best friend’ – the first shame workshop I did – that I felt there was some acknowledgement that there was shame out there – that had wounded or scarred myself so deeply. . . . Very few people take a balanced approach because when they are masking their own shame they are definitely heaving it on.”

Mark “Pride in my children is healthy pride. Pride in material possessions is ego. Pride in my achievements should be held privately; public pride is ‘boasting’, ‘self promotion’. . . . I’m not proud of me, I am proud of my family. Some people are wrong because they are ‘so ostentatious’

“My initial response to shame was a feeling of pain and then to hide - run away. I’m now aware of more types of shame. Shame is subjective. Some societies regard certain behaviour (short skirts, homosexuality) as shameful, others don’t. The definition of shame changes as societies evolve over generations. Shame is a way of society blaming or ‘making someone wrong’. It ostracises a person or group of people, and makes others feel entitled to attack those shamed. This lessens the feelings of shame in those who attack. Shame is a secret, hidden pain for those shamed. Fear of discovery of their shameful behaviour is reinforced by the media. Highlighting shameful behaviour . . . encourages a self-righteous attitude if they haven’t done it. ‘I could never do that!’ (mistreat a child, have ‘illicit’ sex), is a false statement, and gives a false sense of security from attack by society. Highlighting ‘shameful’ behaviour creates fear of discovery and similar exposure in those watching or reading the media if they have done it. People can feel shame even if they belong to the same group as someone accused of shameful or shameless behaviour. Groups and behaviours include single mothers (selfish, promiscuous) homosexuals (anal intercourse), drug addicts (crime) men

(paedophilia, porn) young people (dole bludging) . Strong feelings of shame can lead to more self shaming behaviour (a form of attack self) which leads to more fear of discovery, leading to introverted frustration and anger, etc. “I said that I wanted to run away. I wanted to be encouraged to talk about that, even though I was feeling shame. I felt that I want to find out more about my shame. I am less interested in how others act when they feel shame, or even my affects when I feel shame.”

Note the way Mark talks of social shame with language reminiscent of Richard Hauser’s description of scapegoatism – attacking others for that which we deny in ourselves.

In Chapters Two and Four we explored the idea that shame is a concept that matures with ‘social age’. Infantile shame is for the thing that I have done. More adult shame is for the thing I haven’t done; and mature shame is also for the shameful actions of others. We also saw how shame could be a stimulus to social awareness. Something of its pivotal role in mediating the path through the feelings of anger and grief to such a social awareness can be seen in Don’s reflections below.

Don *“Thinking about ‘pride’ and ‘shame’ - What happened here was that we entered through the ‘head’ and began to ‘constellate’ all the words that surrounded these two concepts. This was a comfortable entry. Pride is about centeredness, honour, integrity, and pleasure. It was surprising to me that so many people saw it is as ‘onya’ – ‘up yourself’³⁸⁸.*

“Out of the shame workshop I began to understand that you build a sense of integrity only one way – by losing it! - ‘Why did I say/do that?’ All the rest was pride in a negative sense. Only by losing the integrity – it was a feeling of shame – did I gain a real sense of pride.

“Shame, now, today, it still has a lot of old stuff attached to it but now I see it in a more positive fashion – Umm! I see it as a passage to awareness.

He then refers to an Australian TV documentary/current affairs program on violence in Aboriginal communities that left him ‘feeling depressed’

The male violence on women . . . was horrendous. The men were partly aware that it was wrong and partly trying to assert a familiar control particularly around sexuality. . . . Next morning I got up early and sat on the veranda and let (the feeling of depression) come on again – and I became aware that the depression was about despair – a giving up – and I moved into it more deeply and shame came on really strong.”

“Shame in what sense?”

“Shame about men and their urge to control women – I know women try to control men but I can only take responsibility for my part at the other end and

³⁸⁸ This isn’t uniquely Australian, but there is a cultural element here – sometimes referred to as the ‘tall poppy syndrome’. Anyone who stands head and shoulders above the field can expect to be cut off at the knees.

*can be aware of how men operate and can do something about it. Then underneath the shame was **anger!**³⁸⁹ – And then I dropped back into depression. So I went back into shame-again and it was only then that I went into grief and just cried. And it was almost a collective thing - grief for the shitty things all of us have done to other human beings. And I cycled between the levels - I now understand despair as the ultimate in quitting; you just walk away – and shame for men, shame for my gender. I had to go to a meeting and cried all the way there – had to breathe deeply to pull myself together to go through it – but I could come back later and could feel the layers.*

Notice how in this sequence Don describes a process like that of catharsis – emotional discharge largely through crying with the ability to both access (feel) the feelings and observe them at the same time.

Exercise # 3 – Sharing shame experiences.

This exercise involves sharing memories of ‘shameful’ experiences with one other person, and then exploring aspects of this in the large group. It is important to create safety here by stressing the agreements discussed in the introduction to the workshop - notably confidentiality. ‘What is said here stays here!’ And the freedom to chose, for example:

- Whether to participate;
- Whether or not to speak at all;
- To stop at any time if there is something the person does not want to reveal;
- To use ‘*blank*’ to protect privacy of sensitive details – but then to feel what lies behind the thought and move on.

In this exercise it is not the detail of the story that is important; it is about exploring feelings and observing what is going on for both the person sharing and the witness.

The sharing proceeds in five steps:

Step 1: I invite participants to stand and choose a partner:

“Someone you feel you could trust to share a piece of your story about shame in your life.”

Step 2: Sets up the exercise with an expectation for mutual respect and support. I invite the paired participants to:

“Choose one person to go first. The other person’s task is to pay attention – to watch and listen and ‘notice’ while the speaker shares a piece of his/her story about shame.”

³⁸⁹ There was a marked affective stress on this word – it was growled rather than spoken.

I indicate that participants will then be asked to swap and the other person will become the listener.³⁹⁰

Step 3: I invite the first person to share:

“Take breath and make eye contact. How much can you trust this person? Close your eyes and remember a time when you felt shame, humiliation, or embarrassment. What happened, what did you **do**, what did you **think** at the time, what have you thought since. Now open your eyes. I invite you to tell the person in front of you about it – share what you feel OK to share.³⁹¹ You will have two minutes each – I’ll tell you when to swap.”³⁹²

After this time

“Bring what you are saying to a close, [pause] and stop. [Pause] Stop speaking now!”³⁹³

Step4: I invite the second person to share:³⁹⁴

“Now the other person [remind of choice/safety] – take breath and make eye contact. Close eyes and remember. . . etc. [as above] . . . and stop.”

Step 5: I then allow pairs to debrief with an invitation to:

“Face each other and make eye contact. How did you feel about sharing? How did you feel about listening? What did you notice about yourself and the other person as you were sharing and listening? You will have about a couple of minutes to share how you felt during this exercise.”³⁹⁵

Debriefing/sharing with a large group is done after bringing the participants back to the full circle. The aim is to draw out the observation of the body language that accompanies the story.³⁹⁶ Where this body language is congruent with the shame story there is the break of eye contact, head drop, shoulder slump, blush etc. Sometimes for all or part of the story this will be masked. The ways it is masked by ‘freezing the face’ or by enlisting another affect can be explored.³⁹⁷ The discussion can also draw out how the affect is an instinctive response – appearing before people are aware of it and often brief - hence “Blink and you will miss it!” The debriefing also provides many opportunities to witness affects – triggered as people recall aspects of the experience of sharing, or sometimes just being the focus of attention. Usually

³⁹⁰ This creates mutuality, in Gestalt terms called ‘support’. See Wheeler 2000.

³⁹¹ As noted earlier, shame is about being seen – the eyes of another. Attention alone will often trigger shame affect. Recalling shameful experiences will trigger shame – and often the strategies developed for masking it. Note how ‘thinking’ questions are used (important with men) to help people access and talk about the feelings.

³⁹² Time is flexible here but a relatively short period, 2-4 minutes for each sharing is recommended.

³⁹³ Evaluation from workshop participants indicates that clarity on closure and the moment for swapping roles helps the sense of safety/containment in this exercise.

³⁹⁴ Going straight to the changeover of speaker listener roles (deferring the debriefing) reinforces mutuality and ‘support’.

³⁹⁵ Debriefing time is flexible. This can be structured as either equal time for ‘share and listen’ as in the exercise or, allowing pairs to discuss the experience.

³⁹⁶ As above, this is done with open-ended questions: ‘What do we notice?’ ‘Who wants to share?’ ‘Any comments / questions?’

³⁹⁷ Kaufman, 1989, p 20; describes three shame masks: ‘frozen face’, ‘head-back look’ and the ‘look of contempt’; resulting, he suggests, from feeling shame about shame.

by this stage in the process the group will be observing more closely. Once noticing it has become habitual, it is very hard to hide shame. I can cover it up but usually only after a brief display!

This debriefing and discussion is, of necessity, flexible and responds to and follows up threads raised by participants. Some areas that are worth exploring include:

- How shame is often felt even when we have done nothing wrong. Just being seen – being the focus of attention can trigger it. But this often starts stories of ‘not-good-enough’ running inside people’s heads.
- How people feel when they see someone showing shame.
- Circumstances that cause shame – how so many of them revolve around a sense that some behaviour has (or may have) threatened the connection with another, the ‘threat to the social bond’. And how, as such, shame is a gift – providing a chance to reflect, change, re-build the relationship.
- The way shame is so often described and experienced as a ‘scary’ feeling. People use ‘fear’ language to describe shame experiences: anxiety, scared, afraid, terrified, etc. In an extended workshop this allows exploration of the way the affect of fear will neutralise the shame affect. People can be invited to explore the connection between language, feeling and affect. How saying it often triggers showing it and feeling it. How the emotions of fear (also anger and disgust, grief and mock interest, surprise and laughter) will mask shame.³⁹⁸
- The effect when shame is not acknowledged. How people respond to the shameless, fearful-guilty, or aggressive displays – and this last as a source of escalating conflict via shame-rage spirals.
- Guilt: as the response to blaming; and the associated fear of punishment and/or anger directed at self. How do people react to being blamed or ‘made to feel guilty’?
- What triggers ‘shame’ - such as feelings of powerlessness, disrespect/humiliation, embarrassment etc.; but also the ‘noble’ feelings of modesty and humility. Hence shame as a spectrum from humility to humiliation.

In mixed groups especially, it is useful to explore where shame sits in the stack of emotions people allow themselves to show in personal/intimate and in impersonal/social contexts. This can uncover the way that social constructions of masculinity tend to permit expression of

³⁹⁸ Below we will explore the extent to which people actually feel ‘fear’ – or whether the fear-anxiety words are just verbal masks for shame. My contention (in line with the arguments in previous chapters) is that the use of the fear words is likely to trigger the feeling – much as the use of the word ‘shame’ often triggers shame feelings.

anger as a mask for distress, fear, powerlessness and, ultimately, shame. Similar stereotyped constructions of femininity have distress hiding fear, anger, powerlessness and shame.³⁹⁹

Sometimes, the large group also creates an opportunity for one individual to share some of his/her experience in the paired sharing exercise.⁴⁰⁰ Invite this person to start with a piece of the story and explore the thoughts feelings involved. The group can be invited to describe what they observe. This allows detail of the shame affect to be drawn out, how it gets masked and how they feel when this happens. It should be noted that there is a tendency for the individual to ‘talk him/herself out of the feeling’.⁴⁰¹ This will often lead to the ‘stuck’ place where the shame can be acknowledged verbally as a pattern based on something in the past but little can be done with this. It doesn’t ‘heal’. At best talking about shame may reduce the burden - mean that it is no longer secret - but there is still a burden to be carried.

Much of what has been shared in this exercise in the workshops rightly remains confidential. Below are some samples from the questionnaires and interviews that people have been willing to share as part of this study.

The importance of safety in this work is clearly illustrated by **Mark**. He reported that he chose someone who he had an empathic relationship with, went first and yet

“I chose an incident that I felt was safe, one that wouldn’t shame me much”.

He described the experience as,

“. . . in my head, not emotional, keeping myself safe”.

His partner was,

“. . . just listening, not responding”- “not much to respond to”.

Similarly when his partner told his story he was not emotional and Mark felt no connection to his experience. In the debriefing Mark says he felt:

“Frustrated that I was still too scared to share something that I feel strong shame around.”

³⁹⁹ Useful questions here are: “*What emotion is on top for men/ women?*” In all-male groups: “*What comes with or is covered up by anger?*” The gender stereotype is breaking down. Younger women particularly are more ready to express anger. In both genders shame is usually the foundation or deepest level, most hidden/unacknowledged.

⁴⁰⁰ As noted above, timing is important, particularly here. The discussion of issues should be limited by the time needed to complete the two important exercises that follow. Having one person share with the whole group is an option for an extended workshop. I have abandoned it in the short form. It is useful more for the way it illustrates that ‘talking about shame’ usually extinguishes the affect and also usually goes nowhere. At best it allows shame secrets to be publicly shared but the ‘burden of shame’ usually remains.

⁴⁰¹ This is perhaps a variant on H.B. Lewis’s ‘bypassed’ shame. There are cues that shame is there but the shame is not accessed or truly felt. Personal Communication, Jane Pennington, April 2003.

Note the fear language here. This theme of choosing to hold back sharing about some areas of shame runs through a number of the reports on this exercise.

“How much of the story Andy?”⁴⁰²

Andy: *“Not a lot. Umm - I chose to speak of something - umm – related but much less revealing – umm, which because it was related, carried the emotion and the affect or whatever. Umm – what’s going on for me is, thinking ‘I’m a scum-bag. He’s going to think I’m a scum-bag. Umm – my God he’s frowning – he must think I’m a scum-bag. He’s nodding – he’s looking concerned – so I interpret that as a judgement about me.*

He shared something about his father or his stepfather – something that he’d done . . . I could tell that he felt ashamed of his role in it and that umm – he wasn’t umm – he started off looking in my eyes and was then looking down while he was telling the story and – Umm – I think he kind of collapsed in on himself – you know like hunched his shoulders and hung his head a bit – umm and the words he was speaking were reinforcing that he felt bad about what he’d done whatever it was. - I remember that I was thinking that, to me, it wasn’t such a big deal – you know I could interpret that it was for him but – umm and I felt that umm I guess I felt I wanted to reassure him that I thought he was OK [Laugh] . . .”

“Open to my noticing . . .?”

“Mmmm?”

“. . . to bring this right into present time?”

“Yes – Ok!”

“As you were telling that, what was your own body language?”

“Well I’m not looking at you, hand over mouth – turned away from you.”

“Yes – and blushed!”

“Did I?”

Just recalling the experience of the workshop where he was in the presence of another who was showing shame, is sufficient here to trigger an empathic affective response.⁴⁰³ Here the affect is showing as a marked shame blush from chest to tip of ears and **yet Andy himself is unaware of this signal of shame affect.** Andy continues to describe the debriefing:

“Well it was pretty much mutual in that he – what he spoke to me about how he’d responded to what I said did seem to mirror what I’d felt while he was speaking his story.”

“Want to elaborate?”

“Umm - He was supportive. He wasn’t – well he wasn’t judgemental in a negative sense – in a way I felt the whole exercise brought us closer – it was probably the strongest one-on-one bonding that I had with anyone for that . . . I think in a way it helped us both to unburden – I’d put a rider on that – Umm – That I was aware that I hadn’t exposed myself to the extent that I could have – and I felt Ok about that actually I – you know.”

⁴⁰² Andy and I have shared our stories about deep shame issues in other areas of men’s work.

⁴⁰³ Note the laugh which is often regarded as a discharge for (light) shame – see Scheff (1979)

“You didn’t feel sh-shame about that?” [We laugh]

“[Laughing] One thing I have learned, I think, is to have a – a healthier sense of what is appropriate, and when, in terms of disclosure.”

Despite this holding back he describes it as one of the most powerful bonding experiences in a particularly memorable men’s gathering. In a previous chapter we explored how empathy, if it is to be useful in building practical connections, needs ‘aesthetic distancing’ so that people are engaged but not overwhelmed by the feelings. Shame issues are so often associated with fear of judgement. Safety and choice may lead to some avoidance of ‘deep’ shame but, perhaps paradoxically, to more effective discharge of stored residues of unresolved shame.

For some, this exercise brings both profound insights and quite intense feelings:

Paul: *“I suppose for me it was the most - [pause]. It is the power of the shame experience. – It is the sharing of that. – It was powerful for me in Perth⁴⁰⁴ but as powerful was the first experience at the ‘Pathways to Manhood’⁴⁰⁵ where I was sharing . . . with a 13 year old boy who had the same shame experience as I had had and was willing to tell (his) story so I suppose that was the first experience of me coming undone in relation to sharing a shame experience. And I think the reason that it was so particularly strong was that I had an idea of what my experience was about to be and was utterly surprised to find a different shame story there that was triggered by my partner. I must admit that at the beginning of the process I had a concept of control over the process – and when the experience was outside of my control it made me feel vulnerable and therefore that shame experience became much deeper. And that particular experience was about experiencing the shame not as a victim but as a perpetrator. Which in many ways threw me because I had this concept of shame as being the victim all the time – low self esteem being bullied or picked on – that was my concept of my experience of shame – it was only when I now had the memory of being the perpetrator of shame and violence upon somebody else – and I think the difference was this – at the time of the event - having no memory of shame – but having now an experience of shame with the memory of my actions – I’m not sure if that makes sense but -”*

“Let me ask the question this way – what was the mask? How was that shame of perpetration – the details of the story are not important – how was that masked all this time?”

“By believing that I was victim all the time - and to stay with that story.”

“What changed it - enabled that mask to drop?”

“I think [pause] what allowed me to drop away the victim mask was the fact that I now had some understanding that the perpetration wasn’t totally mine – whereas before I felt that the perpetrator owned the entire event.”

“I think I need to ask you to explain that a bit more.”

⁴⁰⁴ ANZMLG workshop, Perth, April 2001.

⁴⁰⁵ PTM, October 2000 - see previous chapter.

“Well my, my fear - no fear isn't the right word – my experience of perpetration has been the bully in the school yard – and it was OK for me to be the bully because if I wasn't the bully then I would have been the victim. So in order to move away from being the victim I joined the side of the perpetrators. At the time it felt OK because I was the victim moving towards that. It was later having the memory of the experience that allowed me to have a stronger understanding of my actions. When it happened in the school-yard there was no shame involved because I was the victim. I was just getting my own back or protecting myself. In the workshop it was suddenly having the realisation that I enjoyed the experience of being the perpetrator – I wasn't just protecting myself as a victim I was moving into the place that had power and control and I enjoyed the experience - and the shame came in with the realisation that my story as the victim wasn't working then – in actual fact it was the perpetrator, the aggressor, the enjoyment of the process – is where the shame really affected me. – I realised that I wasn't the vulnerable victim going to that place. I was now the aggressive perpetrator.”

Paul shared some of this experience in front of the group in one workshop.⁴⁰⁶ My intention was to allow his reflection on the paired sharing of his ‘shame’ to trigger a clear display of the shame affect for the benefit of the whole group. But Paul had a strong desire to tell the story (previously secret or only partly understood) and, as we will see below, his affective display was more fear than shame. Here, in recalling the event, he initially resists the invitations to explore the affect. He also moves away from discussing ‘fear’ in favour of cognitive evaluation of the experience in terms of taking responsibility for his ‘perpetrator’ role in childhood bullying. This emphasis on personal narrative, and on self-evaluation, has been borne out in other workshops. Yet, this process of story-telling doesn't seem to relieve the ‘burden of shame’ feeling. Like many other people Paul gets stuck. Talking about it extinguishes the shame affect. Talk is often a mask for some intense feelings.

Here is Paul's recollection as we probe deeper. Note how now, at some distance from the original experience, the recall restimulates the feeling.

“Can you remember that moment when you were modelling it?”

Paul: *“Oh, vividly – and I can look back at that as one of the stronger emotional experiences of my own personal work and I remember feeling very anxious about wanting to share it. The reason was because it was almost a new-found shame – yet a very old feeling. I'd buried this down deep and suddenly it had popped it's head up and I didn't want to let go of it – let it hide itself again. I wanted to explore it and get it up and have the experience and find out what it was. I remember going through the intense feeling of going back to my experience of shame as a 13 year old boy from the moment that you asked me to come across the room and share that. And it is almost like I was outside my body, witnessing what was going on. And what I was witnessing was both painful but almost in some way enjoyable – enjoyment in observing myself as a 13-year-old boy and having some insight because if that - but very painful. And I remember sitting next to you and feeling like 13-year-old boy*

⁴⁰⁶ Perth 2001: Also see notes on debriefing Exercise 4 above.

next to the schoolteacher, father, authoritarian and completely submitting to that.

[I signal that the full affect of shame including the blush is visible on his face].

“Yes I’m feeling the heat rising just in the thought – and then my memory of the experience starts to leave me – because - not because - instead of being just the observer, I’m pulled back into my emotional body and I’m going through the experience again. This experience is so strong that I can no longer remember the experience - so all I now have is memories of a couple of things that were spoken to me and one of them was one of the other men giving me the opportunity to flee the experience and having been given the opportunity, taking it. I can’t remember the words he used but it was something like ‘I’m feeling uncomfortable watching your body language – maybe you need to stop where you are going – I think it’s a bit too much . . .’.”

“Interesting how so often how people react with discomfort – their discomfort - and about the process.”

“I remember thinking at the time – Oh well it’s all about your stuff but thank you anyway – ‘cos I’m feeling that I don’t know where to take this anymore it is an overwhelming feeling and I am feeling uncomfortable and . . . but I’ve been feeling uncomfortable all the time. Now it feels like – again it is an intellectual thought about the experience - that I could have stayed with it, but having been given the opportunity to move out of it I took it.”

In this sequence we can observe Paul describing being in the feeling and, at the same time, observing it – the conditions we earlier identified as ‘aesthetic distancing’ for affective discharge of emotions. But increasing the intensity of the feeling (by drawing his attention to the shame affect) makes it impossible for him to think about it.

This is **Andy**’s recollection as witness to Paul’s share in the same workshop:

“I remember Paul looking really vulnerable and exposed – he was hunched over Umm - he was quite pale I think and I remember wondering whether he was going into fear. He seemed - he is a big man and a strong man – but he seemed umm – yeah – quite defenceless in a way and I wonder whether he went into fear or grief.

Another man, **Brendan**, a youth worker, also recalls this:

“After Paul had shared his experience he looked so much like a little boy of 12 or 13 I found myself looking in awe at what was before me. This ‘boy’, slumped, hands clasped, looking down, I could see so clearly the pain in this ‘boy’. I thought ‘my God –I can see him and it filled me with reverence for Paul. I wasn’t noticing anything else at the time but thinking of it now I felt that everyone was focussed on him at that moment and it felt very strong.”⁴⁰⁷

From where I saw it in the workshop, Paul started with enthusiasm (excitement) touched the shame and was partially overwhelmed by the feeling. He looked around the room with more of a startled, anxious/fearful expression, stiffened and froze part way between shame and fear. He then talked himself out of it – masked it first with words and was left feeling distress with

⁴⁰⁷ Brendan Dwyer – written comments on Workshop March 2001.

a tinge of fear. Further work with this would probably have crossed the line between offering an experiential education workshop and ‘doing therapy’. If we had done this work we might have discharged some of the fear and distress but I doubt that complete re-evaluation of the shame root of this memory could be achieved. In part because we have yet to develop processes for the direct affective discharge of shame,⁴⁰⁸ but also because, at this stage in the workshop, Paul has yet to experience the reframing of shame as a salutogenic process. He has no alternative (salutogenic) place from which to stand to re-evaluate the experience. As I suggested earlier, finding a way out of a pathogenically framed shame experience is like trying to lever oneself out of quicksand – with nothing firm from which to gain leverage or purchase.

In the interview I asked **Paul**:

“If you were to have stayed with it what would have needed to happen at that point?”

“I think I would have needed more protection – a few of the men move around and hold me and make me feel I wasn’t on my own – because the shame experience seems to be one of isolation.⁴⁰⁹ And I found it very difficult to share the experience because I was going back through it and felt very isolated.”

“So it ceases to be a talking process at that point – needs to be something much more physical- kinaesthetic?”

“Much more physical – yes - and the strange thing was I just kept having these (recollections) of being nurtured by mother, . . . Yet, here I was in room full of 35 men and looking for nurture and feeling it was there but unable to say: ‘Right, what I need for this to go on is this’. I think the reason was because I was deeply involved in the reliving of the shame process that I felt really isolated. – Yet at the same time I knew I could ask for support and get it.”⁴¹⁰

“And if the support had been given in that form, have you any sense about where it might have gone?”

[Long pause] “I think the experience itself, as far as it went, allowed me to own the perpetrator, to forgive the perpetrator in a sense – I suppose if I’d had the nurture, that would have allowed me to forgive myself at a much deeper level - because I was actually speaking it to my peers. So if the forgiveness and protection had come from my peers, I feel as though the experience would have been deeper. As it was I had the experience in isolation and, to a certain amount, forgave myself for the shame - but it is almost like I wanted to be forgiven by my community. I suppose the other experience that might have been deeper would have been if I’d had the victims of my perpetration there - offering me- umm - I suppose forgiveness . . .⁴¹¹ But, again, surrounded by a lot of fear and vulnerability by - because it was a new experience and I had no

⁴⁰⁸ As discussed in Chapter Four.

⁴⁰⁹ Isolation is one of the shame pathologies as we will see in the compass of shame work in Exercise 4

⁴¹⁰ Note the language suggests emotional engulfment and interpersonal isolation – inner and outer forms of ‘alienation’.

⁴¹¹ Paul was involved in the Restorative Justice training (see Webb 1999) and has since qualified as a Conference Convenor for work with the Juvenile Justice Dept; so this idea of facing the victims is part of his frame of thought.

control over it – I tend to like to have control – but at the same time there is, like, this risk taker who sees that in the unknown there is a lot of the prizes and the juice.”

“So one of the things that we could do with that exercise is to allow it to go through the process of nurturing and support and, for the individuals involved, that potentially then might provide some kind of healing?”

“Definitely – Yes

“But we are still within the shame reduction mode - we move to forgiveness of ourselves by receiving the forgiveness of others.”

“Yes and at the same time it was also part of me in that experience that wanted the experience I saw other men having as a result of my shame, and I saw them reacting and feeling uncomfortable and I wanted to protect them from that as well. So there was different processes going on at the same time – all from an unconscious knowledge of that at the time rather than an intellectual concept that ‘this was now going on - and I need to do this’. So lots of things happening at the same time - and only later analysing them that I can put language to them

“So given the out – you were quite happy to take it?”

“Absolutely!”

“And given my intention to move through a series of exercises, this was one we left hanging. My feeling is that that process – in terms of talking about it – goes nowhere at that point.”

“Well --- personally it went somewhere – now being able to revisit that place with no problems – even though feeling the shame happening.”

Note again the signs here of that same aesthetic distancing that permits discharge of some of the fear that initially blocked Paul’s access to the feeling of shame, though the overall experience is slightly ‘under-distanced’. In many cases like this, the process often jams up – ‘I’ve told my story so what do I do from here?’ Maybe in a therapeutic context we can take it further but here, with thirty-five people and an experiential education program, we cannot go much further. Even in therapy, as I will show later, achieving forgiveness for a particular shameful incident is often more a process of shame reduction – not shame re-evaluation.⁴¹²

Later in the interview (after we have discussed the compass of shame work and the empathic response) I ask **Paul** to reflect on whether the ‘support’ he was looking for earlier, would be more effective in shifting shame if it had been given before or after these later exercises?

“Mmm [pause] I think that – that maybe if I’d have got the support before having gone through that process it would have taken away some of (this) powerful process. It is almost like you would need to have completed the cycle before you are ready to accept that support in many ways. There is something

⁴¹² I suggest that shame reduction processes usually involve work on each separate ‘shame issue’ - represented by one or more shame memories - so that each gets re-evaluated as less serious than usually recalled. It is a process not unlike analysis in which one spends a large part of the future healing the past.

that is so personal that it has to happen in isolation - before you can actually have this sort of feeling of pride at having done it – having gone through it – without that tension or that anxiety being taken away from you by that support. So even though - even though as I said in the first part I wanted that support in order to stay in the process - almost knowing that I needed to go through it without that support to fill myself with the pride at having done it. I'm not sure why that is."

Exercise #4 – A compass of shame

This exercise starts with participants seated at the end of the previous one. It proceeds in three stages:

Stage 1: Building the compass

I write 'SHAME' on a sheet of piece of paper and place in the centre of the room. If there has been discussion in Exercise #3 of the way other emotions often sit on top of shame, the words for these can be written on separate pieces of paper and stacked with shame on top. This acknowledges that while shame is the primary emotion we are considering it is often bound to or covered up by other emotions. Today we bring it into the light and place it on top.⁴¹³

I draw attention to the SHAME space and briefly model the shift to shame affect when stepping onto this space.⁴¹⁴ I then ask:

“What are the ways that we use to avoid feeling shame?” “What do we do to avoid going here?”

People will offer a wide range of suggestions based on their own behaviour, but with the focus on what we **do** the responses can be seen to fall into one of four categories

- ❑ **Attack other** – including anger, 'defence', aggression, violence in various forms, criticism (of others), and self-justification
- ❑ **Attack self** – including depression, suicide, self harm, self criticism, some aspects of prolonged or 'defensive' grief
- ❑ **Hide from other** – withdraw, hide, run away, go quiet, become invisible,

⁴¹³ In the extended (facilitator training) version of the workshop the full range of affect emotions can be drawn out by questions. Keywords in the SHAME, GRIEF, ANGER, DISGUST, FEAR SURPRISE EXCITEMENT and JOY affect-emotion families can be written on separate pieces of paper. Other non-primary affect-emotions, co-assemblies and cognates such as powerlessness, disappointment jealousy contempt etc can be grouped on a separate page and added also. However, this participatory work is a bonus. The primary affect-emotions can simply be presented as a stack with shame on top or, even more simply the word SHAME on a single piece of paper placed in the centre of the room. Other emotion-words can be added later if needed and used to physically mask or unmask the word shame that is now staring us in the face from the centre of the room.

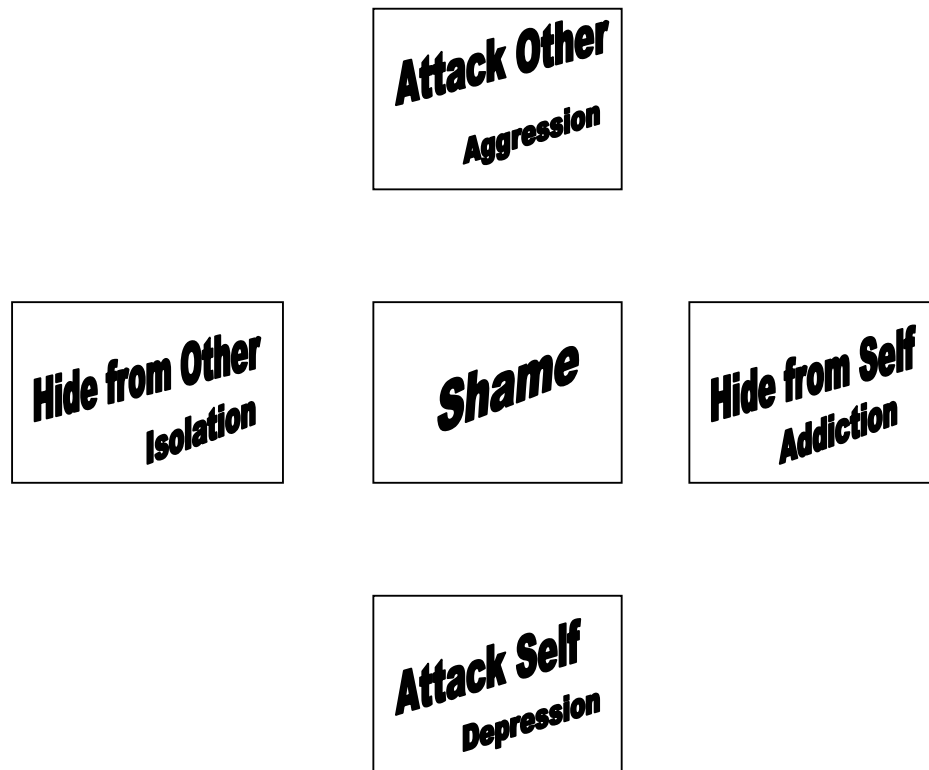
⁴¹⁴ This happens spontaneously – it takes effort to mask it.

- **Hide from self** – all the addictions here (alcohol, drugs, work, love sex, sport etc.) and fantasies.

I use these responses to build the compass of shame on the floor with labels on sheets of paper - see Fig 5.3.⁴¹⁵ This is best done in two stages:

- Establish the four directions and label these as *Attack-Other*, *Attack-Self*, *Hide-from-Other*, and *Hide-from-Self* – the **personal** responses to avoiding shame
- Draw out that these represent not just personal responses to shame but also the four common **social** crises of: *Aggression*, *Depression*, *Isolation* and *Addiction*.⁴¹⁶

Fig 6.3 The Floor Compass of Shame



⁴¹⁵ These can be written at the time or pre-prepared.

⁴¹⁶ For convenience I usually write the social forms of these poles in a different colour or on different coloured/separate pieces of paper.

Stage 2: Modelling walking the compass

As facilitator I then model the experience of how I use each of these poles as a shame defence/avoidance strategy by standing on the points of the compass and describing my behaviour pattern. I know that, as I do this, the affects will be visible. I invite the participants to pay attention and describe what they observe.

“What do you notice as I stand here/talk about . . .?”

My story acknowledges that my first line of defence is to go on the attack. **[Attack Other]** I was an angry child and an angry adult and, while I can claim to have channelled this into social activism around a sense of injustice and social indignation, it has its roots in shame avoiding. This showed itself in personal relationships and social situations and was often the ‘undoing’ of my efforts. When I can’t use anger I tend to go and hide **[Hide from Other]** withdraw from the situation physically or emotionally – I am ‘not there’. I spent a significant part of my life hiding from myself either with various brain altering chemicals (not much alcohol) **[Hide from Self]** or hiding in work and particularly hiding in the idea that relationships could provide the parts of my life that were missing – what some people call ‘co-dependency’ or relationship/love addiction’. I’ve given up most of the addictions but I keep coffee as a daily reminder to me of my addictive tendencies. I can get into self-blame on occasions but it wasn’t until I started this shame work and in the process endured the deepest and longest bout of depression I’ve known that I came to fully appreciate this pole of the compass **[Attack Self]** and its relation to ‘shame’. In a sense I needed to go to this place in order to fully understand it and move beyond it. There are parts of this story that I’m not proud of **[I step to the middle]**, that I can feel ashamed of **[Shame affect]** and being able to feel this – I can catch myself when I am or am about to ‘act out’ and know that there is shame at the core. It allows me to stop attacking, or hiding, and feel what it is that I’m feeling – and take a kind of pride in that **[Pride/Shame balance]**.⁴¹⁷

Stage 3: Participants Walk the Compass

I then invite participants to stand on or near the pole which best represents their dominant pattern of behaviour - the way they usually avoid shame - to recall this pattern and, silently, notice what they feel.

“What do you observe in yourself and in others as you do this?”

I then invite people to move in silence around the different points – including, shame in the middle. Asking: “What do you notice?” again invites people to notice their own and others’ body language – especially as people try standing in the centre.

⁴¹⁷ Each workshop experience is different. The important points in modelling this exercise are not the story but: (i) to allow whatever I feel as I move about the five positions of the compass to show; for the affect to be visible (ii) by modelling it at a personal level to reduce the distance between participants and facilitator - here I am closer to being a ‘mutual’ participant in the process the others will soon experience. The shame and shame-pride affect displays occur naturally – they don’t have to be ‘acted’.

I balance the needs/involvement of participants and timing of workshop in deciding when to bring this part to a close by saying:

“When you are ready return to your seat in the circle.”⁴¹⁸

And I invite last person standing to remain saying:

“Would you be willing to work with me on this?”⁴¹⁹

In the workshop this flows immediately into the next exercise. There is no de-briefing of this experience until the end. For convenience, before we describe the next exercise I will explore some of the participants’ recollections and reflections on Exercise #4 here.

Many of the questionnaire-based reflections on this exercise were brief, indicating that the exercise was powerful but that the participants have little to contribute in detail. Mark’s response is typical.

Mark: *“I already understood this. Seemed very clear as it was visual. I started on Hide from other - Felt comfortable. I don’t think there were many others there. As I moved around the compass I had to consider how much I did those. I do them all. In the centre - less feeling of shame.”*

Extracting people’s recollections by interview required a lot of probing as the following extracts indicate. Andy’s recollections highlight some interesting features.

“Where did you start?”

Andy: *“Ah - I probably went to attack self I’d imagine – [laughs]”*

[Mockingly] “Oh really! - I can’t think why!”⁴²⁰

[Laughs]

“So what goes on there?”

[Pause]

“You walk to that space - what comes up – thoughts feeling and other things that you notice?”

[Almost inaudibly] – *“The sort of way I put myself down – make myself wrong.*

[Pause]”

“Uh-huh?”

[Long pause]

“So these are recollections – of past patterns?”

“Yeah!”

⁴¹⁸ This may need to be repeated. I don’t say, “Stop now”. I want to see who is the last person willing to return to his/her seat.

⁴¹⁹ The ‘last man standing’ approach is one way of selecting the person to model the next exercise. In the development of the workshops have used this as a personal challenge. I do not consciously select the man or woman who I think will be the ‘best’ or ‘easiest’ person to work with or avoid the one who I suspect will be the most difficult.

⁴²⁰ Recall the earlier comment on Andy’s self-blame/attack-self script.

“So what is the feeling there?”

“Probably grief.”

“Uh huh?”

“*And some anger about that too.*” [Brief display of self-contempt]

“Can you separate out the grief-anger combination from the disgust?”

“*Umm – Yeah – well the disgust is what I’m in when I’m attacking myself I guess – Umm – and the grief and the anger is the response to that when I realise that is – that’s what I have been doing.*”

“. . . what do you notice about yourself as you are standing there?”

“*Umm – In my body? Umm – [Pause] – Ah - kind of hang-dog – umm – [long pause] in terms of affect. [Voice trails off]*”

“And the others standing there with you?”

“*Uhhhh [sigh]*

“If you did notice them?” [Laugh]

[Laughs] “*Well if there were, I didn’t notice them [Laughs]*”

“Yep Very common – despite . . . ‘what do you notice about yourself **and others**’ it becomes an intensely personal experience. Where did you go after that?”

“*Umm – probably to hide from self.*”

“Noticings?”

“*Umm – [pause] I think it - I was going to say it felt more comfortable than the [attack self] because of the recognition that when I’m in that place I’m numb in some way or I’ve distracted myself from whatever the initial feeling was that sent me there. It’s some substitute. And I think I looked around a bit more – I think there was a sort of rueful acknowledgement that yes I go to this place . . . Umm – I know I went to ‘attack others’ last so . . . Hide from others next. . . . (That was) kind of sooky.*”

“Sooky?”

“*Ahh – [long pause] [Laughs]*”

“. . . You’ll have to explain it.”

“*Umm – [slight laugh] – Well - It was – was a pejorative term used from my childhood where – umm – perhaps self pitying – withdrawing out of the – you know – nobody loves me – umm – idea. Or more than that [slight laugh] that [Yawn] people out there are judging me so I’ll stay away from them – and I’ll protect myself. . . . The last one is a defensive – fuck-you position – [voice stronger] like, well who are you to judge me. So in some ways perhaps superficially it felt more powerful – because I’m not putting myself down there – or I tell myself I’m not putting myself down at least – Umm – Yeah – if there’s a problem it is someone else’s fault.*” [Strong anger affect is visible]

“Interesting how the affect follows the recollection . . .”

[Slight laugh]

“. . . Unfortunately we don’t carry a mirror around . . .”

“*Yeah!*

“. . . that tells us what signals we are sending. Except other people of course – they are the walking mirror! [Pause] So – the core of shame - right in the middle?”

“Yeah – I felt like I’d dropped all those other things and was just there in it . . . it was a decision to go there and see what it felt like. [Pause]”

“Uh huh – and?”

[Long Pause] “I’m trying to recapture that – Umm [pause] That – that – it felt exposed.”

“To what?”

“Well – to – umm – potential judgement and condemnation and – and I feel there was almost a serenity to it.”

“Tell me more?”

“Well it is like – here I am I’m standing in it – and – that’s all I can do Umm [pause]”

“Is that resignation or something else?”

“Umm – surrender – umm – I guess – umm – I guess a humility – which – which actually carries a pride with it – Umm”

“Anything else you notice there?”

“Umm – [Laugh] I don’t think I observed the others very closely”

Note how much harder it is to extract a ‘story’ or narrative from this exercise. What emerges is much more ‘plot’ than ‘story’ – the underlying ‘script’ for the way that shame-avoidance has led to some deeply rooted life patterns. The emotional tone of distress and anger clearly follows recollection of the patterns of ‘attack-self’ and ‘attack-other’; and shame begins to take on a new identity – one that has ‘serenity’ about it when the other patterns are given away - with ‘humility and pride’ rolled together.

Geoff, Keith and David are members of the same men’s group who shared the workshop experience.⁴²¹ The process of walking the compass triggers memories of particular patterns and a deeper understanding of how these, previously separate patterns are related to shame.

Geoff: *“Let’s see – when I was young I used to attack others – then when I discovered drugs I would hide from self – [laughs] camped out in this little corner for about 20 years – did such a good job hiding here I was probably hiding from others as well. Then when I started this work – I remember in the early days of the men’s group I did a good job of that – taking self - . . . [voice trails off]”*

“Mmm?”

“Getting licks in before – [pause]”

“Say that again?”

[Laughs] “ – said I get the licks in before [laughter] – before

⁴²¹ Men’s Group retreat, Seal Rocks, May 2001.

“Before what?”

“Before anyone else has a chance.”

“Uh – hmm?”

“And - [Laughs] Yes! – [Laughs]

“Very common – in fact there is like a legitimacy in – we’re being real when we are attacking ourselves?”

“Well yeah – exactly – I thought it was the only – the only way of being authentic in the group – not telling stories – yeah!”

“Increasingly I’m coming to challenge it – that whole idea of going to grief – the beat up on self – is just another mask. As you said ‘get it in before somebody gets it in to me!’ Self-deprecating humour is another way of doing it.”

“Yes that’s a classic way of doing it. The class clown . . . With the mask on.”

“So we have . . . attack . . . anger, fear grief - and various avoidance strategies including humour –avoidance and denial.”

“I was mostly into ‘medication’ – even to the point of pushing the envelope having several near-death experiences . . .”

“So what did you notice about yourself as you did this exercise?”

“I recalled – when I was ‘Attacking Others’ –my sister still blaming me until recently for making her life miserable. I see her whole reason for being depressed was me being a ruthless older brother. I didn’t realise she had taken on board that much – some profound consequences – of me being a creep. I got to see it also - when we visited my younger brothers in Denmark – had to get the last kick in . . . I have this ability to be cruel and disconnected and dish out pain without – in a cold blooded way I guess. And even today . . . even when someone is in pain – like (my sister) is crying – I can just switch right off – she can cry her eyes out – and not even want to go there or even be empathetic. [Pause]”

“What are you noticing about yourself or others as you stand there?”

“Like now or then? [Pause] Then? [Long pause] Don’t know – it comes so natural – Like I was a really good bastard – an ability to look for the vulnerability points and go right for it – not necessarily proud –“

“Other places?”

“I used to hide it under the guise of wild and crazy – party animal type of thing but underneath it I was first to come last to leave – never wanted to go home – that kind of stuff – probably a pain in the arse. Only in hindsight I realise that I was losing people’s respect – especially as you go further and further into – hanging around with other addicts – my room mates - became in our own little world – lock yourselves in the house – draw curtains and – you know – become insular . . .”

“Did you stand in the middle?”

“Err Yeah – not right away – when invited – I remember more about that space when we did the ‘one-on one’.⁴²² It was scary – part denial – excited – part a tough act. It was very healing for me – feeling really connected with the group – sharing my shame – and there being no judgement

David and Keith were interviewed together.⁴²³

Keith: *“... of those five processes, the one - most impact-full for me was the 4th – Um - the looking at the compass of shame – yes - then walking it – because I am a very kinaesthetic person – and to do things is when I find how I feel – you know – all that sort of kinaesthetic type stuff. In walking through the different stages of it – I dunno why I’d never done it before but I just suddenly saw – like – like – life on the other side. Um – what life would be like without shame – and I had a – a very clear experience of – of there being a different essence in my – my – Err - basic anger – process. Instead of it being Um – Err-mm – I’m looking for the right word. Instead of it being – umm – vitriolic - it was more like strength – strength coming from anger rather than vitriol. That was a very powerful process for me. And if (name deleted) hadn’t actually had such a lot of stuff going on for him I’d have – brought that out on the day.”*

“So in terms of walking the compass - you go to anger first?”

“Umm – no with shame I go to self-loathing first

“Attack self?”

“Yes that’s right – yes. One of the things I realised that in fact my – my sense of other people judging me, is me judging myself.”

David: *“Attack self – then hide from other – then I explored the opposites - Um – hide from self and attack other*

“I noticed really beginning to understand my – my own feelings around a lot of issues for me. I mean my abandonment issues came up for me – and my feelings of shame – of being ashamed about who I was as a little boy – how I felt as a little boy – I was ashamed to just be who I was. I felt unloved because Um – there was something wrong with me. I was sent away⁴²⁴ because – there was something wrong with me. So it was all about attack self – you know Um. And when I noticed – you know - in the compass of shame – I began to see that whole experience far more objectively – began to understand some of the processes – and understand where my anger came from – Er understand where my introversion came from – Erm – Um - It gave me an insight into some of that – sort of root feeling stuff.”

“The feeling – what do you notice as you are standing there?”

“Fairly intense – feelings – fairly intense experience – very scary, very scary – Both very scary and Um – and very enlightening at the same time ... (In the middle) it seemed to be a place where there was balance, where there was acceptance, where there was um – there was – self judgement was turned off. It seemed to be a place that was free of judgement”

⁴²² Geoff was the model for Exercise 5 in this group. We explore his experience in that role below.

⁴²³ David Williams and Keith Wilshire: interview March 2002

⁴²⁴ This refers to being sent to boarding school as a young child.

- K: *“ . . . I got the most from going to those places . . . and recognising that – Um – it was all my own self-talk. It wasn't – it was not what other people would do to me, it was what I was doing.”*
- D: *“I would say that on the outside it was a very self- [pause] - a very subjective, introverted experience. When I was in the middle I was more aware of my place in the group – more aware of what was outside of me. More aware of how other people might see me without my – [pause] more objective.”*
“And the take-home message?”
- K: *“Seeing the connection between the four polarities – was pretty important for me too. . . . I pretty much associated with three of them – aggression, isolation and addiction. . . . I can see all those four things as elements of shame – that was a bit of a revelation for me. I'd always seen it as simple - certainly separate from shame. I had a sense that anger was associated – hmm – so that was quite influential for me.”*

For many people the exercise marks the start of a shift in perspective. Shame becomes more of a collective experience than before. The intense personal nature of the feeling is seen as not only shared by others but part of a bigger picture. From this 'distance' many are able to experience the intense feelings without being overwhelmed.

Paul:⁴²⁵ *“I suppose the positive thing I saw for that was that it allowed me to reflect on other people's issues – took me away from the personal experience of shame.”*⁴²⁶

“There is an invitation to observe yourself and others.”

“Yes – which is a very strong experience - seeing someone else's experience of shame – allowed me to feel more comfortable about identifying myself there – because I wasn't on my own – was with a group who also identified that process for themselves.”

“It allowed me to identify a pattern – one which I've known about for a long time – which is -umm – in many ways is 'attack others' – before they attack me. . . . And that is a known comfortable pattern of mine – but it - again because of the experience as opposed to the intellectual idea about it – the experience said to me that it wasn't the complete story. I needed to understand what the complete story is – letting go of the intellect and going with the feeling – ended with me going back to the other side from attack-others to attack-self – and realising that this is where a lot of my addictive behaviour comes from - and where a lot of my victim-hood comes from. It is about where - the - yeah - self esteem stuff – attacking myself. . . . Standing there the feeling was quite

⁴²⁵ Paul's recollection of this follows from his earlier one about the intense experience he shared with the group in Exercise 3.

⁴²⁶ Which is what it is designed to do – to take it off the personal. Part of the shame reduction process is about recognising that it has common elements shared by many people – not least in the way we try to avoid it. The questions, “What do you notice?” “What do you notice about yourself, what do you notice about others in the same place or in other places?” are designed to get attention 'out' – a Re-evaluation counselling tool to ensure that what is inevitably an intensely personal experience is also 'distanced' by the invitation to notice others.

comfortable – which I found quite frightening – and I expected - my expectations were to almost have the feeling of shadow - that shadow side of me – but when I went there it felt almost – indulgent . . . - And very comfortable – and I could have stayed there for a long time – ”

“I had to force myself to move away from it and in that process had the realisation of how I am with addictions – it’s like I’m here and I’m enjoying it and it’s OK and I’m treating myself and I don’t need anything else and yet – knowing that it is detrimental. . . . Um – I have an automatic response to go from attack self to addiction – which is ‘hide from self’ stuff – it is almost like it is a pattern – once I have gone to attack self – it’s a deeper experience of the shame – and that moves me to addiction and that in turn moves me to isolation. In isolation I can start to go through the process of understanding the pattern I’ve just created for myself.”⁴²⁷

“What I noticed was particularly the body language and how it changed so dramatically depending who was walking into what areas - and that a lot of people standing on attack others had the same body language and so on – the body language familiar to the place they were standing. I asked myself at the time – we had so many men from different backgrounds and cultures the body language was very familiar. So it seems to me that body language goes beyond the cultural division. The other thing I noticed was that people were walking around the compass without acknowledging each other – it was a very personal thing – no discussions going on – a room full of individuals.

“The other thing I noticed going round the circle. – I had this amazing feeling of empathy towards everyone else involved in it. And I suppose that empathy was deeper because I was involved in the emotional thing myself - It wasn’t like a counsellor with someone in front of you where you can sit back and empathise with someone in front of you – a different level of empathy like I’m in here with you and I’ve got empathy because of that. On reflection I’d find it a very difficult process to be an observer of without being involved in some way – so in that facilitation role I don’t know whether – Umm - I remember doing a shortened version of the workshop with the men’s group⁴²⁸ and feeling very uncomfortable because I wasn’t involved in the process – facilitating on the outside - and felt uncomfortable for the guys going through it.”⁴²⁹ I feel it is not enough to do a part of.”

“What was the experience in the centre?”

“First I tried to avoid the centre but then I observed men standing in the centre and noticed the body language and became curious – so the . . .

“. . . the body language?”

“Low shoulders lowered head – almost like I could see energy depleting –”

“Face?”

⁴²⁷ This is the constructive use of withdrawal – sometimes suggested in earlier literature as the only constructive response to shame

⁴²⁸ Paul used some of the early ideas for working with shame as part of the training for a group of men recruited as ‘Mentors’ for a program on the NSW South Coast. From this we learned much about the importance of pacing the process and leaving people with the experience rather than trying to explain or make sense of all that it throws up.

⁴²⁹ This illustrates why I think it is important the facilitator first of all models it in front of the group – otherwise he or she will be in the position of power as the outside observer

“Face reflected a sadness in many men – yet having said that – almost like a feeling of relief – can’t explain that – but it was certainly there – I suppose that is what enticed me to go to that place.

“Eventually getting there for me – I just – almost as my foot touched the spot my body language just changed – I remember saying to myself I’m going to keep my head up and my shoulders back in here⁴³⁰ – and found it extremely difficult to do even though I had a conscious effort to maintain a non-shame pose – almost in defiance. – It wasn’t – just wasn’t – well first it wasn’t as difficult as I thought it would be to be there – so I could let go of the restriction I was putting on myself and allow myself just to be in that place. I suppose in many ways it was – just sort of – how do I put this – just being there was enough to acknowledge that it existed and that made it quite comfortable. So there was this paradox of knowing that it was going to be uncomfortable and finding it quite comfortable – and not really understanding what was going on in that place and yet not feeling confused. So there were these strange things happening.”

Note how the exercise works in triggering shame ‘as his foot touched’ the spot labelled as ‘SHAME’ – overwhelming the defensive/defiant posture with which he approached it. He doesn’t describe the shame affect in this extract – it is ‘just being’. In this part of the exercise none of the respondents are relating their stories of shame-pathology. We have taken the story off the experience of this emotion. There is actually nothing other than the pure shame. Any story the person may bring in is not being shared. The story is not being exposed. Here shame begins to take on a different meaning – even before the empathic response, which we will explore in the next Exercise. It can be uncomfortable and yet it is manageable because there is nothing associated here with a judgement. The attention here, standing on the shame centre, is on the affective emotion. Feeling it and noticing both self and others. People are noticing more about others from the centre than at the periphery. We can wonder what another’s story might be but we don’t know. All we have to go on is the visual – {‘am I, is he/she showing shame or not?’} I think this is different from most other shame reduction work in that this is not a re-evaluation of an incident or pattern of incidents to reach a point where they may be less shameful than I thought they were. This is a re-evaluation of shame itself.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ This is the classic ‘head back look’ shame-defence, referred to earlier.

⁴³¹ I take up this point in more detail in the next chapter.

Exercise #5 – Unmasking shame - the empathic response

This is the pivotal exercise in the workshop. The choice of ‘the last person standing’ from the previous exercise avoids preferential selection of a person who the facilitator believes would be a suitable model for this exercise.⁴³²

I invite the person standing (the model) to choose one of the ways he/she traditionally avoids shame and stand at that point on the compass (anywhere will do, even a combination or in-between point, e.g. between attack and hiding). I invite rest of group to position themselves where they can observe and invite them to watch closely:

“Blink and you might miss it!”

And then ask the model:

“Tell me about this place?”

Just a brief description is needed to get its relationship to this person’s shame avoidance pattern and his/her desire to avoid going there. It is important to arrest detailed story telling, if necessary by asking group what they notice? The group will invariably report feeling uncomfortable, distant from the model.⁴³³

I then ask the model:

“How far are you willing to walk towards the centre?”⁴³⁴

Responses will vary from strong resistance, to a rush to the centre. I encourage a small movement:

“Getting there isn’t important it is feeling what happens when you start to move.”⁴³⁵

⁴³² To date this exercise has consistently revealed the shame affect display and the empathic response – regardless of who is chosen. This has encouraged me to believe that these results are perhaps universal and not specific to the personality of either the person modelling or the facilitator. From an experimental point of view, the consistency between my observations: across all of the groups this workshop has been run with, and the many different people’s reported experience of it, adds validity to the hypothesis that the visual display of shame is critical to the triggering of a particular quality of empathic response in those who witness it. Jane Pennington has reported similar results using this script to facilitate workshops in the USA. (Personal communication, April 2003).

⁴³³ This is a consistent feature of responses from witnesses – they sense that in story-telling the person is avoiding (masking) shame. There is an incongruity between words and body language.

⁴³⁴ It is not necessary to name this centre as ‘shame’. Below we explore an instance where a man argued that it was not shame he was avoiding. We wrote his preferred word on a piece of paper and placed it in the centre on top of SHAME – the exercise worked just the same. There was a similar instance in an anger management group with the same result.

⁴³⁵ Often there will be hesitation – a holding on to old patterns – a desire to tell the story. The question: “How far are you willing to move towards the centre?” can be repeated after each interruption – it becomes assertive – the only question that I’m going to entertain – and as such focuses the process. Sometimes there is a rush to the centre – an over-riding of the feeling. This too can be arrested to allow the detail of the experience to be felt and observed. This is the one place in the workshop where a clear intention and assertiveness around that intention on the part of the facilitator is essential. We are, after all, attempting to contradict the ingrained personal and cultural patterns of shame avoidance.

A small step towards or stepping onto the centre will instantly trigger shame affect (it may be momentary but noticeable). I ask the group:

“What did you notice?”

I draw out the observations of body language / affect, and invite them to name it:

“What do we call that?”

‘Shame’ (embarrassment etc.)

I then ask the model:

“What are you feeling?”

I will explore this enough to ground the experience but again interrupt any lengthy story. The group can be used to support this. Ask them

“What do you notice?”

They will often say he/she

‘has gone away’; ‘talked himself out of it’.

They report a sense of disconnection or notice that the shame affect has been masked. To the model I say:

“Don’t go away from it / Stay with the feeling / Can you stay with the feeling?”
etc.

When there is stable affect of shame on the model, I ask the Group:

“What do you feel when you see that?” {the shame affect}.⁴³⁶

I acknowledge the responses from the group and draw out the common element - that these are predominantly (often universally) the language of **empathy**.

Then I will ask the Model:

“What do you feel when you hear that?” (i.e. the empathic words spoken by the group).⁴³⁷

At this point the affect change can be quite profound. People often describe it as a lifting of the heavy/oppressive weight of shame. There is often surprise, curiosity (interest) and a smile (joy) – the transformation from shame to pride. I ask the group:

“What do you notice?”

‘The body language / facial signals’ I draw out the details.

“What do we call that?”

‘Pride/self respect’ etc.

“Is that genuine? Up himself? How do you know it? etc.

⁴³⁶ This is the pivotal question of the exercise and the workshop.

⁴³⁷ Using **“hear that”** (rather than “see”) acknowledges that, often, the ‘shame-faced’ model will be looking at the ground throughout the responses of the witnesses – only briefly raising his/her eyes to check the validity/congruence of the words with the speaker’s face.

The Group will say it is:

'authentic pride' – 'it has still a visible element of shame' 'modesty' or 'humility rather than 'up-himself' pride.'

I then close this part of exercise.⁴³⁸ With the group re-seated, I invite people to comment on what was observed and felt. I draw out and explore people's experiences and then invite questions, comments and discussion to explore the question "What's the lesson here?"

Many people report that this exercise is the most significant part of the workshop – whether they experienced it as the model or as a witness.

Don experienced this exercise as the model.⁴³⁹ As he was invited to do this work he returned to the centre of the room and stood on the SHAME spot with his head down shoulders rounded and hands clasped in front. The first step was to invite him to choose one of the poles of the compass as his starting point. He chose HIDE-FROM-OTHER.

Don: *"By this stage in the workshop the affect was in my awareness; so when I stepped into the centre and stood in the 'shame' it simply rose out of my belly and I could not look at anyone. When you moved me back out of the SHAME centre, I went back into my head and expressed contempt and anger - and I felt a loss of some sort of integrity. Then when I moved back to SHAME. Here I recovered the sense of 'properness' or 'integrity' and a sense of connection with the other men in the group. I seemed to go down into grief actually."*

"Yes it was."

*"Then I slowly stood up."*⁴⁴⁰

"Do you remember what brought you out of it?"

"The empathy. As you drew the responses from the group, I felt as if I was surfacing through some sort of membrane and standing up. The tears were still running down my face but my whole body was straightening. The only words that can describe that feeling are 'Standing in my ordinariness, my humanity'."

"And the one non-empathic comment?"

One man had distanced himself from the rest of the group and was standing about a metre to one side. When the group was asked the crucial question 'what do you feel when you see that?' His response was 'I am really angry with you for holding him there'. Don raised his eyes and growled quietly 'nobody holds me anywhere I don't want to be!' and returned to the process.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ It is important to ensure 'completion' for the model who should be given the opportunity to speak and ground his/her experience of this transformation before the general discussion.

⁴³⁹ ANZMLG Perth, April 2001.

⁴⁴⁰ This recollection telescopes the process as we will see.

⁴⁴¹ Interviews with Paul and Andy confirmed the event, as described.

“I don’t remember that – I was so deep in the experience [Blush is visible]”

“What’s going on right now?”

“Oh I’m actually quite proud of that – that’s the revolt!”

“But the affect is an intense blush of shame – something . . .”

“ . . . probably I don’t think you can have pride without shame - it makes no sense.”

Don indicated how, in being asked to recall the experience he felt

“ . . . an instinctive reluctance/avoidance to go back to those places.”⁴⁴²

“Back then, what I felt in the shame centre was an energetic contraction. I ‘shrank’ into the position of shame. As I stood in the centre, in what I felt like a very small space, I felt a slow expansion happening . . . (either) because of the empathy flowing from the group - which I’m sure helped - (or you) as facilitator. It was like coming up from under water. It felt very contained. I remember breathing deeply as I came into that expanded place. Is it ‘proper’ pride or relief one has at dropping the ‘bullshit’ – the expansion into ‘presence’ – the now? - requiring my full and immediate presence.”

At this point he recalled T.S. Eliot’s lines:

*“Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always –
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything) . . .”⁴⁴³*

This is **Geoff**’s experience of modelling it in front of a different group.⁴⁴⁴

“As soon as I stepped in I - that’s when everything was suspended . I was able to just be in those spaces – in the previous exercise I was able to try them out but when I was there by myself it was like I was just naked and . . . - Well – Yeah - when I was in that sense of feeling naked I was free to – I felt all those constraints of self um doubts just dissolve and I was able to explore – I think – don’t know - that I was all of the above and that allowed me to go into the centre – and none of them were good or bad. I had that experience that it wasn’t good or bad it was so – you know – it was one of those um out of time – out of body – I mean time really slowed down . . .”

“As you stepped into the centre what did you notice?”

“Um [He pauses – eyes down, body slumps then he sits up and makes eye contact] – well I felt for the er – I felt total acceptance by the group which allowed me to accept myself – which was kind of weird – it was – I felt no judgement – I felt unconditional love – I didn’t label it as that but that’s how, looking back, I see it as that - which allowed me to um accept myself or suspend judgement on myself – because that’s what I had been doing – ‘How do I measure up?’ and all those conversations just kind-of suspended. It was

⁴⁴² His partner Mardhi, who we will meet below, also reported a similar reaction.

⁴⁴³ Eliot, 1944, Little Gidding, V.

⁴⁴⁴ Men’s Group retreat, Seal Rocks May 2002.

like a freedom to just be – and be myself, which I don't give myself permission very often – particularly in the group so it was kind of . . . ”

“So that’s the thinking – what’s the feeling?”

*“The feeling was – [pause] kind of connected – it’s interesting because even though I was **by** myself it was a feeling of oneness – I really felt connected to the group even though I was kind of isolated and in the spotlight – in the hot seat in the middle - I felt very peaceful. Fear had been suspended. I had fear before I went in – like when I first raised my hand and stuff - um I felt, like a warmth um [pause] [eyes down - blushes] Um [pause] that kind of connected – felt loved and . . . ”*

“When you step into that . . . ?”

“Straight into it . . . ”

“. . . the other stuff falls away?”

“Yeah it was weird – ‘cos, um I thought it was going to be the opposite. I thought I was going to go in and turn like – as a red assed baboon [Laughs] you know. I thought I was going to be embarrassed – bare-assed – the whole thing, but it wasn’t. It was weird ‘cos that’s what I was expecting and I was ready to go for it – and I was willing to go – go - to go into that. ”

“At that point the group is asked, ‘What do you feel when you see that?’ – As you are standing there – do you remember what was said?”

[Pause] “No. – Um I do remember my mask – It felt my mask kind of fell away – so I think I had my defences – I had some kind of protection and I think it fell away – or at least it felt like it did – like it melted away when I was looking around um, but I don’t know what they asked. ”

“And to you – ‘what do you feel when you hear that?’”

“Well I think they started to mirror that actually, I think it was validated . . . someone said that they had witnessed the mask – that hardness or the shell had kind of dissolved and I think that was –. That was validation and um - kind of felt that, and to get it mirrored to actually have the feedback thing -.”

“So this far out from that – what’s the take-home message?”

“Um – you got to be in it to win it. [Laugh] It’s almost like the eye of the needle – that’s what it felt like – felt like you have to go - through – the eye of the needle that’s what my experience was and I still don’t know um [pause]. It’s like a portal – it was like, and – it almost felt like – and I haven’t been in the [trails off]. I’ve read the book of living and dying – you confront all of your – your shadow selves – ‘cos that’s what I was before - and all those bits were coming up – all those inauthentic bits and those incomplete things – the flaws and all the things you’ve done wrong and stuff. There was a chance to confront all those and see that you weren’t those – but in a safe space – I don’t know if that’s valid – but it’s almost like walking through a room of mirrors or whatever they describe when you are on the other side in transition – but in a safe space and in a circle and . . . ”

“And in a sense you walk past them . . . ”

“You walk past them so you don’t get stuck - yeah – so it was like being reborn – stepping off the wheel of Karma [laughs] from a spiritual thing – There was a chance where I could have turned around and – there was initially the fear and stuff - but it was that safety that – I guess um. Um, I don’t know how I’d react in a room of less intimate friends – but I don’t know if it would have

really mattered but um – yeah it was – there was that permission given by the group.”

Notice in this, as in many of the others above, the language of fear – fear of shame – that seems to dissolve as the shame is faced, stepped into and shown – and then how the reaction of others lifts shame into something like pride.

In the workshop however the effect is not just that experienced by the model. The witnessing of it is critical. Keith and David witnessed Geoff’s process.

David *“Oh that was huge! I recall an outpouring of empathy – [Pause] . . . I just wanted to cuddle him – I just wanted to love him – and yeah – I just wanted to nurture him [long pause]*

Keith *“Yeah that was huge – yeah – huge! [Very long pause] I’m having trouble putting it all into words. That was a special time. No doubt about it. Umm . . . I think I realised – um – I realised at a very deep level that I’m not the only one to feel that way. That helped – umm- experiencing Geoff’s process. I can see that was a – a very special moment. A bit like it was a real reflection of how I was feeling inside. . . . Just going back one step . . . I’ve been more aware of um – of having been very selfish with myself – in assuming that other people thought the same way I did – Umm – so when Geoff was going through what he was doing there was – a bit like David said - I felt a - a great deal of empathy for – for what he was experiencing – and – and like a sharing of the collective – you know – ‘shame’ thing. Like instead of it being a - a ‘poor me’ it was more ‘we all experience these things’ and Err – it is - [inaudible] - It gets you away from – the essence – of my response to shame. I still feel shame sometimes. Umm – just not Umm – not the negative self-beliefs to it.”*

Few people can recall what was actually said by the witnesses at the critical moment. My recollection is of phrases similar to those reported earlier when the anger management group did this exercise. They involve recognition of the uncomfortable nature of the experience of showing the shame; and, critically, both a feeling of and a distancing from this feeling. People say: ‘I wouldn’t want to be there’ ‘I can feel some of what he might be feeling’ etc. There is both repulsion and attraction to it, and an acknowledgement of courage to stand there and to (silently) take responsibility for whatever lies behind the shame. The take-home message is the sense of having felt ‘with’ the person – a sense of the collective ‘feeling with’ that the groups all, without much hesitation, described as ‘empathy’.

Andy and Paul witnessed Don’s experience. Their reflections below provide further insights into this process. **Andy** first:

“Andy – Don gets asked to model it for the group - your first reaction when that happens?”

“Something about him being a little boy too . . . In a way similar to what I got when I watched Paul {in Exercise 3} – He’s – it felt like, normally, one who –

who has some - a lot of self assurance and - um - indeed some personal authority - Ah - and all of that was gone, it seemed to me. Yeah! So it was quite um - quite vulnerable - almost like a naughty little boy who had been caught doing something that he shouldn't have.⁴⁴⁵ He seemed abashed - seemed - slumped. I don't think he was looking at anyone."

"How did you feel when you saw that?"

"Umm - I think I felt closer to Don - I felt - it's a term you use but I guess the closest - the strongest one I can - most accurate one - is - you know - I felt empathy for him. . . . Then (after he heard the group's responses) he was standing quite strongly."

"What do we call that? A shift has happened and that is . . . ?"

"Ah - sort of self acceptance. Umm - Relief [Pause] Relief slash/ release - a kind of unburdening. "

In the workshop people consistently refer to this as if they have seen a 'burden' lifted from the man and they name what he then shows as 'pride', often coupled with the idea of 'self respect'.

"What is it that makes it genuine? How do we know when that dignity, that self-respect that acceptance of self is an OK expression of pride - what makes it OK?"

Andy: [Long Pause] "Well it's not inflated - there is no - like false pride is a veneer really - it doesn't let anyone in - yeah! Whereas this is naked, exposed, just being there."

"What does it have?"

"Honesty - Humility!"

In Chapters Three and Four we explored the shame spectrum: humility, shyness, embarrassment, shame, guilt, humiliation, shading into each other - each distinguished by the circumstances that trigger it and the way we react to it, but all linked by the common affect. In this discussion Andy and I explored the Yin-Yang mandala (see Fig 6.4) as another way of picturing shame and pride 'as two sides of the same coin'.

"The mandala has a seed of yin within the yang and vice versa. Within authentic pride there is just a tinge of shame-humility. What then is authentic shame?"

"Something that has a kernel of pride?"

"So can we have an idea of what is false shame and authentic shame - false pride and authentic pride?"

⁴⁴⁵ In his interview Don describes his earliest memory - "at age 4 standing in a room on my own looking down at black patent leather shoes, yellow socks and brown pants and **ducks** knitted into my jumper, saying 'Donald is not a naughty boy'."

“False pride has no shame within it – false shame has no pride in it!”⁴⁴⁶

Fig 6.4 A shame-pride mandala?



To be authentic, *'Pride'* needs to be tinged with shame-humility if it is not to be seen as 'shameless': the overbearing, vaunting pride or hubris that today, as in Ancient Greece, leads to our downfall, our nemesis. But equally then authentic *'Shame'* also needs a tinge of its 'shadow' – that measure of quiet self-esteem, self-respect, indeed dignity. The attack-self, mea-culpa, sorrow, remorse and grief struck patterns that are so often presented as 'showing shame' are often just aspects of another of its masks.

The reaction to an authentic display of shame is usually an empathic one – a feeling **with** the model. Paul's recollection below captures this empathic response but with detail that suggests how this 'feeling-with' has been 'distanced'. He describes, in terms that are reminiscent of Richard Hauser's 'ambivalence', being pulled in several directions. For him

⁴⁴⁶ For an interesting discussion of the yin-yang symbolism in terms of cultural ideology and the tensions between 'power' and 'solidarity' – not unlike the 'pride'/'shame' axis/mandala described here – see Hodge and Louie, 1998, pp48-53.

this allows both intense experience of the feeling and (just) avoids being overwhelmed or being engulfed by the feeling.

Paul: *“When Don was standing there in the centre and going through the shame process – the empathy from myself and the other men in the group was that strong you could almost touch it – yet almost a relief that it wasn’t me there – so I had this dualism – empathy and this absolute relief it wasn’t me.”*⁴⁴⁷

*“I suppose my main recollection of that was of the feeling of Don standing in the centre, in many ways being the vessel for the shame of this whole group of guys.”*⁴⁴⁸ *So, I felt empathy and, as I said before, a great deal of relief that it wasn’t me there, but at the same time it was like Don was standing there and, while going through his own shame process, was doing it for the other guys in the room. So here he was doing this for us – so, an overwhelming feeling of compassion that someone was doing this for me – going through this shame process - and I’m not a religious person but one of the things that came up for me was ‘Jesus Christ being shamed on the cross for the sins of manhood’. And when that came up for me I got a shock – ‘Whoa!’ ‘Where did that come from?’ – and I think that memory and the body feeling was so strong that everything else seemed to black out for me. I was part of this group of men and yet felt very alone. I was witnessing somebody in shame, yet felt that they were doing it and I wasn’t. Yet I felt very connected to them because it was also my shame that they were doing. So having these strong emotional feelings yet – umm. Even though I was in a room with a group of guys (that) I felt very empathetic with, I felt very isolated at the same time. [Pause] Which was a very similar experience to that going round the shame compass earlier.*

“ . . . the general emotional memory of the whole exercise was one of intensity, achievement and also one of relief that it was over. . . . My feelings around that were firstly one of great relief – and - isolation. Relief it wasn’t me – and isolation. And a sense of belonging to the effect – and wanting it to end – for Don to be back among us – and knowing that was my un-comfort around it – and wanting Don to stay there and have this experience. – ‘While you are having it it’s Ok – I can still have the emotional responses and be isolated from it’. And then feeling a bit of shame in relationship to feeling that.”

“And as he lifted his head and stood up?”

Umm – pride that he’d actually done it – pride that this man had - done it for us – you know - that I don’t have to – and then a feeling of -- like I could feel the wave of the men who wanted to reach out to Don nourishing him and holding him and feeling the things I wanted to and didn’t have to.

Note how here the empathy embraces both the shame and the pride. He shares in the ‘pride’ felt and shown by Don. He can also feel with Don’s shame - because he does not have to! The empathic response is appropriately distanced.

⁴⁴⁷ Note how this is similar to the language reported earlier from the anger management program. ‘I really feel for him and I’m bloody glad it’s not me’ ‘I wouldn’t want to go there – but I can feel for him’ and it is said with the affect of surprise – it comes out as – {‘Oh I said **that!**’} – almost like they can’t believe they are hearing themselves saying this

⁴⁴⁸ A colleague working as a counsellor with people in recovery from drug addiction, describes this process of carrying shame for a family or a group as like being the ‘Shame-Sherpa’. Steve Stokes: interview, November 2001.

Dane has participated in this exercise several times, first in the anger management program and then at a Men's gathering. He has experienced this empathy from both sides. First as part of an anger management program where he was the model.⁴⁴⁹

Dane: *"I remember . . . walking to the centre. It's the hopelessness that you feel – realising that you're not far from the centre anyway, but accepting that - [laughs] – accepting that you will like go back there. That's – Um – that was the hardest thing – . . ."*

"The rest of the group is facing you – the invitation is how far are you willing to walk towards the middle – and at some point you step onto that shame spot. What happens in that moment?"

"Ah yeah! Without – without um giving it too much –. Like a forbidden zone – like you think: 'Now hang on – I, I feel like - now –.' Let-me-explain. I, I – like -. You don't know how to cope with that feeling. I, I don't know how to cope. I . . ."

"What happens when you step there anyway?"

*"Oh you feel – **you feel!** You feel like you are um – you feel. [Slight pause] – And it's that powerful like , like, you know, I suppose in it with the – with the life I've had and the lessons I've learn, that - that is obviously a significant huge part of my being."*

"So what happens to your body?"

*"Oh – you feel, you feel weak, you feel vulnerable, you feel sick – you feel teary-deary – you feel scared and you don't feel desperate, you feel hopeless. **Hopeless!**"*

"Now the question to the group is: 'What do you guys feel when you see that?' They are watching you as you stepped on to that spot. What was said?"

*"Well, it's funny because the blokes that gave verbal responses, like some even said and, I remember, I **remember** [slight pause]– the guy says "Oh look, you know, it's Ok, you know like, it's alright like, and by saying 'It's OK' they knew what you were feeling . . ."*

"UH-huh?"

". . . not anybody there – and even the hard cases – not - nobody there didn't not relate to that feeling, one way or another and I think everybody felt it in an extreme way."

"OK. So we're hearing this – that they are feeling with you . . ."

"Yes!"

". . . that they know what you are feeling. What's the effect of that, as you hear that?"

*[Slight pause] "Oh – that, that's the be-, best words you could ever hear. It's like um, you know – er, you **know**. Er, I think there, that, that-th-that was the real core that bring us together - erm – er because they felt that there – 'well hang on', 'under all this' – I felt we are all the same and . . ."*

"Uh hum"

". . . I think the feeling from my side was, 'Hang on. I'm worse than you', but I wasn't sure – I think 'well hang on we're all –' we all felt that same intense

⁴⁴⁹ Dane Millanta: interview, October 2002.

emotion where our other experiences were many and varied, but that hit home hard with me – I think it hit home hard with everybody.”

“And what happened to you when you heard that?”

“I felt good! I felt good, I fe-, I felt that I was - I thought, ‘Oh hang on, like you know it’s not – er – as hopeless as I, as I feel – like I have, I have friends there, I have, ah, souls around’. I felt that’s how you would feel, in my mind when I’ve contemplated suicide or something like that – that’s the feeling in my heart when I think ‘now hang on this is’ - you know – and by being there I thought ‘Ah, hang on there’s people that have been here too – that have felt like this’ – And these guys know how I felt – and I could tell that because no-one was dumbfounded.”

“Mm”

“It was very intense – Um I remember the night in particular⁴⁵⁰, it was very draining – Um – you know and er, I remember doing a lot at that point – but I wa- was still drinking - erm. I though ‘Ah, hang on like’ - like as when you thought the pecking order -. When it comes back to it there was something that brang us all together strongly.”

“Thanks – do you remember when other people did the same thing?”

“Yes!”

“You are now on the outside – you are watching this – the same sequence - they start somewhere and your feeling when they are out on the edge is what?

[Pause]

“What do you feel when you see them on the edge?”

“Ah [pause] well [pause] Ok when they are on the edge of it I felt er close in the sense that I thought that is how I was running my life – To answer that – that’s difficult – the reason being – to be on the outside that’s how I thought around my life, but when it was actually revealed – where do I think I was? – I was in the shame as opposed to . . .”

“So these guys are now on the outside and you are feeling you understand roughly what their life is about what that story is about – as they move towards the middle what changes – what are you noticing?”

“Er I think its er – there’s absolute denial there initially, but as they move towards the middle [pause] er [pause] If, I feel, I felt – you know . . . I felt sorry for them because I didn’t want them to be there. Because I thought the feeling I have there – I hope - . . . Um – I didn’t feel happy with them being there.”

“Mm”

“Like the – you wouldn’t even wish your enemy to be there because it is that bad – and then by thinking that if you can go – ‘now hang on –.’ These guys – some of these guys – some of these guys I love. Some of these guys didn’t impress me you n-know like. Even you – no-one deserves to be there – that’s how I – that’s how I felt.”

“Do you remember in Perth when Don did that?”⁴⁵¹

“Yes!”

⁴⁵⁰ Anger management class, November 2000.

⁴⁵¹ ANZMLG, Perth, April 2001.

“Walk me through what happened when he did that.”

It was – [pause] – this sounds strange – it felt like I was there every step of the way with him – because I’d been there every step of the way with him – and I felt really sad for him – I felt incredibly sad for him because I could see what that can do. I suppose by reflecting what it did to him so graphically it stirred what it could do into me and um that, that brings out different responses because you feel sorry, and then you feel sad, and then you feel protective – but it’s his pattern coming back again – Um and I felt . . .

“And then everybody gives him the feedback . . .”

“Like one of the blokes said – and this stays in my mind – one of the guys said “Oh – don’t fucking do it to yourself.” That stays – and that’s exactly like you know like um - er – and the bloke was very verbal who said that and out of all the stuff that came out of his mouth that kind of made sense – ‘cause you know that that’s – ‘cause if I could have stopped it I would have stopped that.”

“And yet when he gets to the middle and you are asked to report ‘What are you feeling now when you see that?’ – What did people say?”

*Umm –[pause] It, it’s a hard-hitting thing because you feel –Er –[pause] that’s a hard one because you feel like it’s so many different emotions – I can use the words to describe the emotions um like there is a huge degree of um emotion from you - so I’ll say empathy, sympathy. But, like, God, you know – that, **that’s pathetic!** –You know like, and you – and I felt really sad for him as a man – as a human being – you know ‘you don’t have to go and revisit that if it’s that hard’. . . .”⁴⁵²*

“Don’s was a hard one because Don initially did not show shame – what he showed was grief. . . .”

“Ah – yes I remember yes – Ah, yes?”

“. . . So people were responding not to the shame but to the grief.”

But, but – at the end of the day when he, when he broke down I [pause] I thought, ‘Oh shit no that, that –’. I dunno, that . . .”

“Then he came through it . . . So people had difficulty first off – because grief is bringing up all these feelings that you talked about – feeling uncomfortable – like don’t do it to yourself – and yet when he got to the shame point there was a different reaction.”

“Um [pause] How I felt with that I felt that Um [pause] that I’d – that I’d been there and that my heart was there with him in every way er – because shame is unbearable – and I suppose that’s the only way to, to, to think of it.”

“And yet when you do bear it – what do you get from others?”

“Sympathy! I, I-I-I noti- I notice that and that’s Um . . .”

“Is it sympathy or empathy – and do you know what the difference is?”

“Yes! – I think it’s the empathy because you – because it’s something that [pause] you know how they feel, for whatever - you know how they – you know what that feeling does and um what – to put it in a - in a - to bring it back to, say, something tangible I would say if someone said um ‘would you stretch

⁴⁵² Note how here Dane is struggling with the ‘sympathetic’ feelings towards Don’s affective grief/distress and the distancing that this produces. His reaction: seeing the ‘attack-self’ behaviour is to describe it as ‘pathetic’ - quite different from the un-ambivalent ‘empathic’ feeling to the display of shame below.

your values for a million dollars?’ – you’d say ‘Maybe – depends on values’ – but if they say ‘Would you step in the shame box for a day?’ . . .”

[I Laugh]

“. . . [Laughs] you wouldn’t do it. Yeah I found that - that, that for whatever reason made me feel deeply moved, you know and um – er and I felt irrespective of the way it er hits you – it hits you in the same place – that’s what I thought it was – He was hurting where I was hurting – and you could see that. [Pause]

Sometimes not having fluency with words to describe our feelings illustrates the core of what it is that is being felt (in this case feeling **with** another) however we chose to describe that feeling.

There can be many variations on the process of getting to the centre of the compass but the outcome has, to date, been a similar affective expression of shame and an empathic response from the witnesses. This pattern is remarkably stable both between workshops and within any workshop however many times the exercise is repeated. I had five men experience it as ‘model’ one night in an anger management class. It seems to work whether people initially accept that shame is the central point of the compass or not. There is usually no problem with people accepting the four basic directions (and the corresponding socio-pathologies). In one anger-management class a man insisted that what he was avoiding was not shame but ‘*frustration*’. We wrote this on a sheet of paper and placed it on top of the stack in the centre. The affect displayed as he moved onto this was shame. This was described to him by the group and named by them as shame. He acknowledged this but said ‘*I don’t feel ashamed*’. The empathic response to his display of affect was similar to that described above – a ‘feeling-with’ and ‘feeling-for’ him. One man said ‘*being frustrated and unable to do anything is humiliating*’. And there was a similar shift of affect from ‘shame’ to ‘pride’.

So far we have described the experience of men in the workshop. Here’s how one woman describes the experience as part of a ‘professional development’ training day for community workers.⁴⁵³

Mardhi *“What came up was an immediacy – and urgency and a willingness and a, ‘yes, yes I’ll go there!’ . . . For me it was ‘Oh yes, yes, I know that place – alright, yes, sure’ for me it was a readiness to go there.”*

“And as you moved towards it?”

[Pause] [Quietly] “Shame – {inaudible} [shame affect visible]”

“Just opening up?”

⁴⁵³ Mardhi Reid: interview, September 2002. Mardhi is a psychotherapist, partner to Don, who has watched the evolution of this work for some time. This is her first **experience** of it.

“Yep – opening yep.”

“So you hit the middle, what happens next?”

“The - it drops – then I drop into - um – in terms of that compass what would be called shame.”

“Uh-huh?”

“It would take various [pause] various body sensations that go, goes with that.”

“For most people who haven’t got the awareness of seeing it coming it comes as a surprise to them that when they hit that the affect kicks in – In your case?”

[Pause]

“Well you know it’s coming . . .”

“. . . yeah I know it’s coming [laugh]”

“[Laugh] – yeah!”

“So there wasn’t a surprise but there was a vigilance.”

“So it really is not put on – it actually happens?”

“Yeah!”

“. . . - your foot touches that thing and . . . “

“Yep, yep, you fall down the ‘Alice in wonderland’ hole.”

“Mm”

“Yeah [laughter] OK!”

“So there’s the affect of shame kicks in [pause] Briefly? – Or is it sustained?”

“It’s sustained. The affect of shame kicks in. It’s sustained. My vigilance is about staying open to it . . .”

“Right . . .”

“. . . rather than closing down in it – that sort of working, working – it’s a working state for me, it’s not a, not a static state, not a state that stays – it’s a moving, working state – I can’t remember that word but that’s alright – yeah and it’s sustained . . .”

“And the question to the others ‘what do you feel when you see that?’ . . . What’s the recollection - words apart?”

“Words apart? Um it was clearly a safe enough place for me to, to, even that, to use that as my anchor and to come up into pride.”

“Mm [pause]. Do you remember anything of the others’ response at all?”

“No – because in that place I – its not what happens anyway – I lose contact.”

“Right [pause] but it – the feeling is that it’s – whatever response you’re getting it creates this sense of safety?”

“Yep, yep [pause] yep!”

“Any more about that sense of safety? What does it feel like?”

[Pause] *“So for me that’s – that safety is ‘it’s OK here to look up’ ‘it’s OK to go into the other pole’ – which is the pride – and to be anchored by the shame.”*

“It’s interesting that it always is anchored.”

“*Yep, yep, yep!*”

“Mm”

“And in essence, by that stage - the OK stage – it wouldn’t have mattered if there were people in that group who were – um - in their own stuff – in whatever shape or form – it wouldn’t have mattered because something had created enough of a safety net now. The question is whether that was you or whether that was the group and that’s – and the other question is whether you can divide those two things anyway.”

“Uh hum”

“*Um [laughs]*”

“*Yep – I, I haven’t worked that one out.*”⁴⁵⁴

“Because you are indeed the – as facilitator you are the Um the magnet around which the group develops its values – so that’s why I think the second question is important- Um – You know had there been any sense in that, in that {inaudible} magnet-isation of values – erm – where the group felt able to do x, y, or z, - that was antagonistic to that process . . .”

“*I’ve had people actually take off in another direction.*”⁴⁵⁵

“*Yeah!*”

“*But as you say, at that stage the odd person doing that doesn’t matter . . .”*

“Doesn’t matter – that’s right . . .”

We had a case of a participant ‘taking off in his own direction’ later in this same workshop.⁴⁵⁶

A man, we will call him Kell, acknowledged behaviours represented by three of the compass poles but said that he had “*never engaged in ‘attack other’ behaviour.*” He also insisted that what he was avoiding was not shame but ‘*disappointment or disillusionment*’. This was acknowledged by placing it on a piece of paper on top of ‘Shame’ in the centre of the compass. In working from his initial starting point he suggested that he needed a number of intermediate ‘stepping stones’ which he then negotiated in a series of small steps each movement punctuated with attempts to share details of his personal story. At one stage when the group was asked what they noticed, several people commented that he was leaning noticeably sideways – away from the ‘attack-other’ pole. This initiated another segment of story about his aversion to any form of aggression. I found myself ‘feeling embarrassed’ and casually (but consciously) moved round from standing on his left side to standing on his right - physically blocking the ‘attack-other’ pole from his line of sight. Over a period of several seconds he straightened, stopped talking, and stepped onto the edge of the ‘disappointment’

⁴⁵⁴ Creating ‘safety’ was discussed earlier. At this stage in the workshop I think it is something shared and reinforced by the group and not just a function of facilitation.

⁴⁵⁵ I was thinking of the process, described above, with Don in Perth where one witness expressed anger at me ‘for holding him there’ in manifest grief.

⁴⁵⁶ Community Professional Training, Moruya, May 2002.

centre. The instant affect display was that of shame. And there was a noticeable release of tension among the witnesses {‘Oh, at last! Now we can see it and feel for/with him,’}

Don: *“No doubt that as (he) moved agonisingly through his fears, I was right with him. I also noticed that others were completely focussed on his process. As he finally stood in the centre, my sense of tension gave way to relief, expansion and a deep breath. The process had minimally less engagement than being there myself. The whole group seemed just as involved as I was.”*

This is Kell’s recollection of the exercise.

Kell.⁴⁵⁷ *“...moving from where I was to shame. I think I renamed it as ‘disappointment’ or was it ‘disillusionment’. To me shame isn’t a particularly powerful emotion – disillusionment had much more impact as far as my experience was concerned.”*

“Can you explain that for me?”

“Shame I saw as [pause] something like – assuming the car got dirty – like ‘it’s a shame’ – I see it in these terms. Disillusionment is more powerful -, where it indicates to me a whole lot of values have gone by the board.”

“When you moved?”

“I know I had a very different experience from the person before me – a very quick and for them unpainful process – for me it was a much slower – guarded process. I suppose the thing I recall most of all was the encouragement from the people in the group - and acceptance that it wasn’t easy . . . a case of considering each move before . . .”

“Do you recall the comments from the group about ‘leaning to one side’?”

“I think some of them see it as an indication I was avoiding one of the poles – I was avoiding – it might have been violence or aggression.”

“When you reached the centre?”

“Did I get to the centre? I’m not sure [pause] - The support! But I didn’t get all the way to the centre – still a process of moving!”

“And your thinking since?”

“I see it as something I could possibly use in workshops – that I – um – don’t see it as shame being the only means of changing behaviour.”

Leonie, one of the women in the workshop commented:⁴⁵⁸

“I can remember watching the process and what my sense was it was almost like – I don’t think it would have mattered what he would have called it – I think his pathways would have been the same but I think the whole – his process was about him taking control . . . and once he had that control he was then he was able to then . . . go into the centre, name it for whatever it was but the bottom line he was still taking the same path.”

⁴⁵⁷ Pseudonym: interview, September 2002.

⁴⁵⁸ Leonie Deuis: interview, September 2002.

“The affect was shame regardless of what he called it ?”

“Umm – yeah! I actually got a sense that he – he – he on a conscious level; knew what he was doing.”

“Yeah – it was about him experiencing the process for himself – because he saw potential in it and wanted to be able to use it and wanted to be in control – to see how he was going to use it apart from anything else.”

“But – but this is what I find conflicting because I think when somebody goes into a process and they are contriving it for what they perceive another is going to be using it for then they are not actually going in with a blank slate because they are going in with - with an outcome . . .”

“What did you feel when he got close to the centre?”

“Umm I guess a kind of relief because I could see he was going to need those extra pavements put down and the middle called whatever it was going to be called and you know it was kind of like – Umm . . . and he was sort of stuck in – ‘well no I don’t feel comfortable with this I want this extra bit put down’ and so I – it was a – I don’t think it makes any difference whatsoever.”

Unlike some of the participants in this workshop I was very comfortable with his use of ‘frustration’ ‘disappointment’ and ‘disillusionment’ as stronger (for him) than ‘shame’. This I see not as a mask for shame but a legitimate aspect of authentic shame. On a number of occasions I have been struck by the use of the phrase ‘*That’s a shame!*’ (or ‘*what a shame!*’). Exploring this with the speaker would usually yield conversations such as:

‘What do you mean by ‘that’s a shame?’’

‘It’s a pity’

‘Pity?’

‘It’s sad’

‘Sad?’

‘I mean unfortunate – it’s a shame – you know what I mean!’

The truth is I did know what they meant. Universally the people were describing their **feeling for another** who had suffered some misfortune – **whose expectations** for (whatever) **had been frustrated or disappointed**.⁴⁵⁹ Here is an actual conversation in detail. Dan⁴⁶⁰ is a typical Australian working class bloke, semi-literate, who speaks slowly with frequent pauses. The phrase came up in the context of a conversation about a Four-Wheel Drive vehicle incident. When I drew his attention to his use of the word ‘shame’ he coloured red [shame blush]. I commented on this and he stood up and checked his face in a wall mirror. We talked briefly about shame - how the word brings up the feeling - usually associated with something uncomfortable. With his permission I took notes as we explored his use of the phrase ‘that’s a shame’.

⁴⁵⁹ See also Wheeler, 2000,

⁴⁶⁰ Pseudonym: Discussion notes on a meeting with ‘Dan’ and his friend ‘Mack’, July 2002.

- Dan:** *“Hmm- I said it – ‘That’s a shame!’ - but you know what I mean”*
- “What **do** you mean?”*
- “I suppose its because - if- it's like something didn't work - you say ‘that’s a shame. [Pause] [Deep breath] [Pause] But it depends on the relationship between you and the other person. [Pause] Like with Mack⁴⁶¹ and I, I'd say ‘tough shit’ or something like that – It’s like we are familiar . . . but with you it would be ‘that’s a shame’. [Pause] It’s a bit like we use the idea of ‘guilt trip’ – it’s a play on words . . . [pause][Questioning look]”*
- “But why do we choose to use the word ‘shame’?”*
- “Depends - there are several different contexts - a lot of people use (it) in the wrong context - like – ‘There’s no shame {in the situation}’ - they’re not guilty of doing something – something they’re not proud of. We Australians use it in the context of ‘remorse’.⁴⁶² No, not remorse, more like ‘condolence’.”*
- “Condolence?”*
- “Mmm - [pause] [breath] [pause] - shame is a simpler word.”*
- “Why use shame as a simple word for condolence?”*
- “Because it means so much! – We [pause] it carries a lot of story. Shame? [Pause] I suppose ‘shame’ is hurtful. [Pause] (I use it) as in trying to show that I feel really sorry it’s happened - without going over the top with fancy words.*
- Mack:** *[explanatory interjection] “ – ‘That’s no good!’– ‘That’s a shame!’ It's used a lot in that context!”*
- Dan** *[pause] “I suppose ‘regret’ would be another way of displaying what you feel.”*
- “What do we call this – this showing of . . . ?”*
- “Expressing [pause] ‘concern’ [pause] expressing ‘affection’ [pause] show you care!”*
- “Empathy?”*
- “Yes but I can’t spell that so I’d write shame in the computer instead - it’s about showing you ‘understand’.”*
- “Understand?”*
- “Well - pretend to understand a person’s feeling - but each situation is different – like between close friends and strangers – it depends on the relationship – the familiarity.”*

What this illustrates is yet another example of the word ‘shame’ triggering its affect, which Dan remains unaware of until his attention is drawn to it. It also illustrates how *‘That’s a shame’*, deeply rooted in the Anglo-cultural vernacular but relatively unexamined in day-to-day use, is consistently used to signal a **feeling with** another's misfortune, frustration or disappointment. It carries implications of a desire to be seen to be showing concern for the

⁴⁶¹ Pseudonym: Dan’s friend who was present during the conversation.

⁴⁶² He clearly sees me as a ‘Pom’ – a British migrant to Australia – even though I’ve been here 14 years!

feelings of the other, and in this sense it is an empathic shame response. Note the way that, in trying to explain this, Don touches on a number of other key words in the shame lexicon - guilt, regret, remorse, - as well as 'condolence', 'understanding' and the importance of the 'relationship' issue (twice). To Dan 'shame' is a powerful word. It carries significance and a story of the human experience, and is basic – it saves using long and fancy words. The implication I sensed in the conversation was that using it avoided overdoing the display of feeling which might have embarrassed the other (or himself) - but clearly signals a desire to reinforce the social bond with the (absent) other.

My thesis - that shame is about signalling the state of and building/repairing social bonds - is strengthened by examination of this usage. It shows, importantly, that shame (unlike guilt) has a use in (and a capacity to generate and signal) situations where it has as much or more to do with the actions, situation facing, and self-identity of **another** as of one's self. The only example of guilt crossing this self-other boundary I'm aware of is 'survivor guilt' - and this is at bottom very much focussed on the self.⁴⁶³ Shame, or to put it in the active form 'feeling ashamed' - appears to be a far more socially mature form of the emotion. I can feel 'ashamed' - be 'affected' (affect!) - as Dan says, express 'affection' - show I care for the circumstances that result in disappointment of another.⁴⁶⁴ 'Embarrassment' wouldn't work in this context. '*It's a shame*' does! So, while its use has been 'ritualised', it still operates in ways that illustrate the salutogenic functioning of shame.

Debriefing the workshop

It is important that participants have time to debrief: to share their experiences and have these validated. Also to ask questions and have these addressed by the group, not just the facilitator. In the short form of the workshop this is usually quite brief. I will invite a round of comments with "What stands out for you from this workshop?" Participants often report that all exercises and particularly Numbers 3, 4 and 5 provide opportunities for significant insights. These and any questions raised can then be explored. As pointed out in the introduction, the aim is to validate participants' experience and not to impose my own frame of understanding and theory on this. Comments from the workshops suggest that:

- Exercise 3: Sharing shame stories - provides an environment which is supportive – where there is the possibility of an expectation of mutuality and being both heard

⁴⁶³ For example guilt felt by Jewish survivors of the Nazi holocaust is couched in terms of: 'Why did I survive when so many (perhaps more worthy) others died?' (see earlier discussion on p.136)

⁴⁶⁴ Disappointment can be interpreted as the feeling resulting from a brake on or partial extinguishment of the affect of enjoyment (with desire still present). As such it fits perfectly with the definition of shame in affect theory. See Chapter Three.

without judgement (with respect) and being met with a similar level of trust in sharing personal stories. There is often interpersonal disclosure of material that has been a burdensome secret – and feeling that this burden is lessened by the experience.

- Exercise 4: Walking the compass of shame provides an opportunity for re-evaluation of many dysfunctional behaviour patterns around recognition of the role of shame, or unacknowledged shame, as the unifying factor. People report that standing in the different places will bring recall of past experiences and feelings. After testing reactions at each of the four points, many will find the shame centre less problematic – having a kind of calmness and a sense of taking responsibility and self-acceptance – one person described it as *'like standing in the calm in the eye of a storm.'*
- Exercise 5: The empathic response to shame is for many a profound experience. There is often a desire to experience it from the position of the model and this provides the first point for developing extensions to the workshop. It can be experienced with small groups with people taking turns in roles of model, witnesses, and facilitator.⁴⁶⁵

But, more than the specific features of the workshop, it is the overall shift in perspective on shame that most stands out. People now have a different place to stand from which to view it, and review and re-evaluate much of what they thought of as 'shame' 'shameful' or 'shaming' from their past experience.

Leonie *“I think probably the thing that stood out the most was the sea change that happened from people’s collective ideas about what shame was. I think people generally came with an aggressive um notion of what shame was – you know like almost ready to draw swords over what shaming was and it was interesting just watching that um shift. Er - something that I think was a different dynamic in the room was that you had a room full of professionals who were looking for a way in which to be able to . . . be able to transpose it into whatever work they were doing.”*

“So, what have you noticed in terms of your own experience since then?”

“I guess having a visual of um the compass. I guess what it – what it um I guess reinforced for myself was that you know, as a practitioner I do use visual stimulus which the client is in control of Um, so for me I found it like ‘Ah! OK this is an extra tool’ – ‘this is an extra way of being able to use the visual stimulus’ and I think the important thing is that the client . . . has a sense of control.”

Mardhi *“. . . a number of things that stand out in a number of ways. The compass is something that I think about in terms of when I’m working with people – so that’s gone into the bag of tricks - in the sense of I’m aware of, of using that as one of my memos anyway. [Pause] And probably stands out in a personal way – that sense of ‘facing up’, which I had before but perhaps not so*

⁴⁶⁵ As training for facilitators who have already experienced the workshop as participants.

clearly delineated. So that memory of um once you go into the 'facing up place' seems much clearer."

"Can you explain the 'facing-up' thing?"

"In terms of the compass it's the middle – but it's the process of getting to the middle from, from the outside and it's always, I think, a process – rather than a static [smiles] so . . ."

[Laugh] "Yeah – a huge process – could take a lifetime."

[Laughs] "So if I'm in one of those places, I remember that the best place to be in this scenario is in that place where I'm facing up to whatever it is that's, you know, that's causing me to go into those other defence structures. . . ."

*"So, it's something I use in my work [Long pause] And because I did that particular piece of work the benefit I've got is having the memory of - a clearly delineated memory – which we don't often get with shame – it's a much fuzzier memory – a clearly delineated memory of going into the centre and taking it off – so – and I can use that memory to remind myself – of the action. . . . So that memory will change – has changed my life in terms of it's very clearly reminded me of that place to go – it's so clearly delineated that's the beauty of it, it's, you know – **there!** You've got it! You can encapsulate it – so that the little short-term, quick memory boost is good."*

A 'take-home' message?

The workshop is about reframing of shame as a salutogenic experience. It allows people to appreciate, based on their own experience as either model or witness, that 'shame' is not just what we feel: it is also the effect that shame (when unmasked) has on the observers and how their reaction affects the person feeling 'ashamed'. Shame is a **process** as much as (and perhaps more than) it is a state of being. It operates as a signalling system across the boundary between our 'self' and the significant others in our environment. Shame is not just a personal experience it is a social one – one that has immense social implications.

This salutogenic perspective can be summarised as:

- My 'shame' is an instinctive emotion – natural and functional.
- It sends a signal inwards (to me) that I've crossed a boundary with another – done something (perhaps) inappropriate that threatens the relationship.
- The affect of shame also instantly sends a signal outwards (to the other) that at some instinctive level I have 'got it!' – that I'm aware of the break - and my shame (affect) signals that I value the relationship.
- Now if I hide or mask it, I appear shameless, uncaring, full of false pride, arrogant or aggressive - and this increases the separation/alienation.

- ❑ Whereas, if I stay with the feeling and show it, healing begins automatically. It triggers an empathic response in the observer(s) and this starts the process of rebuilding the relationship(s).
- ❑ Hence the role of shame as **the social emotion** –building and maintaining relationships.
- ❑ But this ‘shame’ needs to be ‘authentic’. Without an embedded (embodied) element of pride or self respect it appears as ‘pathetic sorrow’ – which creates, at best, an ambivalent empathic response.

People who have experienced the workshop will take away their own evaluations. What I hope this chapter has shown is that, for many, this includes a realization that the shared experience of shame is an essential component of social relations – one designed primarily for maintaining healthy social relationships. The exercises, questions and the language we’ve used to reach this point are portable. All are invited to share this with friends, families, work colleagues and if any would like to follow it up and be part of the ongoing research project they are most welcome.

This basic form of the workshop has also been extended into half-day, one-day and two-day formats. These allow participants to:

- ❑ Explore and experience the exercises in greater depth.
- ❑ Experience the key exercise #5 with more people in the role of ‘model’ – and/or facilitators.
- ❑ Explore in more depth how acknowledged, unmasked, particularly visible shame will normally (unless other factors intervene) work to heal relationships.
- ❑ Explore how this ‘restorative’ function of shame might be applied in their work and personal lives.

When run as a facilitator-training program, the extended workshop provides opportunities to explore the details of the workshop script.

- ❑ How the workshop is structured and why.
- ❑ How the key exercises are set up and facilitated .
- ❑ The framing of the key questions – what works and what doesn’t.
- ❑ Issues of safety and debriefing.

Whether in short or extended form the aim is to encourage and support participants in using this and/or developing their own versions of this work for helping others experience of the salutogenic functioning of shame.

What this chapter has indicated is some of the practical work that informed the theoretical framework for understanding where we could stand in relation to shame. In particular it illustrates how people can approach the experience of shame as a salutogenic process. It establishes a new place to stand from which to view the shame experience. This position is known by the workshop participants in terms of their personal experience at the body level of seeing and feeling. From this experiential base it can then be understood and framed in the language of those who shared the experience. This allows people to re-evaluate much of what we currently think of as ‘shame’. We can start to see the personal; and social pathologies of shame in a different light - as resulting, in large measure, from our failure to acknowledge shame. In particular, the pathology results from our failure to **show** shame in situations where it is an appropriate response to perceived threats to our connections, our relationships, our social bonds with others.

We have a long way to go. If Richard taught nothing else it was that work, such as this, needs to be applied at the personal, small group, community, society/cultural and eventually the global levels. At the end of the workshop I invite discussion of how people can use this experience in their personal lives, their work and to tackle wider social issues of concern. The following chapters will explore some of the ways this understanding can be applied to healing the damage that results from our culturally distorted perception of shame: how it can be used at the community levels in dealing with the socio-pathologies of aggression and alienation (particularly inter-personal violence and addictions), and finally tackling the challenge of developing a more mature shame culture. I’ll close this chapter with comments from a couple of the men in the anger-management program.

Eric⁴⁶⁶ was still sitting, shaking his head and contemplating the compass half an hour after one class had finished. As I sat down beside him I asked:

‘What’s the thought?’

Eric: *‘I used to get angry and go there [points to Attack other] [pause] Then I’d go there [addictions] and try and block it out [pause] Then I’d feel sorry for myself [points to attack self] and get depressed and it really created distance between me and the wife. [Pause -points to hide from other] I’d just give up and go away. [Long pause] – I must have gone round this a dozen times in different ways sometimes - and all the time all I needed to do was be able to show that I was sorry – not say it – show it!’⁴⁶⁷*

⁴⁶⁶ Pseudonym: Notes from Anger Management class, December 2000.

⁴⁶⁷ Said with a rising inflection that suggests part question: part exclamation

Follow up work has seen several of these men with a history of violence and alcohol and relationship problems make significant steps along the road to personal recovery work. I'll let Dane have the last word here. He has described how, since the workshop, when he got into a mess with his partner he didn't try to fix it. He learned to stand still and feel the shame and think about what he might have done to create the problem. He realised that, as he did this, shame would show – and she would see this and know he was trying. Then they could talk about it. He realised that sometimes, often in fact, he was not in the wrong but he didn't have to prove it – getting back together was more important – and when he was wrong he could say sorry and then do what had to be done to fix it and learn not to do it again. Not that this is always easy. As he says, shame is still an uncomfortable experience.

“OK Dane, so the other side of this process, what's shifted – what shifted for you? What difference has it made?”

[Aside] “With the exception of last Sunday⁴⁶⁸ - The difference . . . it made is that initially it made me think about the process of how I got there as opposed to just being there and thinking ‘Oh shit!’ You know . . . If I can work out how I got there . . . then, with that, I can work out maybe how to get back – as opposed to just feeling . . . ‘Hey hang on I've landed out here and I don't have a fucking clue how to get back’. What it did by confronting it was make me think around it to um, not to see if I can work out how to stop it but how to work out, um, how I work out the sequence of events that got me into feeling like that. . . . I'm not 100% sure how to get it, but I'm getting better – um. I'm slowly feeling more comfortable with looking at that as a destination as opposed to just a – a chance kind of thing – I dunno if that makes sense –

“ . . . you can now own shame?”

“Yes! – yes because it's in my – because it's a – you can identify it immediately um – and its so powerful you can – you can see when you are getting there as opposed to just arriving there kind of thing.”

“And by allowing it to be – what's the effect?”

“Um that's what I'm still trying to work out now – I think – er - I believe growth comes out of it – but – I think – you know – I don't feel comfortable – I don't think I have enough skills in life yet to really get into it because it is still like so overpowering . . . I feel a lot more confident to have a dip but I don't have the proper skills to – to um sort it how I know it needs to be sorted out.”

“I – I think um I found it very hard to get used to the feeling and I suppose um you know like - To put it in colours - In a black and white world that's as bright as the sun⁴⁶⁹ – you know - it's something that stands alone and I [pause] I think by being there that's where, you know, you would – where you become better as a person. However, on saying that I don't know how to get there and be comfortable there. I haven't worked that out . . .”

[Laugh] “I don't think anyone can ever claim to be comfortable.”

⁴⁶⁸ This aside refers to a family incident where he was in danger of ‘losing it’ – but walked away from conflict.

⁴⁶⁹ i.e “In a black and white world {a sense of shame} is as bright as the sun . . .”

“ . . . I haven't worked – I haven't worked that out yet [laughs]

[Laughing] “I don't – I think – No shame is not going to be a comfortable feeling!”

“Its something that provokes a huge deep emotion in me – like when I think about that, I think of the shameful – [pause] and it's got nothing to do with accountability. It's got nothing to do with – er - reason, right, wrong – it's – it is – er - shame and it's . . . it's trying to live with it with a degree of comfort - because I – um by blocking that out I was damaging myself and others – big time! – And maybe not in that order. Maybe all over the place. And also I think there's a huge human side of it. I think it's something you have to um – get to know because if you cover it up and hide it will destroy you – and I'm very, very aware of that – so it's trying to find the right path in without getting burnt – that's what I try to do when I put my mind to it.”

Chapter 7: Shame, guilt and empathy

We had the experience but missed the meaning, and approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form, beyond any meaning we can assign to happiness. . . .

We appreciate this better in the agony of others, nearly experienced, involving ourselves, than in our own; for our own past is covered by the currents of action, but the torment of others remains an experience unqualified, unworn by subsequent attrition.

TS Eliot.⁴⁷⁰

Healing Shame?

How much of both the shame experience and its meaning have we missed – failed to notice? And to recover the meaning how much do we need that ‘near’ experience of being involved in the shame agony of others? If we were to do so, how might this affect the way we approach the task of healing the past for ourselves, and others. How might we then influence local community-based developments and stimulate the global cultural shifts needed to build a more ecologically, socially and economically sustainable future?

In this chapter I will illustrate how a number of workshop participants have begun to re-evaluate the shame experience and how this might be applied to healing shame pathology. The focus here is not just on the personal experience. My aim is to lay the foundations for a broader analysis - one that might be applied to tackling the social pathologies of shame, and in so doing start to build a more mature shame culture. I will attempt to illustrate some of the features, touched on in theory in the earlier chapters, which differentiate a salutogenic from a pathogenic perspective on shame.

Personal social and cultural shame

Shame is the feeling that signals that something may be wrong with our relationships with others and/or with our self. But inherent in Richard Hauser’s theory is the idea that shame can also be a powerful stimulus for people taking social responsibility and engaging in social

⁴⁷⁰ From Eliot, 1944, *The dry salvages II*. Emphasis added.

action. His tools for self-evaluation led many people to feel shame over failure to live up to their social ideals. This sense of shame often led to ‘a catharsis’ and to personal and social growth through shedding of old stereotypes. In the preceding chapters I have attempted to fill in some of the gaps in this idea; indicating how shame might indeed operate salutogenically as the social emotion.

But the reality is that, for most people today, ‘shame’ does not operate this way. For many it is still experienced as something intensely personal, ‘negative’, ‘toxic’, pathogenic; and this acts as a barrier to social growth. Many people are ‘blocked’ or ‘shrunk’ and trapped in patterns that are personally and socially pathological. My thesis is that malfunctioning of the shame-affect signalling system is a common root of both personal and social problems. The way that we frame shame and the patterns of masking, which cause it to malfunction, are culturally determined. We learn about shame in a way that leads to the pathology. Indeed, the way we learn shame is pathological. We learn it in the context of a culture that commonly associates shame with other emotions – notably fear and anger, disgust and distress. The co-assembly of shame with these other emotions so often masks the display (and often the feeling) of shame – and interrupts the otherwise salutogenic shame-empathic process. This ‘guilt-shame’ culture is pathogenic.

When we see that, unmasked, shame works to trigger a particular quality of empathy that builds social relations with others, we can begin to reframe the experience and see more clearly where, how and what interrupts its salutogenic functioning. The workshop described in the previous chapter allows people to have this experience – to see, hear and feel what the salutogenic functioning of shame might be about. This reframing of the shame experience provides a different place to stand from which to re-evaluate much of our past, and particularly our past pathological experience of shame. In this new frame ‘shame’ is salutogenic – normal healthy and functional. The pathological is seen as the result of unacknowledged shame and unresolved past shame sequences – the result of not showing shame.

But this is not (yet) how most people see shame. Don probably speaks for many when he described the ‘problem with shame’ as:

Don: *“It’s about being seen in a negative fashion, with no place to hide. It’s very vulnerable, undefendable, open to the judgement of others, where you have no way to answer. It feels naked, cornered, held up to the gaze of others, with negative judgement and critique. It is a sense of worthlessness, ugliness, woundedness, of being a failure, a flawed self, and being specially public – an inability to hide imperfections, flawed-ness. Its origin is the parental gaze, the head-masters gaze, one’s peers’ gaze, or the scornful gaze of one’s beloved.”*

If the idea of a salutogenic function of shame is to be grounded in reality, we need to better understand how this pathology operates. With this we may be able to see how it might be repaired at the micro-level of face-to-face interactions and perhaps apply this to other levels of social and political interaction.

Shame-pathology: the residues of unresolved shame

Earlier we discussed the human tendency to try to ‘get rid of things’ especially feelings we don’t like. Currently in western Anglo cultures we have a profitable personal growth industry that encourages the getting rid of various ‘negative’ things that are fundamental to what makes us human: our ‘ego’, anger, and shame; being but a few among many.⁴⁷¹

This ‘pathologising’ of various aspects of the human experience has potentially long term social as well as personal consequences. In particular, in identifying shame with its pathology we run the risk of losing what is perhaps the most important aspect of our emotional makeup. It is our sense of shame that provides the ability to sense those moments of disconnection from others. Shame is also the tool evolution has provided for re-establishing these connections: repairing the social bonds via the affective display and the empathic response it produces. Such anyway is my thesis.

In Chapter Four we saw how this function of shame in ‘sensing’ and ‘repairing’ social bonds can as easily be applied in the imagination to signal and build congruence between what we think of as parts of ourselves.⁴⁷² Shame, left to its own (salutogenic) devices heals itself. Yet today we have a variety of therapeutic approaches to ‘healing shame’. Are these needed? Do they work? If not, why not, and what might be a better way of tackling the undoubtedly significant burdensome sense of shame that many people carry in their personal lives?

What I am suggesting here is that the burdensome ‘sense of shame’, carried as a self-judgement is, in fact, not shame proper. It is the residue of **unresolved** shame that results from the co-assembly of shame affect with the affects of other emotions. These other affects effectively mask the shame (interfering with its salutogenic function) and produce interpersonal (i.e. social) results that are the result of others’ reaction to the display of these

⁴⁷¹ Wise: Op. cit.

⁴⁷² In infantile form we may need an inner authority figure to drive this process. In Freud’s psychological terms this is represented by the ‘super-ego’ and the process of developing ‘morality’ is driven by guilt. In a more mature form this authority figure can be replaced by our inner image of the self, **as we desire to be seen**. This ‘ego ideal’ is formed from accumulated images of a ‘self’ derived from early prototypes, later stereotypes and cultural archetypes. Shame is the emotion that mediates our relationship with this imagined inner/ideal/authentic self.

other affects, rather than shame. The emotional residue thus reinforces emotional scripts in which these other emotions are bound to our sense of shame. The process of ‘unlearning’ these scripts has been the focus for much therapeutic work whether through psychiatric, psycho-therapeutic or self-help/personal growth interventions. Some aims to deal with the unresolved shame directly. Still more works on it indirectly via work on the pathological symptoms (drug/alcohol addiction, anger/violence, self-esteem, relationship problems etc.)

The shame recovery movement

Much of modern ‘shame recovery’ work has its origin in Twelve-Step programs originally developed for people with alcohol addiction’. Applied to what has variously been pathologised as ‘toxic shame’ or ‘shame addiction’, the program loosely aims to achieve recovery by:

- ‘Going back’ to identify the things we feel bad about and which as an adult we feel ashamed or guilty about.
- Making an inventory of these shameful things – (equivalent to the 4th step).
- Sharing it with someone else, who responds by showing acceptance of who we are as a person – (equivalent to the 5th step).
- Which leads to shame reduction

There is an overlay of psychological theory not referred to in original Twelve-Step programs. The theory suggests that when we no longer feel ashamed of the things we’ve done, we are less likely to act with obsessive-compulsive behaviours. Self-acceptance breaks the cycle of shame-compulsion leading to more shameful behaviours and hence more shame-compulsion. For example: I feel compelled to drink (take drugs etc); so I get drunk but then feel ashamed of my drunken behaviour; so I feel compelled to drink to self-medicate/anaesthetise the shameful feelings . . . etc. If I accept that I am a drunk (and can receive acceptance and support from my AA group as being an OK/valued person despite my past drunken behaviour) I can begin to break the shame-compulsion cycle.

There is however a (non-sectarian) religious component in this ‘acceptance’. ‘Addicts’ are encouraged to see themselves as powerless to resolve their addiction/compulsion and to ‘give over to a higher power’ to resolve their crisis. As a colleague with experience of this approach in New Zealand put it:

“Engaging in a Twelve-Step recovery programme is much more like engaging in a spiritual practice than doing therapy. In fact there is a dogma permeating such groups as AA that shuns therapy as not being fully on the ‘programme’. ‘All you need is the 12 steps’. The steps that deal with shame are 4, 5,6, 9 and

10. Much has to do with knowing or believing and even acting as if you know or believe in a Higher Power that will take your 'shame' away or heal it or restore you to sanity. The practice is attending meetings where you 'tell your story' and listen to other's stories, and doing the Steps. The fascinating thing is that it quite often works for alcohol and chemical addictions, and amazingly in the most hopeless cases. That is people change from the most out of control self-destructive lives, to a healthy clean lifestyle.⁴⁷³

The downside of this reference to 'higher authority' is a risk of dependence. The language is self-condemnatory – *'I am an addict'*; *'I need another to help me out of it'*; *'I'm powerless over this'*. There is an inherent danger that this provides a subtle escape from responsibility for some. This is particularly significant where, as often occurs, we are dealing with a combination of substance abuse and relationship violence. To tackle one without the other is usually ineffective. To tackle each separately, especially where the message being offered in one is of powerlessness over alcohol, while the other is (of necessity) about taking personal responsibility for stopping violence, is to send mixed messages to a person in crisis. This is not merely counterproductive but dangerous. Such mixed messages leave not only the individual, but also his/her partner at risk.⁴⁷⁴ In general, the 'higher power' approach of Twelve-Step programs reinforces the infantile-shame/guilt culture, where an individual's framework for appropriate behaviour is defined by reference to an external higher/parental 'other'-figure. The guilt-cultural context within which the Twelve-Step movement evolved is neither recognised or questioned. Its conception of shame is deeply embedded in the (pathological) way this is framed within a 'guilt' or guilt-shame culture.

John Bradshaw has popularised the idea of 'toxic' shame and the view that most shame-based behaviour is acting out of unresolved childhood emotional experiences.⁴⁷⁵ His approach to recovery draws on his Twelve-Step experience. People are encouraged to talk about their 'shame' experiences using 'I statements', expressing thoughts feelings and perceptions to a group that validates him/her and supports his/her desire to change. The result of this is a reduction in the burden of 'shameful' feelings and a moderation in the self-shaming scripts by which people live their lives. Those using this approach in the USA and Australasia have adopted the concept that 'shame' is the result of damage to 'interpersonal bridges' but have framed it in the language of pathology – *'toxic'*, *'unhealthy'*, *'shame attacks'* and *'shame addiction'*. 'Healing' such toxic shame involves hearing others acceptance of oneself, as well as merely sharing the shame inventory with them. Unlike the basic Twelve-step approach, where there is little active feedback, some 'advanced shame-recovery' groups go further than simply speaking and listening. They may use 'active listening' (*'I hear you say*

⁴⁷³ John Finn: personal correspondence November 2001. A useful description of the 'theology' of AA can be found in Bateson, 1972, pp 331-335.

⁴⁷⁴ Dale Hurst, (see Webb 1998a). I will take this issue up in more detail in Chapter Eight.

⁴⁷⁵ Bradshaw, 1988; who draws on the work of Kaufman, 1885, 1989.

that . . . ’ etc.), sharing of perceptions (*‘I notice that . . . ’*) and giving sensory feedback (*‘when you say that I feel . . . ’*). But all of these focus attention on the speaker and are about him being seen.⁴⁷⁶ These advanced processes are akin to those used in Australasian men’s groups where the man sharing can invite the group members to respond from their own personal feelings and experience. They may respond with:

‘What comes up for me listening to you is . . . ’.

The aim is to support the man in reaching his own conclusions without having someone outside ‘fix it’ for him by offering advice.

For many shame-bound people some areas of activity (such as sexuality) are inherently shaming. Some recovery work to deal with such ‘shame’ patterns is similar to the progressive aversion-reduction approaches adopted for dealing with obsessive fears.⁴⁷⁷ Brian describes his experience of this approach.⁴⁷⁸

Brian *“Shame is relentless - in the crippling form – where people have a lot of shame on board, particularly around sexual issues. It is close to the bottom of the barrel – close to core issues. Anger sits on top, then numbness, sadness, fear. The feelings of shame are like paralysis, disgust, emptiness, decrepidness, numbness, with sadness on top. The sensations – a panging feeling in lower abdomen – abdominal contraction paralysis and fear – heart and throat contraction – shoulders rounded. You can observe it in others – how they hold the body – not coming out of chest/belly, glazed eyes – hard to hold eye contact, words are either few or, conversely, many. Origins are often through neglect issues and sexual traumas- and dismissal by parents – a cause of huge shame.*

The pathway to shame recovery is to recover memory of the circumstances – to pick points of self you don’t like and go do them – allow guilt to come up. I’m the product of an enormous transformation of shame by going to things I’m uncomfortable with and integrating them – having as part of my life without them being shameful – transforming my belief about what is and is not shameful – loving myself – being able to take the whip off the back and push the ‘critics’ aside. It involves walking into what you find shameful – note the sensations in the body that signal shame and look at what is there – For example – a sex shop – standing outside and feeling the sensations, so go inside and let myself off the hook – allow myself to feel good about it. If assisting someone this way - offer a wide parameter of experiences with boundaries around what they feel has integrity – a sense of what they would feel would be a violation of themselves.”

This may be effective for reducing conditioned and inappropriate shame reactions. It acknowledges the role of feeling in the process of reframing cognitive-affective scripts but

⁴⁷⁶ Personal communication re practice in Sydney based groups from ‘Sam’ (a pseudonym), February 2001. See further comments from Sam below.

⁴⁷⁷ See Rachman, 1974.

⁴⁷⁸ Pseudonym: notes on a conversation, November 2001. ‘Brian’ has been involved in personal growth work and in developing programs for men and boys for integrating ‘shadow’ elements. He has not participated in the shame workshop.

doesn't deal with the confusion of various affect emotions that are co-assembled with, and so often mask, shame. The language in Brian's description above is far from uncommon. Note how he describes the co-assembly of shame with fear, anger, disgust, and distress/anguish. His 'shame' remains predominantly located in the pathology of guilt-shame. It is something to be reduced or eliminated. To do this requires a step-by-step reduction of shame in the many different situations where it is triggered.

For many, the result of years of personal 'recovery' work can be confusion over the role of shame in their lives and a residue of issues still needing to be resolved. Sam's reflections below illustrate this. First however, he focuses on a more specific personal shame pathology; the co-assembly of shame with disgust.⁴⁷⁹

Sam: *"The Shame feeling is one of disgust - a sense of having it put on you, not part of the authentic core self. I experience 'Toxic Shame' as shame that has been internalised or physicalised. Anything that I have 'taken on' as part of my personality as a resulting of 'shaming' as a child such as emotions, beliefs and attitudes that weren't mine but I was powerless to stop (or it was unsafe for me to do so) become deeply embedded in my system, internalised, physicalised - part of my cellular structure. As I start to challenge and release these unwanted and unpalatable parts of my self that I took on in order to survive I experience feelings of physical disgust. My previous counsellor⁴⁸⁰ - even suggested that I aid the process of ejecting the sensations/material by sticking my fingers down my throat to induce reverse peristalsis and dry retching, as if I had ingested a physical poison. I find that this process often brings some relief. I have since found that drinking lots of fizzy mineral water and then burping brings similar relief.*

So what is the connection between shame and disgust? Well, I notice if I am in denial of my shame about an internalised aspect in myself I will feel disgust towards another person exhibiting that same behaviour, attitude or belief. This is the well-observed psychological principle of projection. Conversely, if I am aware of my shame about that issue I will feel not disgust, but compassion and empathy instead! i.e. I will not be disgusted by someone's behaviour if I recognize and "own" the capacity within me for that behaviour, attitude or belief. I notice sometimes that some people respond to seeing someone in shame not with empathy as you predict, but with disgust and aggression - perhaps projection again?"

Perhaps, or perhaps people respond 'empathically' to what they observe – shame masked with disgust. Note how shame self-awareness encourages withdrawal of projected feelings towards others but this shame (felt by self and others) is still seen through the lens of pathology. The downside of this 'pathologising' of shame is a sense that this 'shame' has become all-pervasive.

⁴⁷⁹ Pseudonym: e-mail correspondence and interview notes, February 2001. 'Sam' spent some seven years in personal 'shame recovery' work before participating in the workshop in January 2001.

⁴⁸⁰ A Sydney-based proponent of Bradshaw's shame reduction approach to healing addictions and co-dependency - name and clinic provided but omitted here.

Sam: *“It leads to too much expectation of shame – you live in a world where you see most of your past as shame-based and involving a generic abuse that sometimes wasn’t there. It sets people involved in this work publicly apart, as most people don’t even talk about it – don’t have the language of it – just don’t see shame whereas you see it everywhere in almost all situations. You never know to what extent are they missing it – or whether it is blown out of all proportion.”*

The problem from Sam’s point of view is that people involved in personal shame recovery work are too focussed in on shame as a problem.

“There is a focus on shame as the problem rather than working out of the good. There is a presumption that shame is at the core of much behaviour and individuals achieve validity in eyes of the group by the extent to which they identify behaviour as shame-based and the revealing of the extreme of shame stories. The result is that people in the circle are always focussed on it and talking about it.”

Shame recovery work can leave people feeling ambivalent about the role of shame in their lives. In terms of the work on catharsis discussed earlier, participants may see outsiders as over-distanced from shame emotions while they themselves can be emotionally under-distanced. The programs seem to offer little guidance on how to achieve the kind of aesthetic distance that would allow the effective discharge of stored residues of past emotional experience.

Sam’s experience is not unique. Others have reported similar experiences of five to ten years of therapy/personal growth trying to ‘reduce’ their ‘burden of toxic shame’.

Andy *“Before that workshop . . . I had that Bradshaw-based view of it being – being - as being a bad thing – being something that held me back – being something even that I was addicted to – being . . .”*

“Can you explain ‘addicted to’?”

“I guess where I got that idea from was – I had thought previously that I engaged in behaviours that I considered unhealthy – umm – which might in themselves be seen as addictive – umm - you know such as {blank}⁴⁸¹ umm, certain {blank} behaviours or fantasies and experienced that, as a result of doing those things, umm - I felt bad and I would call that ‘feeling shame’. But then I got the idea that maybe it was the shame itself that – and the experience of feeling the shame or what I called feeling the shame, feeling bad - umm, which was the addiction itself. To put it another way – that I - ah - need to debase myself and put myself down on an ongoing basis.”

“So it became a pattern – one we characterise as the ‘attack self’ mode?”

“Yes!”

“So what was the process that you were using at that stage to try and work through that . . . ?”

“. . . to the extent that I had a process it was to acknowledge the feeling but I’m not sure where I really knew where to take it from that point.”

⁴⁸¹ In keeping with the advice given to workshop participants (see previous chapter) Andy has chosen to “{blank}” over sensitive issues.

“Despite all that ‘Twelve-step’ work?”

“Well in a way it was the talking about it – that was the thing – to own it – umm – ah - OK - there were – I guess now that you mention ‘Twelve-step’ – attempts to give it over to my higher power – to acknowledge that I was powerless about whatever it was – umm. At the end of the day I don’t think - I’m not sure that really helped. There was also a lot of owning it and talking about it – sharing the stuff with people - bringing it out. My whole process with this stuff has been – from that notion, I think from Bradshaw again, – ‘you are only as sick as your secrets!’ So to be able to talk about them, to be able to bring them out into the open, I saw as an end in itself.”

“Uh huh – so we get the reduction at the level of ‘I no longer have to carry this burden – the secret . . .?’”

“. . . Now all I have to do is carry the burden of the shame, or the guilt whatever it is, um, that my secret is no longer a secret and it’s known!”

“An additional burden really in some ways [smile] . . .?”

[Laughs] “Yep!”

“. . . no longer being the unspoken truth. At least it is out there in the open but from what you are saying it doesn’t go anywhere?”

“Umm – [long pause] – It’s only quite recently that I’ve felt any fundamental change in how I feel about that aspect – so OK we’re talking of {blank} behaviour which – that can be seen as {blank} and – Ah – yeah! It’s only quite recently that I’ve felt quite a deep shift in myself in how I feel about my {blank} I guess – and what I do with it - and the truth is I don’t really know what I do with or where I go with it but I feel quite different than how I did for some years – and - I don’t know - and probably the groundwork was laid during those years of bringing that secret out into the open – but at the time it didn’t feel like I was getting very far with it – it felt like I was wallowing in it.”

Geoff’s comments in the previous chapter reflect similar failure to resolve ‘toxic shame issues by recovery-based ‘talking therapy’. Earlier I described efforts to recover from past shame pathology as like trying to lever oneself out of quicksand. What is missing is the firm ground of the salutogenic experience of shame from which to stand, review and re-evaluate such pathological experiences. Such recovery as can be achieved by processes like those described above is limited. They usually only partially reduce the burden of shame associated with memories of specific incidents. Identifying ‘toxic’ or ‘addictive’ patterns again helps reduce, but rarely discharge the burden of shame. In my view this is because these approaches confuse shame with the affective masks of shame; those that led to the original pathologically patterned responses. They are attempts to displace the other emotions that originally masked the shame (and are now carried as feelings bound to the unresolved shame). These approaches offer little or nothing towards the re-framing of the shame experience itself.

A different approach to shame therapy?

The workshop described in Chapter Five is an experiential education process. It is not designed as therapy. However, the dividing line between these is not always a clear and simple one, especially in exercises #3 and # 5. I am using skills, acquired over the years through men's group work, personal growth workshops, and Re-evaluation Counselling, to assist participants access and express feelings. Key to this is the creation of what is often referred to as a 'container of safety' for emotional work. This involves creating an environment that is: supportive, non-judgemental and confidential. Where people can bring to the surface stored feelings from the past that are part of unwanted or dysfunctional life scripts. In such an environment people can then express these feelings in ways that allow 'discharge' of the emotions and free up the ability to think more clearly and make free-intelligent choices about such situations in the present. The 'safe' environment also recognises the problem, identified in Chapter Four, that the client-therapist relationship is often a source of shame.

Despite the application of these skills I maintain that the workshops are primarily educational – aiming to provide a different perspective on shame from which people can view their pre-existing experiences, behaviours, thoughts and feelings around shame. A colleague with whom I have shared some of this other emotional work challenged me on this at the end of one workshop.⁴⁸² His view was that, whatever my intentions, the workshop was clearly being experienced by some participants as therapy – or at least had crossed the line of being only incidentally therapeutic.

In reviewing the data from the interviews I have to concede that he may be right. Many people, particularly men whose word I trust, who are not prone to exaggeration and who have shared 'hard' truths that I haven't always wanted to hear in the past, have described the experience as both 'profound' and, in some respects, therapeutic.

David: *“That workshop was one of the most profound experiences I have ever had in terms of group experiences. It was very, very powerful. In that I think it really opened my eyes to the pathological aspects that – you know – what I was doing with my shame was very unsustainable – and I think that workshop showed me – revealed that to me . . . a realisation of the **function** of shame in it's **restorative** sense – that in expressing my shame – and my feelings of shame in a supportive culture and environment – that I can regain a sense of my own self-worth and self-esteem – and in a sense deal with shame. So it went from what you have clearly described as a pathological experience to a different, healthy one.”*

⁴⁸² Richard Shanahan, Moruya, May 2002.

Keith: *“I’ve thought about it since your phone call requesting this interview – Um and the feeling I gained in the process⁴⁸³ was . . . a sense of it being different from how I’d seen shame before . . . the end result of the process - like it has really settled in me now and is not so much an intellectual memory of what happened, but how I am now – is with less anger. That is something that is basic to my being - anger as a response to most things. . . . Instead of having anger as an energy, I have strength as an energy. This sounds really crazy, you know um but there has definitely been a shift in me in how I relate to my own automatic anger – the anger that comes up in me when I’m threatened – and now instead of that what I’m – what I’m getting is – um – less fear about people’s judgements. I’m not saying I don’t give a shit anymore about what people think, {but} my main concern now is how - how do I resolve it – how do I achieve - or how do I get where I want to go? So there is less anger – like I’m more balanced – definitely more balanced. I don’t know now whether it is all due to that that process. Certainly there were big realisations in that process – and there has definitely been, since then, a big shift in my attitude to my own effectiveness. [Long pause] And that’s the only thing that has happened to me. I’ve not done any other courses since that time. . . . I don’t think there has been any other major change in my life in terms of emotional impacts – so I would say that a lot of the feelings I have around this stuff can be attributed to that - that process.*

The effect of the workshop was described by one participant as:

“. . . like taking a shame shower. It allowed a washout of all previous experiences I’d carried as a crippling burden before”

Unmasking shame

What differentiates the approach outlined in this study from the shame recovery movement is that it finds no value in the concepts of ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ shame. Shame is a natural functional emotion. It is salutogenic. Shame-pathology is the result of the failure of the salutogenic process – caused in the main by the masking of shame by other emotions. **What is often called shame is not shame at all but the residue of unresolved shame sequences usually carried in the form of the emotions that masked the original shame.** These include, predominantly: distress, disgust, anger and fear. What I’m suggesting is that the masks of shame not only block the signalling of, and resulting empathic responses of others to shame, but also result in the unacknowledged shame being displaced by feelings associated with these masking emotions. It is the feelings associated with the masking affects that make up the bulk of the ‘burdensome’ feelings we carry as a result of unresolved shame sequences.

⁴⁸³ Men’s group weekend at Seal Rocks NSW, May 2001 – ten months prior to this interview.

What I am also suggesting is that **the visual display of shame affect is critical to the resolution of the shame sequence.** It is not enough to talk about it. Indeed it seems that, with shame, talking can and often does act as a mask. Go back to the early example in the second restorative justice case study at the start of Chapter Five. The young man had said ‘sorry’ very early on. He had admitted responsibility, offered his apology. And yet, nearly an hour later, the victims were still angry; unconvinced that this was genuine and sincerely meant. Within seconds of the visual shame-display sequence the whole climate had changed.⁴⁸⁴

How far can the evidence from the workshops support this hypothesis? And if it can, what are the implications for work to ‘heal’ some of the shame pathology. Can we provide salutogenic processes that allow comprehensive re-evaluation of the experience of shame rather than reduction of the burden from particular past shame-based experiences?

Shame: or anger, disgust, grief and fear?

Running through the data, and supported by theoretical work in the previous chapters, is evidence that the masks of shame, particularly the affect families of: ‘anger’, ‘fear’, ‘disgust’ and ‘distress’; provide much of the feeling content of what people refer to as ‘shame’. What we are often observing is not shame but shame-anger, shame-disgust, shame-grief and shame-fear. There is evidence in the words people use. For example: almost all of the interviews contain references to fear or fear-like words associated with shame, and there are frequent references to the anger and distress emotion families. Of itself, this is not sufficient. These words may simply be misapplied.⁴⁸⁵ We live in a culture that avoids the use of ‘shame’ words, so use of these others may be just convention rather than as a mask for the shame feeling. However, I think there is also substantial evidence that these other emotions are actually felt. We have seen anger words accompanied by angry expressions.⁴⁸⁶ It is, I think widely accepted that shame-anger usually results in the expression of anger. Above, in his discussion of shame-recovery work, Sam indicates how shame, co-assembled with disgust, leads to very real feelings of disgust. Let us look at shame-grief (which, unresolved, can often lead to anger), and then at shame-fear in more detail.

⁴⁸⁴ In his observations on community conferencing, Scheff, (1997b) highlights the importance of shame being visible to the person receiving the apology (p8) and its role in interrupting the self-righteous indignation and moral superiority often displayed by victims (p11-12).

⁴⁸⁵ Indeed we noted earlier that the Gottshalk-Glaser method uses the incidence of such words as indicators for unacknowledged shame. (see Gottschalk & Wingert, 1969; Retzinger, 1991.)

⁴⁸⁶ See segments of the interviews with Don and Andy in previous Chapter.

Shame-grief: flooding the face.

In facilitating workshop Exercise #5, I have found that I have to work hardest where the model starts from attack-self and/or manifests distress/grief in the process of moving towards the shame centre of the compass.⁴⁸⁷ For some people their shame-avoidance pattern is one of chronic self-doubt or self-blame.⁴⁸⁸ Faced with any criticism or break in connectedness they assume they must be the one at fault. This often manifests as anger directed at self.⁴⁸⁹ More commonly the experience of working with people on the compass is that attack-self manifests as distress and often as intense grief.⁴⁹⁰ In general, men wear anger on the surface; hiding grief and fear (and then shame). Getting below the surface anger is not difficult. Getting to the shame below the grief is much, much harder. Some grief is genuine. Some is an affective mask, and some is used for effect – *{Feel sorry for me!}* – a bid to get you on side.

Since men are not allowed to show fear and showing anger often results in conflict, better to show distress. Indeed within the culture of a large section of the men's movement, showing grief is not merely acceptable but is seen as being 'authentic', 'genuine' and 'vulnerable'.

Don: *As an Anglican priest I could hide from myself. When I first started to be vulnerable, I had 'shame'. Then there was a second stage when I began to see vulnerability as healthy/ordinary – how it becomes a tool – how I create trust by being vulnerable.*

Sometimes this is genuine; sometimes it is a conscious mask. For some people showing distress has become a script (not a very effective one) to avoid an anticipated attack or judgement: 'doing it to myself before someone does it to me!' as Geoff described it earlier. Sorting out the authentic from the false when the individual himself may not know which it is, can be hard work and fraught with difficulty, even danger, in the workshop situation. In describing his experience standing in the shame centre of the compass, Don noted that what he displayed was "grief". Paul and Andy confirmed this (and Dane was confused by it – wanting to feel empathetic but also feeling that it was "pathetic!"). The hardest part of that workshop for me was to hold Don in his own authentic feeling and allow the shame to become more clearly visible behind the mask of grief. It was this extended 'holding' that

⁴⁸⁷ It was particularly evident working with Don (see Exercise #5, previous chapter). It was even more evident at the Tasmanian Men's Gathering (March 2002). The model in this case chose not to participate in the follow-up research.

⁴⁸⁸ See comments by Andy in the previous chapter.

⁴⁸⁹ e.g. Andy (previous chapter). Sometimes, e.g. Kell (Exercise # 5, previous chapter Five) there is an aversion to any display of outward directed anger. In Chapter Four we saw that shame plus inner-directed anger was one of the characteristics of 'guilt'.

⁴⁹⁰ Recall (Fig 3.2) the links between anger and distress as responses to sustained high-level arousal.

produced the angry response from one of the witnesses. His own grief/distress (at witnessing Don's) had been restimulated and, unrelieved, it was expressed as anger.⁴⁹¹

Here is some of the background to Don's story about shame. Observe the affective signals as he tells it.

Don: *"I fell in love with a Catholic girl much to my family's horror . . . my father was very angry. Then we did what a number of you people do in these circumstances; we became pregnant. So the honourable thing to do was to get married. My father arranged to have me posted to Western Australia – out of sight out of mind – save the family honour – don't give offence to the church! But he brought us into his study, and he gave us a dressing down to remember. I now know that he shamed us! At the time we went and made our confession – we took the shame on as deserved. We went to Perth, . . . Then four years on the anger came on. It was very powerful. I was so angry with my father! We were the other side of the continent so there was no communication apart from polite phone calls – and I worked through that anger over a period of two years. It died down. He did what he did – we did what we did – I could let it go to a certain extent. Then we came back to the Eastern States and nothing was ever said. By then I'd left the church – nothing was ever said about that! There was a certain level of understanding and that surprised me, and no judgement. I remember the anger so strongly . . . It was the whole institution that sort of rubbed our nose in it – it was one of the elements that made me say 'I will not play this shitty guilt game!'*

"That was a very powerful experience in my life. What I wanted from my father was connection and I got little flashes of it as he got older, always still groping for the authority the moment he was threatened. Grope is not a good word – flourish is a better one – yeah! That was an important passage for me because it hardened in some ways my boundaries around shame."

"Don, are you open to noticing? [Pause for nod of agreement] The affect {just now} was grief."

"Oh yes!"

"But the words are anger."

"I can touch the place but the affect is grief – absolutely. I can feel tears have been here for quite a while – I can feel anger but the real emotion now is grief – at separation and lack of connection and understanding. Anger, it's gone but I can touch it – I can taste it back there but not now – it's gone."⁴⁹²

"So what's under the grief?"

*[17-second pause] [Controlled display of distress/grief] "Loss. There were possibilities for closeness in my family. I was capable but by parents were very limited in their capacity for intimacy, so we never did quite meet in my terms Tony – **meet in my terms!** So the hunger for closeness is part of a hunger for paradise . . . I know the place. I've met so many people in intimacy but not my parents – and there is grief there's sadness around that. I would have liked that but it was lost! It was unexpressed! It was classically English! I*

⁴⁹¹ Again, as predicted by Affect theory - See Fig 3.2.

⁴⁹² Ibid A sustained high-level stimulation below the level that would trigger anger is manifested by the affect of grief. But while this is grief for loss (authentic) it is loss of connection, a separation, a break in the social bond – which should trigger shame affect – here overlaid with and masked by grief.

expressed it but - mum could give me a hug and that was 'bout it - and dad could write a check! At 40 I could embrace him. I'd get kidney damage but he could hug and that was an achievement in itself.

"So it is all tied up together – I can't give primacy [pause]. I'm not sure about this – I guess the primacy for me is intimacy – respectful intimacy – accepting – probably what marks my relationship with Mardhi – that's why its so precious."

"Don, what I'm noticing is that we started talking about shame. It opened the door into a story about not being met – about someone not being available. The language was the language of anger but the affect was grief. Now we've moved to this sense of loss of connection - the unfulfilled desire for intimacy and a sense that, at this remove: 'all I can have is the sadness that it was not possible'. What's being bypassed here?⁴⁹³

". . . But I don't know that I feel shame."

"I know . . . you've made good of this – but the scenarios in terms of the circumstances⁴⁹⁴ [pause] are of a situation that which would normally trigger _____?" [Questioning pause]

"Shame! [Pause] [On the edge of tears] I felt not good enough for my parents for many years. 'Oh Donald I don't know what we're gonna do with you!' - that was a mantra. But that was not later on. 'You don't have to do anything with me – what I want is intimacy – you can't give it – I've found it in other ways!' – but I know there is another place. What I experienced with my family was that we weren't in intimacy – just that!"

"Somewhere in all of this is a place we find it very hard to go – we can touch it and then we bounce. We say: 'Well I came to terms with all of that'; 'there's nothing much I can do about it' etc. . . . We can do anger work. We can do grief work . . ."

"We can do shame work – we don't like it!"

"We don't like it and the problem is we can't do it through this [gesture to head]"

"I think you are probably right . . ."

". . . because all we can do with this [gesture - head] is, as you say, tell ourselves: 'Ok I'm not good enough but there's nothing I can do about it – they're not going to give me that connection!'"

I hope the above illustrates at least one way that 'shame-grief' (in this case in context of the full range of shame, grief and anger) manifests as a visual display of both the genuine feeling of grief and as a mask, which blocks the affect and the feeling of shame. We will return to this later when we explore working with Geoff in a more affective/cathartic shame-grief-anger process.

⁴⁹³ Implicit in the question – and Don knows this as his next remark indicates – is that 'shame' is the affect emotion we (he and I) know is associated with such loss of intimate connection.

⁴⁹⁴ i.e. a break in the social bond between family members.

A case study: Sorrow and forgiveness – a mask for shame?

*“I wish I had said more about shame but I’ll be chary of the word, as it is often applied to mere branches of etiquette; when the moral sense does not strictly come into play; . . . I consequently have used the word **repentance**, and **remorse** for the feeling when very strong . . .” Charles Darwin⁴⁹⁵*

Elsewhere in his papers⁴⁹⁶ Darwin defines remorse as “*pain of guilt*” and repentance as “*sorrow for anything I own for sin*”. These locate ‘remorse’, ‘repentance’ and ‘sorrow’ firmly within the framework we have identified as part of the ‘guilt’ culture. They are also manifestations of affective distress co-assembled with shame. Yet, these are often regarded in our culture as appropriate signals that an individual acknowledges the shame of transgression. The case study below indicates some of the problems that result from this way of framing shame. It suggests that this shame-grief assembly, operating as it does throughout the culture, can interfere with even the more enlightened approaches to conflict resolution.

In March 2002 I was invited to convene a restorative process in an attempt to resolve the effects of violent conflict between two members of a women’s martial arts group. ‘Alice’ had attacked ‘Veronica’ in her home, fracturing her eye socket.⁴⁹⁷ The injury required surgery and had the potential for long-term impairment of vision. The incident was preceded by increasing tension between the two women (which Veronica showed little awareness of).

A preparatory meeting with Alice and some group members (not Veronica) uncovered some of her feelings leading up to the incident and her ambivalence over the consequences. She expressed regret: over the impact on the group, the consequences for herself and Veronica, but not for the action or its premeditation.

Between this and the meeting involving the whole group, the full extent of the physical damage to Veronica was confirmed, Alice’s ex-partner created a domestic crisis, and the police decided to press charges. In the meeting Alice appeared anxious, confused, less able to articulate feelings expressed in the earlier meeting, and failed to address the physical hurt caused by her actions. Veronica also made light of the physical hurt, focused on the ‘*shock*’ of the incident (seen initially as ‘*unexpected*’ and ‘*incomprehensible*’) and her subsequent thinking regarding **her** role in ‘*provoking it*’. Both women focused on the impact of the incident on the group.

⁴⁹⁵ From his letter to Wentworth cited earlier

⁴⁹⁶ Letters: ref 88.20 Charles Darwin Archive, Cambridge University library.

⁴⁹⁷ Names of the group members have been altered by request to preserve anonymity.

Affectively, Veronica displayed distress/grief. This prompted Alice to offer a verbally confused apology – in terms of ‘sorrow’ and a request for ‘forgiveness’ reaching out, inviting hand contact as she did so. Veronica reciprocated and the women held hands physically rebuilding the connection – and relieving the pain felt by the whole group⁴⁹⁸

As part of the outcome plan, both women agreed to explore what led up to the violence with the aim of developing clearer communication strategies and better boundaries. However, in follow-up counselling, Veronica’s first words were: “*It isn’t resolved.*”⁴⁹⁹ The sessions led to an understanding of her emotional patterns of response to relationship conflicts. For Alice the counselling was confronting. She proved unable to acknowledge a pattern of violence and self-isolation and withdrew from the commitment to subsequent sessions.

Was sorrow a mask for shame? On the surface, the process of affective display of feelings of distress/sorrow (and remorse expressed as “I’m sorry”) rebuilt the connection. But this occurred without acknowledgement of the full extent of the hurt, underlying fear, anger, and ultimately shame being acknowledged (and/or expressed) by either woman. Alice did not address the ambivalence she felt about responsibility for the attack. Veronica did not address the shame-humiliation she felt over being attacked.⁵⁰⁰ Alice responded to distress with sorrow. She offered sorrow as the token for forgiveness. In accepting this token Veronica relieved the sorrow (distress/sadness) shared by the group.

There are indications that unacknowledged shame-guilt was driving the behaviour. There are obvious elements of aggression (both attack other and attack self), and alienation (isolation and engulfment). Alice used premeditated violence, avoided responsibility, blamed Veronica for provocation and expressed a desire to hit back. In the first meeting she showed suppressed anger and talked of a sense of humiliation saying, Veronica is: “*too nice*”, “*always so virtuous*”, “*over-helpful*” and “*over-generous*”, which she experienced as “*humiliating*”. She is “*pissed off*” with this, feels “*put down*” and says “*it makes me angry!*”⁵⁰¹ Alienation can be seen in confusion of speech and thought,⁵⁰² isolating herself from offers of support, a desire to avoid the second meeting, and self-medication with

⁴⁹⁸ Evidenced by marked release of breath in the group; confirmed by interviews with members.

⁴⁹⁹ Follow up counselling sessions were with member of the group who is a professional relationship counsellor and psychotherapist.

⁵⁰⁰ A telling point not picked up in the conference was a brief mention that, after the initial blow(s), Alice physically knelt on top of Veronica with her full weight – a dominating/humiliating action.

⁵⁰¹ Coded references to shame – c.f. Retzinger (1991)

⁵⁰² See earlier references to H.B. Lewis; Retzinger – on markers of unacknowledged shame. Also to Goffman – on flustering’ behaviour.

cannabis as a way of coping with stress.⁵⁰³ Confronted by the consequences of her behaviour (including legal sanctions) she froze (a fear reaction) and was unable to express anger or shame. Affectively what appeared through the frozen mask was sorrow – “*I’m sorry*”- but this was distress/sorrow/remorse for the general situation, not shame for the (unexplored) hurt to another person. The picture she portrayed was of a person caught in a confused shame-rage spiral modulated by fear of the consequences to herself that activated a pattern of shame-alienation – disconnection from others and from self.

Veronica was predominantly in self-blaming mode. She gave her-self away and continued the pattern of being ‘nice’, even taking the moral high ground of ‘the forgiving victim’. She was unable to assert herself over: the self-evident physical and emotional hurt, the unacceptable nature of the violence or the elements of humiliation in the attack. This suggests a pattern of alienation from self.

Both women were alienated. Alice from others, Veronica from herself. In the conference these patterns of alienation were the set up for a boundary invasion and subsequent engulfment in an inadequate ‘reconciliation’ process. Distress (like any other emotion) produces an ‘empathic’ response – a feeling (real or in imagination) of some of what the other is feeling. But, here it was sympathetic rather than empathic. Importantly it overwhelmed (engulfed) the women’s personal boundaries. Alice’s ‘too-rigid’ boundary collapsed. Veronica’s too weak/flexible one was easily invaded. For Veronica the process was simple engulfment – alienation resulting from the pattern of avoidance represented by the attack-self, hide-from-self quadrant of the compass of shame. Alice’s was more complex, through ultimately a case of being overwhelmed by a desire for relationship. She was initially isolated but her too-rigid boundary structure collapsed under pressure of: her ambivalence (based on fear of consequences), the desire for reconnection with the group, and Veronica’s display of grief.

Earlier I suggested that an authentic empathic response is a ‘feeling with’ another - one that avoids both the over-distancing (feeling sympathy/pity, sometimes contempt for another) and the under-distancing (feeling engulfed by or emotionally contaminated by another). Unmasked shame tends to trigger an ‘aesthetically’/appropriately distanced emotional response. Here shame-grief, shame-fear, and suppressed shame-anger clearly do not. Unacknowledged shame sets up patterns of alienation: isolation (characterised by having too rigid interpersonal boundaries) and engulfment (characterised by too flexible, permeable or

⁵⁰³ This is an unconfirmed suspicion with respect to the meetings, but confirmed by others as habitual, suggesting a tendency to ‘hide from self’ as part of her shame-avoidance pattern.

non-existent interpersonal boundaries). These alienated boundary patterns lack a sense of balance between identity (firmness without rigidity) and identification (flexibility without weakness), which are necessary for rebuilding social bonds based on respectful relationships.

In the example above, what occurred was not a rebuilding of the relationship between two people with a balanced sense of identity and identification. Instead, there was a boundary collapse. This suggests that just as unmasked shame is a vehicle for rebuilding damaged social bonds; so equally it may be the vehicle for building sound interpersonal boundaries. I suggest that the vehicle for both is the empathic response to shame – which has the potential to be qualitatively different from that elicited by distress.

Shame-fear

Even more than anger, disgust and grief - and central to the thesis emerging from this work - has been the repeated reference to shame-fear. Fear is the emotional response to a threat to the body. Shame is the emotional response to a threat to social connections. Since, in infancy, we are dependent on and may not survive without such social connections, it is easy to see how these can be co-assembled – and perhaps remain so into adulthood. In infancy, the threat of abandonment (which in the adult would trigger shame) is rightly perceived as a real threat to physical survival. Thus fear and shame initially follow the same path and only diverge later into shame (threat to the bond) and fear (threat to life and limb). What people call ‘fear’ of abandonment may thus be either a misnomer or indicate some trauma early on, which kept these two on a fixed track rather than diverging.⁵⁰⁴

In Chapter Four I indicated how the affects of shame and fear are, on each count, almost complete opposites. To recap:

- ❑ **Shame is seen as:** a breaking of eye-contact, looking away, lowering of eyes, drop of head, slump of upper body, loss of muscle tone at the base of the neck, and dilation of blood vessels leading to characteristic shame blush.
- ❑ **Fear is seen as:** a widening of the eyes, pulling back of head, stiffening of upper body, contraction/tensing of neck muscles, contraction of blood vessels and blanching of the face.

⁵⁰⁴ Suzanne Retzinger (personal communication, August 2002). I explore this issue from a personal perspective the section on Restimulated scripts below.

Muscular contraction might be expected to override relaxation. When these are co-assembled we are more likely to see the affect of fear than that of shame. This is indeed what we have seen in the previous chapter.⁵⁰⁵

The language people use certainly indicates this co-assembly of shame and fear. I think there is also evidence that this is not just a misnomer – using fear words to describe what should be shame. At least in some instances, fear is being both felt, and shown in affective terms. This is Paul who has a quite exceptional ability to identify and integrate body sensations, feeling and thinking about his emotions.

Paul: *“I think it is a toss-up between the societal concept of shame that keeps us away from it - that makes us afraid of going there because it is a taboo area – but as I say that, I have this body reaction that has us knowing about my own personal fears around shame.”*

We noted earlier how he identified the reactions of men in the Pathways program as ‘fear’ and checked whether this was fear for the boys or his own. He said there that he needed to know it for himself – to capture it and “*understand what that fear was.*” Here he talks of how he couldn’t pinpoint it to any one experience of being exposed to shame in the past:

“So it seems to me then that (when) shame operates . . . I start to have fear about the shame . . . and there doesn’t seem to be much difference between the size or the experience of the shame. It just seems to be that (the fears) all come together under this one flag of shame.”

Keith is another man with highly developed emotional facility who identifies the shame-fear feelings in kinaesthetic terms. Here is his recollection:

“What was shame to you - how did you view it?”

Keith: *“For me it is a sense of judgement by other people - and a gut feeling, like a - a real body sense of - diarrhoea - really lower – lower stomach - sort of pretty diarrhoea type sensation (Laughs)”*

“A sort of a gut wrench?”

“Yeah - and definite sense of judgement - negative judgement from other people - like that - you know um - because, for me, I spent my childhood fearing other people's judgement so I - that is like an automatic response for me - in a shame situation I go to my weakest link which is my fear of um judgement - Uh - also that is not a fear of being hurt or anything, it is just a fear of judgement, so - it is a psychological issue.

Cognitively he can distinguish between fear of hurt and fear of judgement, but the inner (lower body) sensations are very suggestive of an affective fear reaction. Here is another man from the same workshop where ‘fear of judgement’ results in fright-flight behaviour.

⁵⁰⁵ For example: the descriptions by observers that accompany Paul’s recollection (in ‘fear’ language) of his experience in Exercise # 3, previous chapter.

“What stands out for you about the workshop?”

Mark: *“I feel that I really need this process, but I'm so fearful about being judged around the things I feel shame about that I didn't share, I opted out.”*

Many of these men at the time of interview can see how shame sits behind the fear words - but the initial reaction is still to describe it as ‘fear’. Recall how Paul said that the shame felt when bullying others was masked by believing he was really a victim. He was able to let that mask drop when he was able to understand that his fear of being seen as bully was coupled with fear of being the victim. *“If I wasn't the bully then I would have been the victim.”* To avoid being the victim he joined the perpetrators. His fear of being bullied was real. Shame associated with joining the bullies was co-assembled with this fear. Recalling the memory (coupled with being in the spotlight of attention) produced a shame-fear reaction in the workshop. This was, seen and felt as fear. Recall Andy's comment on this moment in the workshop. He remembered Paul looking *“really vulnerable and exposed . . . hunched over . . . quite pale . . . going into fear.”* A big strong man who seemed quite defenceless and showing fear.

I see this binding of shame to fear as inherent in the feeling we call ‘guilt’.⁵⁰⁶ However, whatever we call it, it is a common feature of much of the shame-pathology we have been exploring and, where it occurs, the dominant feeling (both felt and displayed) is fear rather than shame. This is affective and kinaesthetic and not just cognitive as Geoff's experience of shame indicates.

“What is the feeling?”

Geoff: *“Just wanting to evaporate - just wanting the earth to open up and swallow me - a sense of being worse than worthless - not even being on the scale of human being - more the protoplasm amoeba type - you're on a scale with slime - on par with the lowest form of scum on the planet - how dare you even exert rights in the family - even have a place on the planet.”*

“Whose assessment was that?”⁵⁰⁷

“Ahh! - My assessment! How I felt: usually - a big knot in the stomach - incredible lump in the throat - heart pounding, umm - I did have an incredible sense of guilt - every time I did something wrong I definitely knew that I did it and unfortunately unlike some of my friends I wasn't able to switch off - I was always uh sweating profusely, heart pumping, didn't have that cold cool bravado - it set me up to get caught a lot because I was always the guiltiest looking one.”

“Sounds like a fear reaction to me . . .”

⁵⁰⁶ See Chapters Two and Four where we framed it in these terms because of the fear reaction to blame, judgement and punishment that so often characterises shame-guilt.

⁵⁰⁷ Naming it an ‘assessment’ locates it as a **thought**. This is sufficient to redirect Geoff to explore the **feeling**.

“A fear reaction - very much - lots of fear any time I did anything wrong.”

“. . . the binding of shame to fear . . .”

“Very closely related - almost like two sides the coin.”

“What you are describing is fear - a fear reaction?”

“Yes a fear reaction . . .”

“. . . The cold sweat, the - you know . . .”

“. . . Heart rate and all that . . .”

“. . . All that stuff - the adrenalin pump - . . . binding of shame to fear. Do you know what we call that?”

“Guilt! - Very guilty - I could have been a good Jew I've been guilty all my life - me and Woody Allen - I Love Woody Allen!”

“I think - I'm working towards a clearer understanding of what is shame and what is guilt. Guilt is externally imposed - it can be taken on as a self-assessment, but it is bound to fear . . .”

“But that time felt deeper than just guilt - the bicycle thing - I was guilty of stealing the thing but I felt worse than worthless⁵⁰⁸ . . . Then the fear . . .”

“. . . A shame-fear reaction . . .?”

“I had gotten caught.”

“The trouble is most people don't have a way of experiencing or recalling shame in the absence of . . .”

“Fear!”

“. . . fear.”

“Yeah it is a tricky one!”

“We have seen people in the (men's) group unable to separate shame from grief. Some people can't separate out the shame from the anger – they just go into attack mode . . .”

“Yeah I'm good at that!”

“. . . A lot of people can't separate shame from fear . . .”

“Yeah if I'm feeling shame I'll definitely go into control or blame . . .”

“Blame is critical - it is that finger-pointing thing- the trigger that starts the guilt reaction.”

“Right - yes that is a very quick trigger!”

⁵⁰⁸ In another part of the interview Geoff describes his “most excruciating shameful interaction” as a result of being caught stealing the bicycle. His stepfather was ‘embarrassed’ by being called to the school by the Principal and confronted with both the theft and an elaborate set of lies Geoff had invented. “He started with this very low monotone – no voice raised not even a threat or hint of spanking or violence – it was: ‘You’ve broken the trust of this family – I can never trust you again – how dare you’ – you know – ‘tell lies in this family – I’ve never told a lie in my life and here you are betraying the entire generational families background . . .’ It was amazing I just wanted to crawl – I mean I really wanted to say ‘just hit me’ I was begging for it – anything but that quiet - . Yeah – it was horrible – really just wanted to slither into a pool and slide out the door. [Laughs] I became a better liar after that!” We touched on this desire for punishment as a way of avoiding shame in Chapters Two and Four, and will take it up again in Chapter Eight below.

This is not just word association. There are enough indicators of bodily manifestation of fear to indicate that this is also felt.⁵⁰⁹ Clearly, fear frequently assembles with shame and people here report feeling it in terms of body sensations. The behaviours that result from shame-avoidance, as we have seen in exploring the compass of shame, can be analysed in terms of aggression and alienation – in common everyday language ‘fight’ or ‘fright’.

What is missing here or at least only briefly attended to is clear evidence of facial affect of fear. At the time of the interviews, my focus was on people’s descriptions of the workshop experience. I was also looking for expression of shame, particularly instances of marked shame-blushing. I did not expect affective fear to be expressed in the interview situation. If triggered it would probably have passed unnoticed. But there is another factor that limits the identification of this facial fear-affect. It has been my experience that for many men, showing fear is a definite no-no. There is good reason, as men, to fear showing fear.⁵¹⁰ Shame-fear is not just a tension between two mutually opposing affect displays but the fear-shame mask itself gets inhibited - out of shame and fear of showing it.

Restimulated scripts

In tracing my own shame-fear pathology back to its roots in my family of origin I have recovered elements of my own shame-fear pattern. I was the first-born child to parents in their late 30’s who had been bombed out of London and were living in a small country town in the last years of World War II. For my mother, pregnancy, childbirth and an unsettled newborn child were traumatic and her post-partum depression undiagnosed and untreated. For me it resulted in a world of unpredictability, fear, and distress, never knowing which of four patterns to expect. From infancy through childhood, at any time I could find myself ignored, shouted at, beaten for any or no reason, or expected to show affection.⁵¹¹ This understanding helps me make sense of my pattern of self-doubt, chronic shame-embarrassment, and its association with fear. The original threat was real and physical – a threat to my body as well as to the bond with my primary caregiver. The script that evolved bound these conflicting emotions of shame and fear together. The early programming also makes sense of my conflicting patterns of isolation and engulfment in intimate relations. As an overall response I mobilised anger, initially as adolescent rebellion, later as a highly developed critic and as a social and political activist; tackling issues of social injustice with

⁵⁰⁹ Note also the rapid speech, (which I mirror in the interview) reminiscent of the way Helen Lewis describes bypassed shame.

⁵¹⁰ We will explore this in more detail in Chapter Eight below.

⁵¹¹ Tomkins (1963, also 1991) describes each of these patterns and their implications for shame-based scripts - here all four are combined with unpredictability!

righteous indignation. To a large extent this pathology has made me what I am, led me to live the life I have and resulted in this effort to understand shame pathology not just for myself but in more general terms and, more important perhaps, how to reframe it through the salutogenic perspective.

It might be thought that this would enable me to hear, see and feel the effect of the assembly of shame and fear more acutely in others. However, while I have learned to observe more closely how **my** fear masks the shame both affectively and cognitively, for me **another's** fear does not trigger a mirror-empathic response. Rather, it stimulates other emotions, usually anger. In part this is my own rejection of / resistance to re-stimulation of my own shame-fear scripts. But in this I am not alone. I find many men react similarly with anger or contempt rather than empathic awareness of another's fear. Were it not so, perhaps a display of fear might be sufficient to repair the break in connection indicated by the language of shame-fear - fear of rejection, judgement abandonment etc. But often this doesn't happen. The fear language, and accompanying affect signals inhibit the kind of empathic response that would rebuild the connections. Instead they seem to increase the social distance.

Shame and empathy.

What is emerging is a clearer picture of the different patterns for co-assembling other emotions, with shame – notably: anger, fear, distress and disgust. These other emotions tend to mask the affective display of shame and interfere with the salutogenic shame process. At the heart of this process is the triggering of an empathic response in those who witness the shame display. This 'empathy' assists the process of repairing the damage to the social bonds that the initial shame affect was hard-wired to signal.

The masking emotions are, in part, culturally learned reactions. Fear and anger in particular are part of the aggression and alienation responses we explored in the compass of shame. They are also, if we build on the analysis at the start of this study, a function of what we have called a 'guilt culture', or at least an immature shame culture. Critical to understanding of shame-pathology is the way that displaying shame plus fear (or anger and, to some extent disgust and distress) produces a different 'empathic' response – one that does not lead to closeness and reconnection, at least not in the way that shame does. Perhaps a useful way of describing the distinction is by reference to the subtle but profound difference between empathy and sympathy.

What is empathy? Earlier I suggested that empathy seems to be a hard-wired human experience that allows us to feel **with another**. It is an emotional process. One that operates functionally when the ‘feeling with’, is appropriately ‘distanced’. Sympathy might usefully be seen as this ‘empathy operating dysfunctionally: either falling short of or overstepping the mark when we either under or over-identify with another’s feelings. The workshop experiences suggest that the empathic responses to shame achieve this more balanced empathic response, at least when the person showing it is standing at the centre of the shame compass – physically midway between the poles of isolation and engulfment.

To explore the idea of ‘feeling empathic’ further I asked various people for their thoughts on and experience. What goes on for them when they feel ‘empathic’?⁵¹²

Jane describes the experience in Twelve-Step meetings when the person sharing is showing shame:⁵¹³

“{They are} not looking at anyone, usually looking at the floor, turning away, lots of looking down. . . . expressing an experience that is important and dear to them, usually personal, usually emotive, sometimes with an explanation of transformation for them. They are intense, their emotions are more on the surface . . . not necessarily emoting . . . distanced from their emotions enough to describe the situation

“I find that my empathic response is centred in my heart/chest area. My head is up, I am intent on the person I am looking at and listening to. I have no fear, there is a lessening of caution, there is a building of greater bond, but not too much. I still recognise/understand the different between “us”. What is interesting about this is it does not matter what the other person is talking about, but that it does matter that it comes from some sort of admittance – “A when I felt this” sort of scenario – the narrative is extraneous . . . seems to be a vehicle. I think it is true that my empathic response is to the affect – if it is not to the narrative what else could I be responding to? However, that said I do cue into certain words but these words are associated or married to bodily cues too because I am looking at the person. Without the whole picture it can be just a bunch of blah, blah – even whining.

*“My response is sometimes tears welling up in my eyes. I am always surprised at this. I have no reason to cry. I do not feel sad or bummed out. I actually feel warm and fuzzy, I feel connected, I feel a healing thru this connection. I do not feel alone in the world anymore, but I do not feel engulfed and I do not want to help this other person because it is their struggle and I know they need space to get thru it **but what I have witnessed helps me with my struggle.**”*

“The vernacular language of empathy?”

“ Words like: ‘Understanding connection’; ‘It touched my heart’; ‘Boy I can really connect with that!’ ‘I had a great deal of empathy for her’: ‘I really feel for you’; ‘I’ve been there’; ‘I had something similar ‘happen’ to me and felt the same thing you describe’.”

⁵¹² Questions to the UCSB Shame list, and MHWA stopping-violence list July 2002.

⁵¹³ Jane Pennington: personal Communication, June 2002. Emphasis in original.

Dale describes it in more cognitive, distanced terms:⁵¹⁴

“Empathy may be selective as to its object, maybe cognitive, . . . a ‘rational’ understanding of a person’s situation, accompanied by little feeling, based on one’s memories of ‘similar’ situations one has been in . . . One can ‘understand’ that a person’s situation is painful without feeling the pain. This form of empathy is important for our professional development. So what’s happening when we feel someone’s pain? This is a big issue for me – one who traditionally ‘emotes’ easily, too often excessively. . . . My thought here is that we ‘beat up’ our feelings in these situations – grow ‘em, boost ‘em. We love to ‘feel’, some of us more than others, so we construct feelings and emotions and very often over-empathize from the point of view of the person we are responding to. We ‘overlay’ the emotion!”

“Situations?”

*“A normally ‘bright’ person presents as unhappy – will produce a different response to a normally ‘flat person’ as unhappy. Inurement? - Or conscious understanding of the **context** of an emotion vis a vis the individual? Someone close will generally evoke a stronger response than someone I don’t know well. . . . How I am feeling – mood – background emotiveness. ‘Negative’ emotions evoke more response than ‘positive’ ones. Points to mutual-protective group behaviour?”*

“Cues?”

“{My} Body language, tears & despair, etc. . . . This might support your ‘hard-wired’ suggestion. {But if another’s} words are not supported by body language we neither believe nor feel their claimed emotions. Babies pick up emotions, respond instinctively. I guess it points to a heavy overlay of individual experience and response on an original emotional response field – where feelings rise and fall and flow easily and healthily.”

“Behaviour?”

“Feeling with – being with. Even when we don’t feel the other’s feelings we tend to behave as if we do. If someone does not share our feelings we may feel ‘invalidated’. We learn, then, to validate others feelings/experiences. A functional relationship to shame?”

*“Overall – available for appropriate response. My tendency to ‘over-indulge’ is much less these days – due to learning about meaning of emotion and self and identity. . . . I believe we are here to look after each other and empathy is knowing how. I am capable of **not** feeling someone’s emotions . . . also inappropriate feeling – humour in zone of tragedy (tension release?)*

*“The question arises: what is the relationship between empathy and love. Not those grasping desirous, possessive etc meaning but what is often called ‘spiritual’ or ‘unconditional’ love? As we get to know someone, and sometimes sooner, we begin to experience moments of admiration/perceived beauty/at-one-withness. The thing is, beneath this there is a sense of **the other is I am the other**. This can be worked up but is initially spontaneous – your definition of empathy: ‘a feeling **with** not just **for** another’.*

“Your discussion of the useful limits of empathic response, emotional distance etc. reminds me of the ‘falling in love’ process where one feels much empathy,

⁵¹⁴ Pseudonym (see Chapter Six): personal communication, August 2002.

*full acceptance, etc. followed by the need to re-establish individuality. During the process one's ability to help or serve the other may be hampered rather like the 'over-empathic' nurse.⁵¹⁵ Of course we are into the nitty-gritty of self/other in this whole discussion, a huge part of **who we are**.*

"I gather that introspection has gained some respectability, and you certainly use it, but throwing 'love' into the equation can hardly be helpful. In a PhD thesis it would be suicide! Anyway 'love' is probably a compound of processes with empathy as a central 'regulator'."

These comments reflect a number of the ideas we have explored earlier in this study. They illustrate some of the differences between feeling empathy and intellectual empathy - which involves more imagining how the other feels.⁵¹⁶ But notice how in both cases empathy is experienced in terms of (appropriate) distancing of emotional responses to observing another's shame. If we are right in seeing shame as the master emotion that regulates social-emotional interactions then it clearly has a pivotal role to play in this distancing process. It may be that the mirror-empathic feeling of shame is the mechanism by which the observer maintains this emotional distance. And, far from being 'suicide', we may come to more clearly understand mature adult 'love' (as distinct from some of the excesses of adolescent romantic love) when we view this through the lens of shame and shame-empathy. I will take this challenge up further in the next chapter.

Reconnecting with shame

Often, we don't know how to show shame; and when we do show it we often don't know it. Throughout the interviews there were moments when men showed shame-affect (including marked blushing) but were unaware of it until it was pointed out to them.⁵¹⁷ It is as if we are disconnected from our sense of the affect of shame. We're often not aware of it and so easily assemble it with any other feeling that will mask it. Don, recalling his experience in the workshop is a good example.⁵¹⁸ While his experience is about a shame-based situation, he is showing grief. The affect is grief; the language is grief. It is something that takes him by surprise, 'out of left field', which triggers initially surprise, then the blush of shame. I see

⁵¹⁵ See Discussion in Chapter Four.

⁵¹⁶ See Duan, 2000. He explores the role of observer in the distinction between 'empathic emotion' and 'intellectual empathy', and how shame, fear sadness and joy elicit different types and intensities of empathic response.

⁵¹⁷ See for example, instances of blushing by Paul and Andy in Chapter Six.

⁵¹⁸ Chapter Six – Exercise # 5.

this affect but he remains unaware of it until his attention is drawn to it. On this lack of shame awareness he observed:

Don: "It has probably got to do with facility – emotional facility – I'm not sure I like this idea of 'emotional intelligence'⁵¹⁹ - it is about facility and the latter part of my life has been about learning to achieve emotional facility – to know what I feel and be what I feel."

"And show it?"

"Shame may well be the one that none of us have had a chance to get at. It is hardest to get at because nobody gets at it – men or women. We're a society that lives in flight from shame. Any other emotion will do. For women by and large it is grief. For men by and large it is anger. A huge generalisation but one that has a large element of truth in it."

Cognitive-behavioural and narrative approaches

How can we re-learn the facility of 'feeling' (i.e. being aware of) the shame affect? The workshop process offers some pointers to approaches that can be applied within existing therapeutic frameworks.

The first of these is cognitive-behavioural. When I find myself engaging in any of the behaviours represented by the attack/hide patterns of the Compass of Shame I am prompted to ask: 'what is the shame element here?' Increasingly my friends, and particularly men's groups, are encountering this challenge. It is worth asking if an element of shame is involved whenever we find ourselves: becoming defensive, aggressive, self-critical; withdrawing from or feeling ourselves repelled by situations; or engaging in addictive behaviours and/or being overly attracted to others. There may be none; but given the way that shame-avoidance is at the root of these behaviours, and the shame itself so often masked, it can be worth asking. Masking shame may be an appropriate response; or it may not be. Does masking it serve me and how? Often I may feel it is not 'safe' to show the true feeling. It can be worth asking why – and what I need to do to create the kind of environment where I am able to show it? All of this points to issues of the quality of relationships and the opportunities to work on improving these – exactly what shame is hardwired to do.

The second is a narrative approach. What language do I use? When I say something makes me angry or sad or anxious, scared, afraid, or that I am disgusted by something, what do I really mean? Am I really feeling this? Are these emotions appropriate to the situation? More

⁵¹⁹ See Goleman, 1996.

to the point, are these words being used as a cover for shame.⁵²⁰ We have noted the prevalence of fear and distress language to describe what are essentially shame-based situations. ‘*I’m afraid . . .*’ Afraid of what? Often, such language is coopted to indicate we recognise threat to relationship. ‘*I’m afraid I can’t do that for you*’ or ‘*I’m sorry I can’t . . .*’. Are we really saying: {‘*I recognise in saying that, you will be disappointed and that may affect the relationship between us*’}?⁵²¹ And implicit in this also perhaps: {‘*and I care about that!*’}. Using ‘I’m afraid’ or ‘I’m sorry’ may be socially accepted but, often, the ‘fear’/‘distress’ language masks the real message we are trying to convey – that it’s a (source of) shame. Worse, it masks **to us** what we feel and what we need to be saying.

What might be the effect of choosing a different narrative - one that acknowledges the underlying feeling is one of shame rather than fear? The extent to which our culture is embedded in this pathological pattern becomes evident as soon as we search for alternatives. Simply substituting ‘ashamed’ or another word from the ‘shame’ spectrum in ‘I’m afraid . . .’ or ‘I’m sorry . . .’ doesn’t work. We need a radically different grammatical construction – much like the use of ‘It’s a shame . . .’ which we explored in the previous chapter. Saying ‘It’s a shame but I’m not able to help you’ still sounds foreign – but then, as I have been arguing throughout this study, so is the idea of making shame visible so that it can operate salutogenically. For other uses, in everyday language we have the broad spectrum of ‘shame’ words with which to express our feelings of disconnection more creatively. Fortunately, what is normal or acceptable language is continually being changed by the way it is used.

This reframing of our language so that ‘shame’ words are used in appropriate situations may be a necessary goal. The evidence above suggests that use of fear, distress, anger, and disgust language not only masks shame from ourselves and others, but will actually produce elements of the corresponding affects on our face and activate mirror-empathic (or alienated / ‘sympathetic’) feelings in the other. Displays of fear, anger, disgust and (to a lesser extent) distress seem to **increase** the emotional distance or separation between us. Grief/distress may be considered an exception here. But not, as explored above, when this is used as a shame mask - as part of the attack-self script. This use of grief avoids the acceptance of responsibility that is the hallmark of shame. People seem to instinctively sense the falsity of it. In the compass of shame work, they report feeling distant rather than close to the person displaying this false distress. Shame on the other hand seems to activate an empathic response that **brings us closer together**. It acts in some ways analogously to enjoyment.

⁵²⁰ For example: see Chapter Four - section on fear of shame - where my friend was challenged to explore the shame issues underlying her ‘fear’ language and pattern of withdrawal.

⁵²¹ Now that would be a shame wouldn’t it?

Where joy is concerned, empathy usually means ‘You smile- I smile’. Showing shame (at least as observed above) seems also to activate a salutogenic mirror response. In Chapter Three we saw how shame, in a way analogous to that of joy and laughter, functions to reduce the high-level (or increasing) arousal that activates the affects of: anger, distress, excitement, fear, and shock; as well as its recognised role in (partially) reducing interest and enjoyment. It acts as a brake on all the other emotions not just the so-called ‘positive’ ones.

Affectively, shame is the signal of another’s attention to the relationship between us. Observing the affect leads us to also attend to this relationship. If we value it, our attention will strengthen it. This is not a guaranteed response. It requires a supportive environment and, given how badly mangled our culture’s perception and understanding is, the reaction to talking about shame can activate some negative shame scripts in other people. But overall it is worth considering using the appropriate emotional language - body language as well as the words we use.

Emotional responses have evolved for instinctive use in specific situations and serve to produce particular responses in those who observe them. Fear in one member of a group activates an ‘alert’ response that primes the whole group to respond to external threat – not the need to attend to the social bonds within the group. This latter is the function of shame. In the many and diverse situations where the shame response is the appropriate one we already have a wide range of words in the shame family. Using these is more likely to activate the corresponding affective displays and empathic shame responses than when we co-opt words from one of the other emotion families. As we have seen humility, modesty, shyness, self-awareness, embarrassment, shame, humiliation etc. (to which we can now add disappointment and frustration) provide a rich and textured lexicon to convey the nuances of shame-based situations and our feeling responses to these. They activate an entirely different response – one almost diametrically opposed to those of fear: anxious, afraid, nervous, scared, terrified etc.

In previous chapters we have seen, in theory and in practice, how display of an emotion-affect leads to feeling that emotion and the cognitive processes of finding the words to describe it. Here we see how the other side of the cycle operates. If we speak it we are likely to show it and feel it. As we show it the one who observes it is likely to also show, feel, think and act out of his or her scripts for the emotion we are displaying. As one of my favourite poets, George Griffiths says:

Words are like feathers in a bag . . . once they are out they can blow all over the place and never be put back again. So take care.⁵²²

Affective work with shame

The strategies above are cognitive. Throughout this study I have stressed that shame is primarily affective. Blink and we may miss it, but try to hide it (as most of us do) a flicker often gets through. It is activated before we become aware (and feel it).

Much of the pathology around shame is due to the way we have learned not just cognitive but unconscious scripted, patterned ways of reacting emotionally to the initial trigger of shame. It is not just that we use words of fear, anger, grief or disgust etc. to mask shame. We co-assemble these feelings **and their affects** with the shame. These masking words, feelings **and affects** provide a comprehensive mask for hiding the display of shame. Just as we started with observation of the affective expression of emotions in seeking a theoretical framework for this exploration of shame, so we return to this as the point of firm ground from which to undertake the practical task of unlearning the personally and socially pathogenic patterns that result from masked shame. It is from this **visual** base that we must also start the process of relearning if we are to learn to handle it better - and in the process start to change our culture so that it handles shame more salutogenically.

My contention, based on the workshop and other experiences described above, is that observing the affect, noticing what we see and feel as a result of the visual display, can produce significant shifts in people's thinking, words and actions in relation to the life situations in which they encounter shame. But the interview data, based primarily on verbal recollections and reflections of the workshop experience, are still only suggestive.⁵²³ To illustrate and perhaps strengthen my case let me give another example of working with shame – in this case primarily visually, and in a different context.

I expect by now you will have formed some idea of the personalities of the individual men who have contributed to this study. They are real people not composites. I have worked with a number of them for several years in a variety of settings. This is an example of another aspect of this work, informed by the praxis of working with shame described above. The setting is an evening meeting of a men's group in the Blue Mountains, West of Sydney.

⁵²² Griffiths, 1975, "Words".

⁵²³ Earlier I indicated that future work will involve testing this visual-display-of-shame hypothesis further using video resources beyond the scope of this study.

Geoff, who you will have met in the interviews above, has spoken often about his efforts to deal with *'toxic shame'* *'shame attacks'* and the *'patterns of rage'* *'compulsive lying and avoidance of responsibility'* (financial and other) and *'risk taking behaviour'* that he sees as related to this *'core shame'*. On this evening he is speaking of an experience in the previous week which he introduces by saying, *"I feel embarrassed talking about this but . . ."* He describes how an incident focussed his attention on details of his family history, particularly: his parents divorce, and how this led to loss of contact with his natural father until just before he died. Geoff talks about his realisation that (he thinks) his mother prevented him from having contact with his father after the marriage breakdown, and the sadness he feels at this loss of contact.

The affect display is overtly sadness/grief but I notice brief facial display of anger⁵²⁴, which is rapidly masked. Talking about the story progressively takes him out of all display of emotion. When he finishes speaking I ask him,

"What do you want to do with this?"

There is brief discussion about having done work previously and acknowledgement there is more there but, as he says.

"I'm not sure what to do with this"

"Geoff, how about we cut to the chase. I'd like to know if you want to work on the anger that I think I saw there – right?"

He acknowledges the anger, then says:

"But I was never allowed to show anger at my mother"

"OK, let's start by working light; after all it is only your mother".⁵²⁵

This triggers laughter.

*"Yeah! [Laughs] **Only** my mother – Right! [Laughs]"*

We then work for some ten minutes around the edges of the anger he feels towards his mother - drifting off into story, much of it rehearsed earlier (and on previous occasions) - with sporadic laughter discharge and slight, controlled display of sadness. He is ready to give up, saying he has tried to talk with his mother but finds this impossible:

"She doesn't want to hear about how I feel – I'll probably never be able to say how hurt and angry I feel"

⁵²⁴ See Eckman & Friesen (1975) for cues to recognising subtle signals – particularly on the brow and around the eyes.

⁵²⁵ People familiar with Re-evaluation Counselling work will recognise this as 'a contradiction' – designed to assist in achieving aesthetic distance for emotional discharge by pointing in two directions – both away from the distress and towards the source. The implicit invitation is for Geoff to walk between these to find his own point of balance. (Goffman conveys a similar idea with his suggestion that an 'accurately improper' move can penetrate a person's stereotyped views of 'reality'. See Goffman, 1961.) The laughter that follows signals the discharge of light fears also some of the initial embarrassment. The initial contradiction has been effective in starting the process – it confirms that my observation and intuition was 'on target'.

Affect display has now almost ‘dried up’ – is frozen.

“Maybe you just need to say what you would like to say to your mother?”

“OK”

“How about you chose one of us to represent your mother?”

“OK – *how about you be mother*”

“Geoff I’m your mother – you can’t be angry with me!”

There is a brief display of shame rapidly masked with flash of anger then an overlay of mild grief – and a flat response

“*I can be angry with who I like*”

“Not with me you can’t!”

Now I’m flying by the seat of my pants here. I know how stuck Geoff can be around some issues. He can and has discharged surface emotional material before but reports that the core issues don’t seem to have shifted much. I have the cues for an **uncaring, un-expressive** mother and sense that to honour his process from here on I need to maintain **silence**. The only tools I have to work with are gross body language, facial affect and noticing his and my feelings as the process unfolds. I can choose whether to allow affects to show or to mask them – to inhibit display of spontaneous affect or impose another affective display over the spontaneously felt one. I adopt a neutral mask and watch as Geoff rehearses what he would like to say to his mother first with rising grief then, in the face of no empathic response from me, with anger that progresses into rage mixed with grief. The language and expression is that of victim powerlessness – crying and shouting with an aggressive facial anger-affect attempting (ineffectually) to intimidate.

Then within this powerless grief-rage at the unemotional mask he shouts:

“... and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for what you did – stopping me from seeing my dad, keeping me from even knowing that he was dying – so that I only had a week and he was so wasted . . . I couldn’t even communicate with him . . .”

I notice myself wanting to drop my eyes and head. I catch the feeling of shame - and notice that I have masked it. I choose to consciously maintain the un-expressive face of the surrogate mother and watch as the powerless rage tirade continues. Indeed, it seems the more effort I put into maintaining the mask the more his anger rises. I’m aware that I find it interesting that I can remain unmoved by what the other men later acknowledge is intense, directed anger, but am ‘touched by’ the call to acknowledge shame. I decide to explore what happens if I ‘go with the feeling’ – if I stop freezing the mask that hides the shame. First I intensify the effort to hold the ‘frozen’ un-expressive mask and Geoff’s anger ‘goes ballistic’. Then, as he reaches the end of his tirade I stop holding the un-expressive mask. This allows

my eyes to break contact, my head to drop, my shoulders to slump. I'm not aware of a sensation of blush. There a significant pause and silence. I glance up briefly and look away. Geoff is staring at me intently. There is a long pause. Then he starts speaking again. He is expressing anger without grief now and there is power in his voice – an authenticity that comes with it being calmer. Not cold, not hot rage but calm strong expression of the anger he feels - that, as he says, he has '*a right to feel*' over the unjust behaviour of his 'mother'. Raising my head, and resuming a neutral mask (a slightly less cold, uncaring but still unemotional face) does not trigger a change. He continues with the assertive anger until complete. We then discuss what has happened.

The group comments on the change in Geoff, particularly the assertive tone of voice.⁵²⁶ I comment on how I experienced the work both in terms of what I had noticed about the sequence of emotional expression and how I had felt unmoved by the grief/anger and anger/rage but felt this feeling of shame and had decided to allow that to show.

What is the lesson here? I think it shows how:

- For shame-bound people, who intellectually know that their 'toxic' shame reaction is based on 'carrying the unacknowledged shame of their parents and/or family of origin', there is difficulty expressing cleanly other emotions such as anger.⁵²⁷ Attempts to express these emotions, as in this case, usually become inflated. Here we see an override that switches rapidly from grief into rage – with a sense of in-authenticity, or falsity to this expression. Both Geoff and others present commented on this aspect of the first phase of his anger expression.
- The 'attack-other' rage hides, is a cover for, or fails to acknowledge one's own shame and/or a desire for the other to 'meet' us by acknowledging their shame. The acknowledgment of this shame (even briefly) by the other produces a dramatic shift to a more authentic expression of anger.

Working with the shame as the root of anger (and grief and fear) offers another tool in the psychodynamic bag of techniques for releasing stored and pathogenic emotions. My previous experience suggests that most psychotherapy works on many of these issues down to the level of felt powerlessness (evident here also). These techniques encourage the client to 'take back the power' in a variety of ways, but do not usually attempt to work with the shame that is often at the root of interpersonal conflict. The result may be a building of self-esteem; but

⁵²⁶ They do not initially comment on the shame signal.

⁵²⁷ As we noted earlier, they are 'Shame Sherpas' carrying the baggage their parents have handed down – often the same baggage the parents were handed by the grandparents.

over the top of the still unresolved shame issues. The ‘pride’ thus generated has an element of falsity about it because the shame is still unacknowledged. It can appear inflated, ‘up oneself’ and often appears ‘selfish’. There is something rather embarrassing about many people who emerge from self-esteem based personal growth work. It is as if the personal growth has been achieved at the expense of social awareness.

Tackling the underlying issues involves understanding that one of the major tools for this work is shame-affect – the silent, visual, facial expression of shame and its functional role in the process of rebuilding connections between people. This is breaking new ground. The study of cathartic discharge of emotions has identified the importance of maintaining an appropriate emotional distance. However, with respect to the challenge of finding an affective discharge mode for shame it has only been able to suggest that laughter serves this function. I agree with this as far as it goes. As we discussed in Chapter Four, laughing works as a way of discharging some aspects of shame: shame-embarrassment for example. It may be that deep belly-laughter may go deeper into stored residues of unresolved shame sequences. However, it is recognised that laughter is also the mode of discharge for the lighter forms of almost all emotional distress patterns. Each of the other affective emotions has, in addition to this laughing discharge, a specific pattern for dealing with the deeper stored residues. Deep fears discharge with shaking and cold sweating, anger with shouting and hot sweating, grief with deep sobbing etc. As well as being a mode of discharge, laughter can be a mask for shame and also be used to mask various other emotions.

It may be that the current framework for cathartic discharge will work for shame by progressively ‘taking off’ the fear anger grief etc. thus removing the masks of shame. By simultaneously ‘working light’, i.e. reducing the intensity with which the shame is experienced, (so this is released as shame-embarrassment rather than shame-humiliation) it may be possible for the deeper layers of stored shame to be progressively discharged. But I doubt it!⁵²⁸ How else might such shame be discharged? I have observed cathartic work in which it was claimed that shame was being discharged as heat.⁵²⁹ The earlier observations from Darwin onwards (seen also in the previous chapter) suggest that the singular affect display that would unequivocally indicate shame discharge would be **blushing**. There are a number of instances in the data above where people acknowledge ‘feeling heat’ in response to my drawing attention to their blushing. The example above of work with Geoff also suggests that attention to the silent display of other facial signals and the body language of shame-

⁵²⁸ As noted in Chapter Four, so do a number of people in the Re-evaluation Counselling movement.

⁵²⁹ As noted earlier, Brendan Nicholls, ‘Mastery’ Program, Sydney, 1997.

affect may be sufficient to release aspects of stored shame. Further exploration of this is part of ongoing work flowing from this study.⁵³⁰

Observing and noticing

The example from men's group work above shows a complex interaction between two people with a pivotal role for the affective display of shame. My experience is that shame sits on both sides of disconnection between people and the healing can begin when either party (or even a third party) takes down the mask that so often interferes with the shame display.⁵³¹ If we have learned anything about shame thus far it is surely to see it as an emotional **process** between people rather than as an emotional state within the isolated self. The residues of stored emotion that contribute to the pathologies of shame were laid down first in terms of unresolved shame-based sequences of interactions between people – between the 'self' and the 'other' or others. In this frame, **shame is a boundary phenomenon**. It signals the health of the boundary between me, and my environment. In this 'environment' other people are usually the most significant features. As we move forward with the new perspective that this work with shame allows, and as we work backwards to release some of the old patterns and stored residues of unresolved shame, our focus of attention needs to be on this boundary.

For the salutogenic process to work the affect needs to be both made visible and observed. Much of the evidence here has been gathered from people who are healthy, functioning, 'normal' and with perhaps higher than normal emotional facility. The aspects of the psychopathology of shame that they express are akin to what is normal in our culture today. There is however some useful evidence from people who fall outside this 'normality' which supports the view that it is observation of emotions via facial signals that is critical to social functioning. People are often confused by and uncomfortable in the presence of people suffering from Schizophrenia. The schizophrenic's social responses often seem to be 'off key'. Recent research on facial scanning patterns shows that these people tend to focus attention not on the brows, eyes and mouth, where affect signals can be recognised, but on the flat, neutral areas of the cheeks.⁵³² Similar research with people suffering from autism (particularly Aspergers' Syndrome) who show little interest in social communication,

⁵³⁰ Here we come full circle to Charles Darwin who enquired of his colleagues world-wide about their experience of shame and the shame blush. I have asked colleagues in the RC community to similarly observe and report on examples of shame-affect in co-counselling sessions.

⁵³¹ Witness the Restorative Justice Case study in Chapter Five.

⁵³² See work of The Brain Dynamics Centre, www.brain-dynamics.net at Westmead Hospital and University of Sydney: Williams, Loughland et al., 1999; Lee, Williams et al., 2001; Lee & Williams, 2000; Loughland, Williams & Gordon, 2002a, 2002b. Also reported in 'The Emotional Brain' - Catalyst program, ABC TV, 1 November 2001, www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/s404806.htm.

indicates that, rather than focus on the eyes, and maintain eye contact, such people focus instead on the mouth and are easily distracted from attending to the face of others by sounds.⁵³³ It may be that some of the social consequences flowing from these pathologies are clinically related to the failure to observe what are, in ‘normal’ people, the vital clues to the feelings of others. They may not pick up on the cues that signal threats to their social bonds. As a result they show little affective display of shame that would signal ‘other-awareness’ which would repair, build, and strength these bonds.

If we are to use the power of shame to build social connections we need to become more aware of its subtle signals both in and on ourselves, and on the faces of others. At the point in Andy’s interview when he blushed noticeably I observed that it’s a shame we don’t have a built-in mirror to reflect back to us the subtle signals on our face. It is often the failure to pay attention to the sensations, in part because we have learned to block them, which stops us being able to **feel** the shame. We simply do not notice it. And yet we do have a mirror. The mirror is there in the faces of others – the very ones who triggered our shame affect as we instinctively sensed that our connection with them had been threatened.

How come we don’t see these? How come they also often miss that first flash of our shame-affect, before we mask it, which would initiate the empathic response? Indeed why is it that sometimes, even when we do show it, they either don’t see it or don’t respond with empathy? Perhaps the answer lies in the nature of the shame affect itself. Maybe it is simply that the affect triggers the breaking of eye contact, a looking away, a lowering of the head so the face of the other is no longer in our line of vision. And the empathic response is to trigger the other to also look away. Note how we avoid increasing the shame of embarrassed people by not looking at them. We respect their ‘privacy’. It is not hard to see how such affect-initiated non-observing can set up a tragedy of errors. I look away in shame:

{‘This other person thinks badly of me’}.

He responds instinctively to the brief flash of my shame by looking away. He may not think anything of it or be focussed on the initial behaviour that caused him to break connection. I furtively look back at him to see if he noticed – he is looking away:

{‘Whew - he didn’t notice!’} – {‘Better not show it then’}.

He looks back – but I’ve now masked the shame. I’m now ‘shameless’. His reaction is to think:

{‘He just doesn’t get it!’} {‘He’s up himself!’}

⁵³³ See work of the Yale Child Study Centre particularly: Klin, Jones, et al., 2002a and 2002b; Also ABC Health Report 21 April 2002 www.abc.net.au

The result is further disconnection and real damage to the relationship - **and** I have one more pathological piece to add to the long-term residue of my scripted distress pattern of unresolved shame. This is hypothetical. I could script a number of alternative scenarios. But at the end of the day the breakdown in the otherwise salutogenic functioning of shame begins with not noticing its affective display. And:

*. . . because we fail to notice
that we fail to notice
 there is little we can do to change
 until we notice how failing to notice . . .*

This could have profound implications for a wide range of personal growth and therapeutic work. Within these, as in some sections of the men's movement, there is acceptance of what might be termed affective or cathartic work. Expression and discharge of anger and grief is accepted and not uncommon. There is also some work around fear. Much of this psychotherapy focuses on early childhood fears of abandonment. Leave aside for the moment the point (discussed above) about the misapplication of 'fear' language and the emotional confusion between fear and shame with two diametrically opposed affects. The end point of much of this psychotherapy has been to see emotional pathology in terms of residues of early and/or childhood traumas – in which the individual was in a state of powerlessness. Recovering from being victim to survivor, from early powerlessness to empowerment and reclaiming self-esteem are all very well but they are operating within the frame of reference of a culture of power.

My contention is that underneath this question of power and powerlessness there is often another layer; that of shame. It is this we need to focus on. Shame is the common feature that links many of the other aspects of emotional work – at least in so far as this focuses on the issues of relationships. It is shame that is the master emotion. But work on developing a more mature shame culture begins with developing shame-awareness. This is not the intense introspective self-absorbed awareness of shame pathology that is the result of much of the 'recovery work' today. It is about developing awareness of shame signals between people - secure in the knowledge that, unless something intervenes to derail the process on either side, the result will be a strengthening of the social bonds between them. A sense of shame is indeed a gift:

*'to be rewarded by esteem . . .
 the soul's crowning glory . . .
 a virtue above all others'*

Chapter Eight – Towards a mature shame culture

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

T.S. Eliot.⁵³⁴

Where do we go from here?

Chapters Five Six and Seven detail some of the inner- and inter-subjective experiences of shame as seen through the eyes of men and women I have worked with on this study. They provide some human colour and depth to the theoretical framework in the earlier chapters. They illustrate how shame might operate salutogenically to build social relations, and the mechanisms by which this functioning can be disrupted. The task now is to explore how this might be applied to the world of social action, to bring about social and cultural change.

This is to return to the starting point. I began with a sense that the ‘big picture’ of social action had missed something important – an element without which the building of a new social order might forever be doomed to fail. I have traced a path from the macro to the micro: from theories and tools for social change down through the layers of human interaction to that moment when shame is uncovered on the human face and the effect that this acknowledgement of shame has on those who witness it. In this moment there is the possibility for the growth of social connections between people – the seeds of society. I now have to chart a path back – to map out at least some of the processes that might allow this understanding of the salutogenic function of shame to change the current shame-avoidant culture. Describing the path, at least at this stage, will involve some wandering between, rather than linearly structured issues and arguments. It will also involve some repetition as we revisit some key points from a variety of different perspectives. Bear with me while I attempt this

We live in, are embedded in a culture where shame is routinely unacknowledged and, as we have seen, the affective display frequently masked. The result is that the normative social

⁵³⁴ Eliot, 1993. Four Quartets, Little Gidding V.

function of this emotion is disrupted. In this cognitive and affective avoidance of shame we can see the emotional roots of alienated or aggressive behaviour that underlie many of today's social crises. The unmasking of shame can be seen to be a necessary condition for unlearning of these pathogenic responses, and perhaps the healing of the social damage. But it is important to understand that the pattern of shame-avoidance is not just a personal pathology. It is a deeply rooted cultural phenomenon that has developed and been maintained over centuries. Changing it will be a lengthy process. The challenge is to show how our understanding of shame, explored at the micro-level of face-to-face human interactions, might be applied at increasing levels of scale and complexity up to the macro-levels of international geopolitics. Implicit in this is also a challenge to identify how we might intervene to bring about change at the various levels of each of the major social crises, and thus effect change in the underlying culture. Each such shame-aware intervention can be a step on the path towards a more mature shame culture. This is a wholistic approach that is not just working from micro to macro, or even there and back again. It is a multidimensional approach to informed social change praxis against a long-term background of culture change.

Starting points for social change

At the end of the workshop I invite participants to discuss how we might use our experience and re-framed perspective on shame. Where and how could it make a difference? The discussion will often include areas such as:

- Personal growth work – particularly: reframing past shame experiences and old patterns of reacting to shame, replacing avoidance (and the shame compass behaviour patterns) with unmasking/acknowledging shame and knowing that this can lead to salutogenic outcomes
- Everyday relationships at home, at work or in the community;
- Relationship counselling, divorce and separation;
- Parent-child family relationships;
- Mentoring – between people of all ages;
- School discipline, conflict education, bullying etc.;
- Restorative justice – both within the formal justice system and in areas of conflict on the community where ‘victim’ and ‘offender’ are harder to define.
- Anger management and domestic violence work
- Drug, alcohol and other addiction-recovery work

- ❑ Suicide prevention
- ❑ Men's (and women's) support groups

Sometimes the discussion ranges more broadly into areas of culture change such as:

- ❑ Exploring the changing patterns of male-female relations and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity
- ❑ Workplace and industrial relations,
- ❑ Inter-community/racial interactions.
- ❑ International conflicts, peace and reconciliation etc.

To bring about the kind of culture shift implicit in the idea of 'a mature shame culture' will require work on all these fronts and more. As I said at the start of this study, such wholistic change towards social maturity is probably a project for centuries rather than decades.

One of Richard Hauser's contributions to social change theory was the idea of working 'wholistically'. This is more than the idea of 'thinking globally while acting locally'. Actually working on multiple issues at various levels from local to global generates synergies that have impacts across the issues and levels. The whole is thereby more than the sum of the individual parts. It was his view that the synergy of planned and unplanned effects of interactions at various levels might achieve the kind of social growth needed for human social evolution, if not human survival. Each project was a pilot or model for change in one area that might contribute to broader change in the social climate.

With this in mind let me try to map, of necessity in outline, some starting points - areas of practical activity that illustrate how the perspective on shame might be applied in a few of these areas.

Men's health and wellbeing - a community-based approach

It will be evident by now that this study has been informed by practical engagement with a number of social issues and programs at community level. Over the life of this study I have been actively involved with a number of the men you will have met in these pages in developing a comprehensive program for working with men and boys to tackle some of the symptoms of violence and alienation in one local rural community on the NSW South Coast. In 1999 we undertook a local action survey to assess the need and potential support for men's health and wellbeing services in the community.⁵³⁵ From this we developed a community

⁵³⁵ Henley, 2000.

partnership between a number of agencies to provide crisis accommodation and support services. We now have a local Men's Health Committee developing programs on specific men's health issues and promoting better and more proactive services for men through existing community agencies. In collaboration with local women's domestic violence services we ran a professional development program for local community workers, locating the work with shame in the context of anti-violence and addiction initiatives.⁵³⁶ Growing out of this are innovative programs for: transforming anger, suicide prevention, and mentoring of teenage boys. They involve training of groups of retired, un/under-employed, and other mature adult men in working with shame and other emotions, using experiential techniques developed in this study. Shame awareness will be an important tool in the skills these men bring to work on personal and interpersonal problems. The shame awareness will also inform initiatives to engage sections of the community in tackling the social issues from a broader structural and cultural perspective.

The initial objective is to develop a network of programs including:

- ❑ Anti-bullying programs, restorative justice approaches to discipline issues and conflict resolution programs for schools;
- ❑ Mentor training and mentoring programs linking mature adult males to teenage boys with difficulties at home or school or with the law
- ❑ Rites of passage work for these and other teenage boys, their fathers, mentors or other significant males in their lives to help map the pathway from boyhood to manhood, including the shift from externally imposed duty to internally freely-chosen responsibility;
- ❑ Local restorative approaches to tackling family and community conflicts;
- ❑ Development of support-group-based programs for men in crisis (particularly as backup to local suicide prevention, transforming anger / stopping violence and addictions recovery work);
- ❑ Leadership development and support programs for men engaged in social action.

Together these will demonstrate the kind of comprehensive approach to improving the health and wellbeing of men, their families and the community which might be applied more widely across other communities and regions of the State and/or nationally.

We are also interested in demonstrating new shame-aware approaches to particular issues or clusters of issues that might have widespread application. Let me illustrate this with further

⁵³⁶ Webb, 2002.

reference to the stopping violence and restorative justice work that has informed much of the perspective developed in this study.

Stopping violence – gender and power or gender and shame?

Even the most violent people are not violent most of the time.

Their violence occurs in brief acute crises . . . when an incident occurs that intensifies their feelings of being humiliated, disrespected or dishonoured to the point that it threatens the coherence of self, or when they find themselves in a specific situation from which they feel they cannot withdraw non-violently except by “losing face” to a catastrophic degree.⁵³⁷

Men are the primary victims as well as perpetrators of violent acts. Institutional violence in the form of state-sanctioned war and inter-communal violence are far and away the most serious problem. This violence between men in the community often attracts less attention than violence between men and women in family or relationship contexts.

It is instructive to see this spectrum of violence, wherever it occurs, through the lens of shame and humiliation.⁵³⁸ It appears that in many instances (at all levels from the interpersonal to the inter-communal) a sense of shame-humiliation is a significant trigger, if not a necessary condition, that precedes the violence. In saying this I don't wish to minimise concerns of women's groups over gendered domestic or family violence, or to 'blame the victims' for provoking it. There is a gendered component in this area of violence. Although on some measures men and women are comparably responsible for the frequency of violent acts,⁵³⁹ in terms of criteria such as seriousness of harm, power imbalances and controlling behaviour there is a serious problem of male on female violence.⁵⁴⁰ Any violence between adults also affects children who are then more likely to perpetuate the cycle of violence in their own next generation families.⁵⁴¹ There are also strong connections between violence and drug and alcohol addiction.⁵⁴² Throughout this study we have encountered the suggestion that shame may be the common root of both violent and addictive behaviour. Shame also affects both offenders and victims of violent behaviour that damages relationships. Little of this understanding appears to be incorporated into programs for stopping violence.

The issue of the appropriate community response to family or domestic violence is a political minefield. It is one I have attempted to walk through for some years with respect for both the

⁵³⁷ Gilligan 1997 p 114

⁵³⁸ See earlier references to Gilligan, Scheff, and Poulson.

⁵³⁹ Seth-Purdie, 1997.

⁵⁴⁰ See for example James, 1996

⁵⁴¹ National Crime Prevention Program Report 2001

⁵⁴² Gorney, 1989; Stith et al., 1991; Digirolamo, 1993; Frances, 1995.

victims and for the dedication of those men and women who provide either victim support or education/behavioural change programs for people who have used violence. I support the strategic decision in the early 1990s to press for criminalisation of violent behaviour in domestic situations as a necessary step to changing the culture which, if not condoning, tended to ‘turn a blind eye’ to this problem. Where I have parted company since has been over the low priority given to the need for more preventive programs to tackle violence and out-of-control anger.⁵⁴³ These are urgently needed alongside work that supports victims (of whatever gender) many of whom want their relationships to continue but want the violence to stop. I also part company with those who insist on the limited Stopping Violence programs that are available being: for men only, mostly as a result of a court-mandated intervention, and based on ‘re-education’ of men to understand that their violence is used ‘strategically’ with the intention of maintaining masculine power and control over their female partners.⁵⁴⁴

The major concern I have is with the view (which informs most of the interventions) that domestic or family violence is, almost exclusively, a problem of male power and control. This is a topic that deserves more space than I can give to it here but my own work and that of others points to an alternative analysis and some very different solutions. Ask men questions about where they feel they are ‘powerful’ and where women are ‘powerless’ and most will acknowledge a number of features supporting the ‘gender, power and control’ (GPC) thesis. Ask where they feel powerless and they feel women have power, and we get a somewhat different, but no less credible and serious sense of power imbalance. Ask professional groups (men and women) the same questions and it becomes clear that the men’s view is not just a fantasy or ‘denial’.⁵⁴⁵

Fig 8.1 shows responses of anger management groups (in somewhat graphic language) to the questions:

- In what ways are men powerful?
- In what ways are women powerless?
- In what ways are women powerful?
- In what ways are men powerless?

⁵⁴³ See VAW 1998 and Webb 1998b.

⁵⁴⁴ Programs in Australia are based on a ‘whole-of-community’ approach originally developed in Duluth Minnesota, USA. For a summary of current issues from within the dominant paradigm see Laing, 2002.

⁵⁴⁵ Data from Workshops: Warwick Pudney, ANZMLG, Taupo, New Zealand; October 1997; MHWA education workshops, Sydney (Webb, 1997b, 1998a); Professional development program: Moruya, (Webb 2002).

Fig: 8.1 Gender, power and powerlessness.⁵⁴⁶

<p>Men - powerful</p> <p><i>Strength, physical size, bigger/stronger;</i> <i>Control, (self)</i> <i>Dominating, intimidating; Bossy – kids;</i> <i>Perpetrator/offender;</i> <i>Leaders, decision makers;</i> <i>Work – (but also? on this);</i> <i>Aggressiveness;</i> <i>Show less emotion;</i> <i>Breadwinner – Money - earning capacity;</i> <i>Sexually – Bed, penis/balls;</i> <i>Fast cars;</i> <i>Logically/practically – planning; Brain/mind, analysing, intelligence;</i> <i>Action / survival</i> <i>Security and protection</i> <i>Politics, political positions</i> <i>Proud; Responsibility;</i> <i>Social standings;</i> <i>More ‘laid back’..</i></p>	<p>Women - powerful</p> <p><i>Sexually – sex, pussy power;</i> <i>Home - being home, control of domestic situations</i> <i>Money - budgeting, spending</i> <i>Mothers, childbirth;– kids, kids, and kids;</i> <i>Love</i> <i>Looks pretty, figure, beauty, sex;</i> <i>Sympathy – getting it;</i> <i>Women generally get what they want;</i> <i>Courts - A V O’s (control of access to home and kids) - Family Court;</i> <i>Manipulating / lies;</i> <i>Hiding / secretive; Vindictive;</i> <i>Manipulative – emotional blackmail</i> <i>Never forget; Plan mind-games;</i> <i>Nagging / Demanding</i> <i>Women have time to think – brains not muscle;</i> <i>Verbal – words, tongue-power;</i> <i>Responsible / Independent; Multi skilled</i> <i>Sometimes breadwinner</i></p>
<p>Men – powerless</p> <p><i>Can’t hit back – ‘have to cop it sweet!’</i> <i>Can’t see kids; - Kids, kids and kids;</i> <i>Law, sanctions – and expectations – men don’t use A.V.O.s; Women’s lib;</i> <i>Sex – sexually; pussy power;</i> <i>Easy to hurt pride; Suspicions; Defeat;</i> <i>Shame - and guilt and more shame;</i> <i>Can’t handle emotion; Relationships;</i> <i>Feelings; Angry/Anger – short-fused; Jump the gun;</i> <i>Beliefs - individual - cannot accept;</i> <i>Vulnerable when alone; Can’t talk about problems; Don’t listen to advice; Think they are right;</i> <i>Home life not happy, have no say;</i> <i>Sucked in by / tend to believe women;</i> <i>Being too straightforward;</i> <i>Rely on luck more; Gambling;</i> <i>Divorce and separation;</i> <i>\$\$ Money – money and work; In the wrong job;</i> <i>Pressure – can’t think;</i> <i>Age.</i></p>	<p>Women – powerless</p> <p><i>Weaker – physically, smaller, fragile;</i> <i>Action – things they can’t do;</i> <i>Shame;</i> <i>Strength;</i> <i>Not aggressive;</i> <i>Passive;</i> <i>Emotional, soft-hearted, able to be manipulated;</i> <i>Timid, quiet, passive;</i> <i>Emotions – crying, breakdown;</i> <i>Fearful;</i> <i>Sexually;</i> <i>Gambling;</i> <i>Financially;</i> <i>Kids are dependent (on them);</i> <i>‘Fragile’ / ‘victim’ – self victimisation;</i> <i>Social standing.</i></p>

In anger management groups the men usually run out of space in the ‘male powerless’ quadrant. These men (and also the men and women professionals) recognise that male power and female powerlessness are ‘mirror’ (sometimes ‘co-dependent’) poles of the gendered

⁵⁴⁶ A composite of responses from three groups of court-mandated men in an anger management program, October-December 2000 and March-April 2001

‘power and control’ model. The men have no language but that ‘perpetrator’ or ‘offender’ for male power - though this is offered usually with some evident distaste and resentment. Female powerlessness is labelled as being a ‘victim’ – again with ambivalence and/or resentment and some questioning whether this is ‘genuine victim’ or ‘playing for the victim role’.

A similar pattern of polar opposites can be seen with female power and male powerlessness. But when asked to label these poles the men instantly revert to ‘name calling’.

Female Power elicits: *‘She’s a bitch’*

Male Powerlessness: *‘He’s a loser/ pussy/ gutless/ failure/ spineless/ not a man/ useless/ coward/ all locked up’.*

The vehemence of this response is surprising in both intensity and consistency across the groups. Coming as it does from exploration of their own experience of male powerlessness it indicates deeply felt shame-humiliation – and a desire to distance themselves from this. The ‘loser’ label is initially attributed to others not themselves. Many of these men are confused by the whole question of gendered power. They display considerable ambivalence. They cannot unambiguously identify with having the power (in the form of power over women). They feel powerless in significant areas of their relationships. But they are unwilling to identify as ‘victims’ – the role allocated to/adopted by women. They are shamed whichever path they take.

Men in men’s gatherings, and men and women community professionals in co-gender settings, similarly (though without the name calling) describe these power-powerless dimensions in terms of co-dependent polar opposites.⁵⁴⁷ Recent research has called into question the assumption that men who use violence do so strategically for control. While some men acknowledge strategic use of violence, for many it arises as a reaction to provocation in much the same way as for women.⁵⁴⁸

Across a wide range of groups we find that, underneath feelings of powerlessness, people (men and women) report feelings of shame. It is not that the ‘Gender Power and Control’ analysis is wrong, as far as it goes, but that it does not go far enough. More important, the way we construct the problem (as one of male deficiency) and the solutions we offer (criminalisation within guilt-based structures, and stigmatising ‘re-education’ programs) are

⁵⁴⁷ In the workshop in Moruya, May 2000, I invited a woman to facilitate this exercise and to seek views of only the women present. Their evaluation of their own responses reached the same conclusion – in some cases reluctantly as this challenged the theoretical basis of most of their victim support work. And yes, some of the men observing did appear delighted and feel vindicated!

⁵⁴⁸ James et al., 2002. See also O’Neil and Harway (1997) for discussion of the complexities of men’s motivation in domestic violence

themselves deeply shaming – seemingly designed to humiliate men whether they accept the need to change or not. This suggests that programs based the present ‘power and control’ analysis are likely to be unsuccessful, even counterproductive. Indeed this is what we find. Many such programs report high drop-out rates – even when clients are court-mandated.⁵⁴⁹ Ironically we encounter the political argument that such programs ‘don’t work’ used as a reason for not providing **any** programs for men who use violence.⁵⁵⁰

Put simply, we apply a ‘one size fits all’ approach that **labels** men as ‘violent’ and insists that they are using this violence for **strategic** power and control over their partners. This way of defining both their ‘self’ (as powerful) and their motivation (as controlling) is unlikely to engage men in programs or encourage them to take responsibility; even where it is a reasonably accurate description. For many more, it is a stigmatising label that does not fit and is likely to be rejected along with much else in the program that might have been of benefit. Whether accurate or inaccurate, in both cases the use of this labelling is humiliating – and it is sometimes overtly and intentionally shaming. This is unlikely to lead to acknowledgement of the shame that is inherent in the breakdown of relationship, of which the violence is a symptom. Indeed it is more likely to lead to further alienation and/or violence – the very result that the program is intended to stop.

Fortunately the reality is that many programs make significant modifications to the GPC model in order to respectfully engage the clients.⁵⁵¹ But what I am advocating here is the need for an analysis (and programs based on that analysis) that builds on our best understanding of the culture of shame that is the root of violence rather than the culture of power which is one of the symptoms of shame-guilt, shame-humiliation, shaming – or, in our cultural frame, ‘infantile’ shame.

Restorative shame - repairing relationship violence?

Let us take this a step further. Domestic violence is a symptom of problems in relationships. Unless the people wish to end the relationship (and perhaps even then) there is a need to work

⁵⁴⁹ Webb, 1998b; Freeman, 1998.

⁵⁵⁰ VAW, 1998.

⁵⁵¹ Many programs modify the ‘Duluth’ model, most by incorporating elements of Narrative Therapy (c.f. Jenkins). This ‘lip service’ to GPC in theory but creative and respectful engagement of clients in practice was evident in the discussions in the Relationship Violence stream of the National Men and Relationships Conference, Canberra 1998. It was even more evident in the National Forum on Men and Relationships, Sydney 2000. In addition this forum saw a significant and more fundamental challenge to the stigmatising nature of the GPC approach from Aboriginal groups – notably Aboriginal women. The message was ‘*Don’t try to tell us how to work with our men!*’.

with both parties. One problem that many who work in this field have to deal with is that re-education of one party (whatever the basis of the program) often initially increases the level of conflict in the relationship. I routinely tell men in the anger-management program that they can expect things to ‘get worse before they get better’. They have to ‘do the work for two in the relationship’ as ‘only one person is learning the new script’. Many men report that, as they reduce their level of aggression, that of their partner increases. This need not be the case. Some programs also work with women partners of men who use violence so that both are learning how better to negotiate a respectful relationship.⁵⁵²

But, if we are seeking restoration of the relationship rather than stigmatising shaming, there is also a case to be made for face-to-face work; and family, group, or community ‘conferencing’ processes. These could draw on the knowledge and experience we have accumulated through restorative justice approaches in the criminal justice context. A ‘restorative’ conference could encourage repair of the relationship and reintegration of offending partners through acknowledgement of shame on both sides of the relational conflict. Needless to say there are dangers here with the need for careful attention to safeguards that protect against abuse of power – what has rightly been described as ‘re-victimising the victim’. However, these are challenges to the intelligent structuring of the process, not a reason to avoid the need for it. Various Aboriginal people are already actively exploring this approach for dealing with violence in their communities. As one Canadian writer speaking from this tradition has said:

“... there is the understanding that you cannot effectively deal with unhealthy connections between people by dealing with people as individuals, as having independent control of their own fates. Instead, because the connections are the issue, all the major players in anyone’s life will have to be part of the process. If they are not, there is simply no way to understand or alter the connections between them.

“That is not to say that there is no such thing as ‘one-on-one’ work or that all the players in severely dysfunctional groups should be instantly brought together in every case and worked with en masse . . . sometimes the power imbalances between players call for intensive individual work before it is either safe or useful to bring them together. It is true however, that the most intensive healing efforts will likely come undone if they are restricted to only one of the players involved, or if all those players are ‘treated’ separately. If people ‘go home’ at the end of their formal healing to all the unchanged relationships that dragged them down in the first place, there is every chance that all the good work will come quickly undone.”⁵⁵³

⁵⁵² See Webb (1998) for discussion of the detailed program for both men and women piloted by Dale Hurst at Melton in Victoria. This goes beyond the ‘safety, responsibility and accountability’ criteria adopted by many programs where contact with the female partner is maintained to verify that there is sustained behaviour change - see Younger, 1995. What is important here is that the program addresses the need for change in the partner’s behaviour also.

⁵⁵³ Ross, 1996, p138.

What I am suggesting here is that our understanding of working with shame prompts us to consider not just how we apply these ideas in social action but how, in doing so, we might transform social structures, cultural attitudes and myths. The experience of working with shame in different areas (domestic violence and restorative justice) can be brought together at both local community and national (cultural) levels with potential for synergy in producing social change.

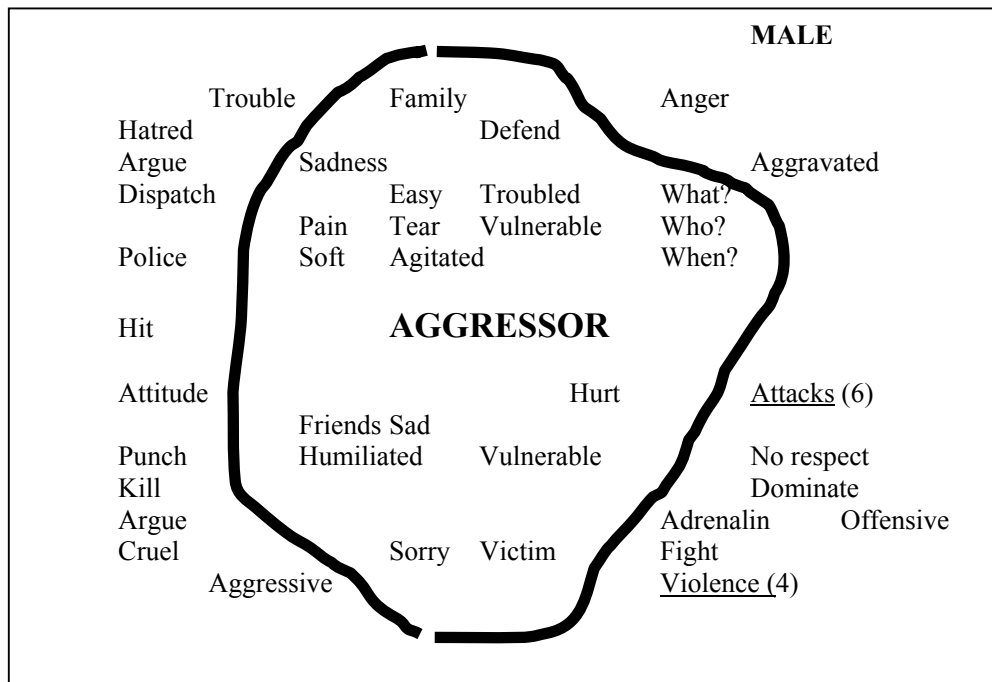
Shame and masculinity

I am particularly interested in enabling others working in the field to experience how our present shame culture contributes to stereotypes, such as those of ‘masculinity’, with the routine co-assembly of shame and anger or fear, and thus the root pathologies of alienation and violence. In facilitating training for community professionals I share a number of the exercises that form part of the program for anger management clients. This allows them recognise that the difference between their experience and that of the ‘clients’ is, at best, a matter of degree – that we are all affected by the same shame-cultural stereotyping.⁵⁵⁴ One of these exercises involves gathering reactions to the terms ‘Victim’ and ‘Aggressor’ around two circles on a white board; and drawing out similarities, differences, polarities, and gender associations.⁵⁵⁵ ‘Victim’ is often associated with women and ‘Aggressor’ with men. On reflection the groups (whether client or professional) often suggest that many of the words in one category also apply to the other. Further questioning on differences leads to the idea that while victims often appear to be ‘soft’, ‘vulnerable’ on the outside they often have hard/aggressive feelings on the inside. They come to see that, for many men, ‘hard’ (aggressive) feelings, thoughts and actions ‘*on the outside*’ are an exaggerated protection for ‘softer’ more vulnerable feelings ‘*on the inside*’. These vulnerable feelings invariably include humiliation and/or other shame words, (see fig 8.2). It is as though, for many men, there is a shell that keeps the vulnerable elements hidden.

Exploration of this ‘shell of masculinity’ reveals a culture of masculinity in which some feelings can be shown but others must be hidden – often as a matter of imperative rather than choice.

⁵⁵⁴ See Webb, 2000, 2002.

⁵⁵⁵ For this exercise I am indebted to Dale Hurst. See Webb, 1998a.

Fig 8.2 The shell of masculinity’.⁵⁵⁶

I ask the men:

“When did you learn to put this shell in place?”

The response is usually ‘*very early/as a child*’ or ‘*in school.*’ I then ask:

“What happens to someone⁵⁵⁷ who doesn’t learn to hide these vulnerable feelings?”

Responses include:

“*They get labelled/called: girl, sissy, poof pansy, cry-baby, wimp*”;

“*They get picked on, isolated, left out, looked down on, ostracised*”;

“*They get bullied, beaten, bashed etc.*”;

“*They can get raped*”;

“*They can be killed.*”

It is easy to see why a boy or man would want to keep this hidden. It is sad (a shame) that almost all men (and many women) have such hidden feelings, hide them, know that we and others are hiding them – and nobody is game to break the rules of this game.⁵⁵⁸ I then ask:

⁵⁵⁶ These responses are drawn from one Anger Management Class, April 2001. Shown are the group’s responses to “Aggressor” after elements initially identified with “Victim” have been added. Similar patterns were found with all the anger management groups (November 2000 to April 2001) and with professional groups: Dale Hurst (in Webb 1998a); and Webb 2002.

⁵⁵⁷ I don’t ask “What happens/happened to **you** when. . . ?” Men will talk more freely (from their own experience) about what happens to ‘another’ in this situation.

⁵⁵⁸ For women the cultural pressure often results in aggression being ‘inner-directed’ though this is changing with younger women displaying more overt aggression.

“Under what circumstances would you be willing to take down the shell and show some of this?”

The answers reveal the significant relationships – *lover/partner/wife/family/mother* (sometimes *father*) *close friends* etc. and the need for *respect, trust confidence* etc.

The early social shaming of men often leads to internalisation of shame as part of male identity. This is one reason why traditional masculinity has been harder to deconstruct than the feminine. It is much harder to look at because, even to take an interest in the question would suggest one doesn't measure up to the full demands of autonomy and self-reliance associated with strength, social acceptability – and masculinity.⁵⁵⁹ In men, sensitivity to being shamed often leads to more extreme ‘sense of humiliation’ responses⁵⁶⁰ and, sometimes these days, to a sense of ‘shame at being a man’.⁵⁶¹ The attack-self scripts adopted by some of the men in this study can be seen as a futile attempt to exorcise this shame by turning it into guilt – culturally expiable though penance⁵⁶² but at considerable personal cost.

In an anger management program the discussion of the social/cultural prototypes and stereotypes that keep this structure in place is less important than the affective response. The men look anxiously around the room avoiding eye contact [shame, fear] as they realise that some masks have slipped – that there is nowhere to hide. Some crack jokes – deflect with humour – and then recognise this is what they are doing. I have had cathartic outbursts of anger and then grief.⁵⁶³ With only simple questions and no pressure to ‘bare their soul’ or ‘get touchy-feely’, the core of homophobia (as fear by men of other men) and the heavy price we pay for this has been unmasked. Also being unmasked is some of the shame, embarrassment, guilt and humiliation that are felt in recognising these ‘life scripts’. As I indicated, this exercise is also valuable in training of professionals. It uncovers our own stereotypes, and how we are armoured against feeling shame and fear. This understanding helps us see the patterns of ‘denial’ in our predominantly male clients in a different light.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁹ Wheeler, in Lee and Wheeler, 1996, p37.

⁵⁶⁰ Paul Gilbert (personal communication, UCSB shame list May 2000)

⁵⁶¹ Connor, 2001.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ One man who had until that point in the program been ‘winding up’ the female Probation officer with various sexist remarks [angrily] said to the group: ‘*you don't know the half of it*’ and then [with affects of grief and shame] disclosed how as a teenager in his country of origin he had been arrested for ‘political postering’, beaten and raped in jail.

⁵⁶⁴ A useful exploration of early childhood, gendered, patterning of responses to adult shaming and punishment for transgressing adult rules (often those of adult females) can be found in Crawford et al., 1992, pp74-75.

Shame-aware stopping-violence programs.

With community professionals I also include another exercise designed to illustrate the shaming assumptions we often make about clients who have difficulty with anger and violence. This is used as the starting point for exploring a more supportive, shame-aware framework for the design and promotion of programs – how we get people to want to come through the door in the first place.⁵⁶⁵

I ask the group to define ‘violence’. The collective response usually includes elements of: physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, economic abuse; controlling behaviour; and the engendering of fear. I then set up a paired-sharing exercise inviting participants to share (with confidentiality) their experience of a time when they used violent behaviour – however they wish to define it. Participants are then asked whether they sought professional help to deal with this violence – and if not why not? A sample of comments is shown in Figure 8.3.

Fig 8.3. I didn’t seek help for my violence because . . .⁵⁶⁶

Group 1	Group 2
<i>It was justified</i> <i>There are degrees of violence (2)</i> <i>It was only temporary/only happened once</i> <i>I was trying aberration</i> <i>It was a natural on a role</i> <i>It was a temporary instinct</i> <i>I had Pride in what I’d done</i> <i>Guilt – it was out of character</i> <i>I didn’t need help</i> <i>I didn’t consider it</i> <i>I didn’t know to seek help</i> <i>Too shameful</i> <i>Remorse</i> <i>Out of character/confusion</i> <i>Spur of the moment</i> <i>Didn’t think I needed professional help</i> <i>I did seek help</i> <i>I was guilty and scared</i> <i>It was violence in thought only –</i> <i>I was attacking myself</i> <i>Feeling helplessness</i> <i>Shock</i> <i>It was in character – I chewed on it for 2 years</i> <i>I was ashamed/frightened</i> <i>I told myself “I can manage it”</i> <i>I didn’t need it</i> <i>Shame</i> <i>It was a one-off event</i> <i>The violence was in the other person’s language</i>	<i>It only happened once - just once</i> <i>I’m not a violent person</i> <i>I’m not really violent</i> <i>I shut down – put it out of my mind</i> <i>They deserved it</i> <i>If I didn’t do it to them they’d do it to me</i> <i>I was violent to myself – that’s OK</i> <i>There was no-one I could trust</i> <i>I didn’t get caught</i> <i>I was ashamed -</i> <i>I was embarrassed</i> <i>It was a long time ago</i> <i>I dealt with it myself- gave myself a good talking to</i> <i>I dealt with it with the other person</i> <i>I was in denial</i>

⁵⁶⁵ This exercise is also based on the ideas of Dale Hurst.

⁵⁶⁶ Group 1 is from the Moruya Training workshop (Webb, 2002) For comparison Group 2 responses are from Dale Hurst’s workshop for DV practitioners in Sydney 1998, (Webb 1998a).

As these responses are collected the ‘light bulb’ starts to go on. The community professionals realise that the words they are using are similar, often identical, to those of the clients of stopping violence programs - people who are often labelled as ‘denying responsibility’ for their violence. This opens the door to discussion about what kind of program the professionals might have been willing to participate in, and how an appropriate community program might be framed to attract, rather than repel, people who want or need to deal with issues of anger or violence. As a result of this experience, ‘clients’ can be seen as people who feel ashamed but who, like most of us, have difficulty acknowledging this. What would it have taken for us to seek professional help for our violence? We realise:

“I’d have had to be made to go.”

“The desire for change would have been greater than the fear.”

“The program would be one where I’d have been treated as an OK person – even if violent – treated with respect.”

“One where the facilitator was vulnerable – willing to talk about himself.”

“Where it was grounded in the context of my violence.”

“One that recognised my need for survival in their world.”

“I’d want to change!”

“I’d need to recognise the violence – be aware that what I did was ‘violent’.”

“It would need to be an appropriate program for the scale of my violence.”⁵⁶⁷

The point that can be drawn from these experiential exercises is that our awareness of shame about our own ‘violent’ behaviour is critical to our thinking about how we design intervention programs for others. ‘Violence’ is rooted in shame-avoidant ‘attack other’ behaviour that is part of our cultural response to shame. With this experience, empathic shame-awareness can be built into both how programs to change this behaviour are presented to the community; and the content and mode of delivery to the client group.

In tackling social issues of crime and violence there is scope for a wide range of initiatives. To the extent to which these are built on the kind of shame-awareness outlined in this study they may have a better chance of tackling the root problems which are, as we have seen, cultural as well as personal. Over time an increasing number of such initiatives might assist the cultural shift from one based on guilt to one that understands the salutogenic power of working with shame.

⁵⁶⁷ Responses from workshop in Moruya, May, 2002.

Shame culture

But I have a sense that the kind of culture change that is required will need more than the accumulation of small parts even allowing for their synergies. We can observe that human society is ordered around a series of what might be called ‘cultural myths’. These are like the personal life ‘scripts’, or patterns of thinking about and framing experiences, writ large on the canvass of social history.⁵⁶⁸ They represent the conventions, beliefs, dispositions, and attitudes shared by the members of society that are so taken for granted as to be virtually invisible. They form the core of what is often called ‘commonsense’. This study has attempted to keep them in focus by calling into question the way that we frame the shame experience – and how it might be reframed in ways that permit personal and social growth.

The workshop *Working with Shame* creates a micro-culture that:

- Invites people to observe – to notice what can be seen and what can be felt – to develop awareness of self and others; and thus see shame in its social context as an emotional bridge between our human needs for identity **and** identification;
- Supports and encourages the acknowledgement of shame, and expression of the empathic responses to shame and its various affective masks;
- Allows re-evaluation of the way we think about shame - as an affective-empathic signalling process - such that we recognise its capacity to build both interpersonal connections, bridges, bonds, and healthy interpersonal boundaries.

What we have shown is that it is possible to reframe the shame experience so that it can be salutogenic when it is acknowledged, and particularly when shown in facial and body language. In these circumstances, people experience it as building connections with others through their empathic response to the display of shame affect. The result of our acknowledgement and acceptance of shame can be a genuine (modest) pride in having taken responsibility for it. We have also shown that, as a result of this reframing experience, people often re-evaluate the uncomfortable residues of past shame experiences. They come to see them as unresolved (undischarged) affect-emotions (fear, anger disgust, grief etc.) that were co-assembled with the initial shame and which were used to mask it. The stored memories are of these other feelings - not ‘shame’. They need not be bound to our image of ‘self’.

⁵⁶⁸ Elias refers to these in terms of the concept of ‘habitus’. Marx draws on Hegel for the idea of ‘hegemony’. Richard Hauser, Assagioli and Lewin speak of the ‘zeitgeist’. All touch on the same idea of a set of unquestioned assumptions about how the world **is**.

With this place to stand and re-evaluate them, these residues can then be discharged or discarded. The personal ‘shame’ scripts and narratives can be re-written.

This is not the way that our culture usually frames shame. In terms of our cultural myths, ‘commonsense’ tends to frame it in terms of intense discomfort, attached to the image of ‘self’, and based on unpleasant memories – often associated with being shamed or humiliated. Not infrequently it is recalled through the frame of guilt – of transgression against moral codes - with self-blame, judgement and fear of consequences effectively (and affectively) masking our shame with angry or fearful reactions. Our culture does not handle shame well. Our understanding of it as a force for growth towards social maturity has not evolved.

In some respects we may have regressed. Earlier I touched on the early democracy of Greek City-States. A brief excursion onto Ancient Greek reveals a language rich in depth of appreciation of the concept of shame.⁵⁶⁹ *Aidos*’ itself embodies the sense of shame as bashfulness and modesty (especially genital modesty as in the French pudor). But it is used principally as a **moral** feeling. The sense of shame is contrasted with honour, and as such shame is something to be cherished within you. It leads you to share regard, respect and reverence for others. Thus it carries a sense of majesty embodied within disgrace. *Aidos* is closely linked to *Aideomai* – a word little used except by poets where it carries the sense of feeling shame, to be ashamed (again a moral feeling) with a bodily fear especially towards the gods (it shares a root with Hades – the underworld) and thus is a sense of awe and reverence which extends to the showing of respect and honouring of others (*aidoios*)– including their misfortunes. Associated language embodies the idea of failings due to ignorance, unknowing of the right law (hence Richard’s conception of sin/errors due to ‘social ignorance’).

In the Judeo-Christian Bible we find a variety of words that have been translated as shame - with different nuances: (1) *Aidos* itself is not much used and tends to be translated as modesty.⁵⁷⁰ (2) As *Atimao* (*a-Timia*) it suggests dishonour or disgrace shame. (3) In the use of *Aischros* we have the sense of disgrace-shame via nakedness. It is translated in the Old Testament as ill-favoured,⁵⁷¹ and nakedness,⁵⁷² in Homer as disfigured and frequently in the New Testament as shame/dishonour or⁵⁷³ as shame/nakedness. (4) In *Aschema* (*A-schema*) this nakedness also embodies the idea of disfigured (uncomely, shapeless, deformed). (5) As

⁵⁶⁹ I am not a Greek scholar. I am indebted to Bob Hodge and Don Bowak, for assistance with the analysis of that follows. Personal communications, September 2000.

⁵⁷⁰ Timothy 2, 9.

⁵⁷¹ Genesis 41, 3.

⁵⁷² Genesis 2, 25 and 9, 22-3.

⁵⁷³ Revelations 3.18.

Entrepo we have the idea of being put to shame and disrespect – which in the Gospels is used in the form ‘to have respect for . . .’ (6) *Deigma* – a thing shown, an example, suggests: to expose (as a warning) to make a show of, and hence to shame. (7) *Kataischunete* (*kat-aischuno*) is to disgrace, dishonour, put to shame, to be ashamed, also of unfulfilled hopes. Paul uses versions 2,3,5 & 7 in the same epistle all translated in English as ‘shame’⁵⁷⁴

The point here is that the cultural meaning attached to the sense of shame has undergone a transformation. Shame was originally a self-moderating mechanism for development of both (inner) personal integrity and (inter-personal) social/political behaviour. We noted earlier that shame operated politically, to rein in the power of the aristocracy. Honour and shame had inbuilt the idea of reciprocity between self and other, similar to the Australian Aboriginal idea, ‘my pride can be your shame’.⁵⁷⁵ Shame also embodied a sense of awe and mystery – an archetypal force given a spiritual role and accorded a place among the pantheon of the culture’s gods. The Goddess *Aidos* was central to the ancient Greek community, having an altar on the Athenian acropolis and a reserved seat at the theatre of Dionysus but, as befitting of a human emotion (the gods did not need shame) was seen as ranging the earth rather than living with the other Olympian deities.⁵⁷⁶ But she should more properly be seen as the Goddess of self-respect and reverence than that of ‘shame’, which is the result of the absence of either or both.⁵⁷⁷

As noted earlier, ancient Greek citizenship applied to men only. The norms of acceptable behaviour were also localised – varying from one city to another. Whether this would or could have evolved into a more universal morality is a moot point. It didn’t. Instead, under the influence of Christianity, shame became more self-centred on either the body (nakedness) or the sense of disgrace over transgressions against God-given law.⁵⁷⁸ Eventually, the concept of guilt emerged as the driver for ‘moral behaviour’. The political structures of monotheism and feudalism harnessed the all-seeing eye of monotheistic God - (with delegated authority through divine rights of Kings, nobles and pater-familias), along with judgement, confession, penance and punishment - to create the guilt-based cultures we inherit today. In terms of the analysis offered in this study perhaps the most significant problem is the way that this guilt culture routinely co-assembles shame with fear. We see this in the language we use to

⁵⁷⁴ Corinthians I - three of these in the same chapter.

⁵⁷⁵ See also the idea of a shame-pride mandala – Chapter Six, Fig 6.4

⁵⁷⁶ Edelman, 1998, p38.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid p58.

⁵⁷⁸ Strictly, this applies to all the political monotheisms, especially evident in the Judeo-Christian and Muslim State-religions.

describe ‘threats’ to our social connections and, more important, in the way the affect of fear neutralises and masks the affective display of shame.

As we explored in the previous chapter, there is an element of attack-self pathology built into guilt. Prospective shame can be felt in our facing the expected reactions of others - to behaviour they would avoid for the same reasons. It is the shared attitudes to what is acceptable behaviour (or not) that lead to a shame culture. But

“guilt can be felt at simply breaking a rule (or resolution) where there is no question of considering wrong to others or reparation and . . . it narrows down (suspectly) to a desire for punishment.”⁵⁷⁹

As such

“It might helpfully be replaced by what it should have been in the first place, shame. If we come to understand our shame, we may also better understand our guilt . . . the structures of shame contain the possibility of controlling and learning from guilt because they give a conception of one’s ethical identity, in relation to which guilt can make sense. Shame can understand guilt but guilt cannot understand itself.”⁵⁸⁰

In shame, the ‘other’ is ‘watcher or witness’ to our responsibility. In guilt the other is either victim of our transgression or enforcer of the rules that define our duty. It seems that, for all the benefits of a more universal morality, we have traded a social-ethical emotion for one that gives us only limited understanding. And one that carries a heavy burden of pathology, through inner-directed anger and/or fear that mask the salutogenic functioning of the empathy-generating affect.

And yet at different times throughout the intervening centuries shame was recognised as a valued emotion. I started this study with allusion to the way that ‘difficult’ life experiences such as shame are represented in stories, such as that of the Grail legend, handed down over generations.⁵⁸¹ In the cultural ideal of mediaeval courtly behaviour (which still underpins the ‘romantic’ nature of intimate relations today) shame was seen as ‘redemptive’. It was a vehicle for transformation of the false to a more authentic self - one perhaps no less self-conscious, but certainly more focussed on the relationship between self and others. Throughout history shame has had a role to play in prompting us to reflect and change, not just personally but socially – both inter-personally, and through the structures and values that characterise the culture. This inter-subjective perspective on shame, as an emotional prompt

⁵⁷⁹ Williams, 1993, p 83/4

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid. See also Ribkoff, 2000, p 48; who suggests this is because shame embodies conceptions of what one is and how one is related to others.

⁵⁸¹ Godwin (1994) explores the heroic and subversive nature of the Grail legend – a challenge in its day to the Christian dogmas of: good and evil; true (Christian) vs. false (Mohammedan) faith; and ‘black and white’ thinking generally.

to reconsider self-image and locate it in a wider social environment, has always been with us, despite the philosophical trend towards individualism over centuries.

But it would be a mistake to assume that all or even most people in previous ages managed it better than we do today. Often the representation in literature is not ‘as is’ but as allegory for what ‘might be’. It prompts us to think and consider but often the prompting is unacknowledged, masked, and we miss the opportunity. The history of shame as transcendence of the self finds perhaps its fullest and most powerful expression in Shakespeare. There shame, rather than guilt, is a central theme for dramatic presentation of how various characters negotiate the pain of not being one's ideal self.⁵⁸² There are many instances where the shamed character faces a double audience as witnesses to his or her humiliation; one on stage and the other in the theatre.⁵⁸³ For the tragic heroes there is a progressive erosion of the initial view of self. Fate delivers a series of hammer blows until this self is broken, destroyed. Then, if the originating shame is accepted, there is a resolution. But the transformation is usually only a prelude to a peaceful death. The character's soul may be redeemed but not his (or her⁵⁸⁴) life. This is, literally, shame redemption through mortification: not something very attractive to most people as a model for daily life!

Between the sixteenth century and the present, shame appears to have gone underground, surfacing only occasionally in literature to show a small part of its character. Where it appears, its transformative nature is again usually presented in religious terms. Dostoevsky, who showed a fascination for the extremes into which shame may tip a person, seems to conceive of it as a spiritual fulcrum, about which the individual pivots between transcendence and oblivion, salvation and damnation.⁵⁸⁵ More recently, Salman Rushdie comes closest to Richard's guilt-to-shame culture thesis, locating shame as part of an almost cosmic struggle to replace the traditional myth of struggle between good and evil:

*“Between shame and shamelessness lies the axis upon which we turn: meteorological conditions at both these poles are of the most extreme, ferocious type. Shamelessness, shame: the roots of violence.”*⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸² See Fermie, 2002.

⁵⁸³ As discussed in Chapters Four and Seven, this creates the ideal emotional distance for the audience to experience ‘cathartic’ discharge of shame.

⁵⁸⁴ Scheff, 1979; explores the interesting ambiguity about shame and gender in Shakespearean drama especially in the comedies. Female characters are played on stage by young men – often playing women who appear ‘disguised’ as men. The dramatic technique of disguise and disclosure (to which the audience is privy ahead of the on stage disclosure) and the ‘witnessing of witnessing’ of shame/embarrassment help create the aesthetic emotional distance for the audience that encourages affective discharge.

⁵⁸⁵ Fermie, 2002, p233.

⁵⁸⁶ Rushdie, 1983 p115-116; cited in Fermie, 2002 p 239.

This historical drift towards shamelessness is particularly noticeable in contemporary drama where it is accompanied by a sense that it is now all pervading. It is as if in modern culture shame is inevitable – a reflection of the condition inherent in a world dominated by capitalism and its ethos of competition. As Arthur Miller writes in *Death of a salesman*, it is the outcome of:

*“... indulging 'the only dream you can have - to come out number-one man' - dooms us to a life of pathetic deception and shame. In a society where precedence and power are sovereign, shame is anathema and yet inevitable for all but the 'number one man' himself, and even he must feel always vulnerable to being toppled by any of a multitude of rivalrous competitors.”*⁵⁸⁷

On the other hand, Bergman, perhaps the most existential dramatist of our time, writing on the shame of shame and powerlessness, reflects the hidden nature of this condition in the line:

*“Sometimes everything seems like a strange dream. It's not my dream, it's someone else's, that I'm forced to take part in. Nothing's properly real. It's all made up. What do you think will happen when the person who has dreamed us wakes up and is ashamed of his dream?”*⁵⁸⁸

Running through these excerpts is a cultural message - that shame involves a rite of passage. At the personal level this involves a reframing of the individual's perception of the self. Yet this reframing is achieved, if at all, through heightened awareness of one's social identity: through seeing and experiencing how one is being seen through the eyes of others. It is the challenge of shame to reflect and change, in terms of both my behaviour and my sense of a separate identity. Yet running through much of the literature, as it does through the theoretical and the empirical work of this study, there is a greater challenge – that of transforming the culture through which the individual experiences (or fails to experience) this personal transformation. The challenge is to create a culture in which this transformation becomes commonplace, the norm rather than something remarkable. In a more secular, and shameless age the 'transcendent' experience of shame needs reframing less in terms of a one-time momentous life-changing event and more in terms of the minutiae of everyday experience.

⁵⁸⁷ Miller, 1949; cited in Fermie, 2002, p 236. For a more detailed analysis of shame, guilt and empathy in this play see Ribkoff, 2000. And for further discussion of the way shame (on stage) triggers empathy (and perhaps empathic discharge) in the audience watching this play, see Stotland et al, 1978, p7.

⁵⁸⁸ Bergman, *Persona and Shame*, 1972. Gibson, 1993; discusses this in the context of other plays in Bergman's 'redemption' series. He appears to interpret Bergman as advocating something close to the Twelve-Step mode of redemption. The need for 'a saviour from without', and 'inner acceptance' would locate his conception of 'shame' firmly within the framework of a 'guilt' culture

Shame, human rights and social ecology

Yet even here, in the everyday and commonplace, we find that shame has gone underground. Studies on etiquette over the centuries have found long-term trends in both increasing shame and decreasing awareness of it.⁵⁸⁹ While we might regret these long-term trends we can also see them as the inevitable consequences of a breakdown in paternalism – as positive signs of the breakdown of an old order and the emergence of a new one. For a time feudalism and even slavery as the institutional forms for subjugating sections of the population, were the natural order. It was not until the ‘revolutionary’ ideas emphasising the concept of individual ‘human rights’ entered this cultural mythology, that imposed-inferiority triggered not just natural shame but shame-humiliation and an indignant reaction.

*“the experience of being humbled is much more painful in a context of human rights norms, since awareness of those norms is part of the habitus that defines this context. Under a human rights regime, humiliation is regarded as unacceptable and far from ‘normal’.”*⁵⁹⁰

Indeed it can be argued that felt shame for both the condition of the slaves and the degradation that slavery brought on both slave and master was one of the driving forces that led to the abolitionist movement.

In taking a broad sweep of human history, Richard located social crises as opportunities for social growth on the long road from feudalism to ‘social’ democracy. In a social order where differences in status are seen as the norm, expressions of ‘shame’ are part of what has been described as ‘due deference’.⁵⁹¹ But today such assertion of superiority is increasingly resented and reacted against. A key element in the pathology and indeed the ‘commonsense’ view of shame is the way that it is often framed in terms of the intense guilt / humiliation end of the spectrum. For many people ‘shame’ is experienced in terms of shaming, guilt-ridden, or humiliating processes, today systematically embedded in many workplace organisations and market-driven economies.⁵⁹² This locates it not merely as a break in our social connections, but as part of social structures and processes in which the ‘other’ has power over ‘us’. Others have the ability to assert superiority and expect that we will feel inferior. This may still be the norm today, but unlike earlier times, it is less acceptable. The social structures that promote such inequalities now arouse a more intense sense of shame – of being disrespected. But we experience this as externally imposed shame. Others fail to deliver the due deference our cultural values teach us we should receive - as equals in terms of being human, with human rights. Alongside the negative consequences of increasing

⁵⁸⁹ Elias, 1939; Salumets, 2001.

⁵⁹⁰ Lindner, 2001a, p52.

⁵⁹¹ Goffman, 1963b. As noted above Gilbert et al. frame this idea in terms of ‘sensitivity to social rank’.

⁵⁹² Smith, 2001.

shamelessness, this intensification of shame in our culture can be seen as positive - a step towards a more mature, democratic society in which such expression of social superiority will (again) be seen as shameful.

A still broader view suggests that the process of shaming and humiliating began with, and has at its core, the idea of a 'God-given' right of human beings to control their environment. This applies to various aspects of both the natural and human environment. The 'taming' and then the 'exploitation' of natural resources for human benefit was 'natural' and largely unquestioned. But this is increasingly being challenged today. In Australia, part of the challenge of traditional Aboriginal people is for us non-aboriginals to see 'reconciliation' first in terms of reconciliation with the land: and only then with its people. If human rights have become part of the global frame of reference for social values, the idea of ecology (having concern for long- term environmental sustainability), is not far behind.

Thus we can see shame at the heart of social and environmental crises on a global scale and the intensification of shame within our culture as part of the opportunity. The problem is that we have yet to unlearn the patterns by which we mask shame with anger and/or fear, distress, etc.

A new culture change - from guilt to shame?

I'm conscious that this study glosses issues of cultural differences within what are increasingly 'multi-cultural' societies. 'Shame' is not a homogeneous cultural construct. Without reverting to the simplistic distinction between collectivist shame and individualist guilt cultures we can nevertheless acknowledge differences between cultures where 'saving face' takes on different forms if not different priorities. Some cultures, notably in the Eastern Mediterranean also place relatively higher value than others on issues of family 'honour' than those identified in terms of individual 'human rights'.⁵⁹³ But all of these cultures are in a state of flux.⁵⁹⁴ Various aspects of what might be broadly seen as 'shame culture' are contested on a global scale – witness the international debate over primacy of the western concept of individual human rights against more social and collective rights.⁵⁹⁵ What might unite: the individualistic 'freedom to', the collectivist 'freedom from', and the relative importance of 'face' or standing within the community; is that each is inevitably constrained

⁵⁹³ Peristiany, 1996.

⁵⁹⁴ For example, Lee, 1999; explores 'western' influences on Korean 'shame' culture that are shifting emphasis from 'face' and 'family' to issues of 'competence' and 'material success'.

⁵⁹⁵ See Drinan, 2001, p xi.

by shame. My ‘rights’, ‘responsibilities’ and ‘self-image’ need to be negotiated when they meet the boundary with those of others.

Throughout this study I have chosen to follow Richard in describing the more infantile form of shame culture as characterised by ‘guilt’. As I said earlier, I am conscious that this flies in the face of a large section of academic opinion – one that distinguishes shame and guilt as separate emotions; and seeks to show that shame-based self-evaluation leads to greater pathology than guilt-based evaluation of behaviour. I think this perspective glosses the detrimental effects of the blame, judgement and punishment that so often accompany ‘feeling guilty’ in common everyday experience. It also seems to view shame through the window of its pathology – almost as if shame were defined in terms of its pathology. It is framed largely in terms of the negative consequences, which this study suggests are the result of **not** showing shame. When people from this academic tradition speak of shame I am left with the feeling that they are talking about **shaming** - the imposition of shame. As we have seen, it is the sense that others have imposed shame on them that so often inhibits people from feeling shame. Instead, we feel shamed, humiliated, ‘guilt-tripped’. Being able to blame others for the feeling dilutes our shame.

The conception of guilt as a moral response to transgression or breach of rules underpins the social concept of criminality and our system of retributive justice. I am supposed to feel guilty as a response to real or imagined judgement of others. Furthermore I am expected to accept this judgement and I can usually expect (and be required to accept) punishment as a consequence. In the ideal, transgressions are rare because ‘moral’ people avoid them by preempting the judgement of others, internalising it as part of their value system. Again in the ideal, where transgressions do occur the **feeling** of ‘guilt’ experienced is supposed to be of greater significance in deterring further transgression than any externally imposed punishment. This is the ideal for a guilt culture. Needless to say reality often falls short of the ideal. What we have shown is that this ‘feeling of guilt’ is, if anything, shame – or shame co-assembled with anger or fear or even more complex mixed (unpleasant) emotions.

In the past what was moral (good and bad) was seen as God-given. As a child the external all-seeing eye of ‘God’ saw all my transgressions – even when I succeeded in hiding these from parents and other adults. In secular form, the rules were set by authorities and embedded in social structures of parents, family community and civil society. I learned these within the family when I was small and dependent on parents who were large and had power to enforce them – either physically or, just as or even more effectively, by withholding their approval. This conditioning via judgement and punishment (brutal or benevolent) is

exercised for the ‘good of society’, sometimes ‘for our own good’, and sometimes with disastrous personal and social consequences.⁵⁹⁶ Ideally, people eventually come to see that the personal interest can be well, if not best served by consideration of the wider social good. For most of us, life is a ‘moral’ balancing act between personal and social interests, not always easily resolved.⁵⁹⁷

The common feature across the moral spectrum of guilt-induced social behaviour is that the values are imposed by reference to external authority. This holds even where the values are internalised ‘as my own’ – by reference to imagined internal structures of my ‘self’ – whether I call these ‘conscience’ higher self’, ‘super-ego’ ‘inner self’ or sense of ‘inner truth’. In Richard’s terms guilt-morality is about performance of duties (to God, society or my values), rather than taking on responsibilities as freely-chosen burdens. This perspective locates the origins of guilt in the ways we learn to interpret the feeling of shame-guilt from infancy to maturity within a frame of duty to, and judgement/punishment by higher authority. Guilt is constructed from the primary affect of shame, with a cognitive overlay based on the way it is framed by development and culture. This locates the origins of guilt in the ‘infantile’ – as learned when dependent. It also suggests that in shame (free of the judgemental and punitive baggage of guilt) there may be the opportunity for a more socially mature emotional driver that could achieve similar social ends.⁵⁹⁸

Earlier I mentioned the example of the Australian debate over ‘reconciliation’ between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. It is inconceivable for many (including those working for reconciliation) that the majority of the current Australian non-Aboriginal population can or should feel guilt over the abuses of the past. It is entirely conceivable that (in an evolved shame culture) we can and should feel shame for the actions that were done by others, and the past and present actions that are **not** taken by others that could heal the hurt experienced by the Aboriginal community. To acknowledge this shame, where it is felt, is an adult, mature response. I (my-self) am not to blame for the past. My self-respect is not diminished and yet my sense of the worth of my culture is - to the extent that we are unable to

⁵⁹⁶ See Miller, 1990.

⁵⁹⁷ An example would be the dilemma socially aware middle class parents face over the choice of selective or comprehensive schools. Many ‘liberal-minded’ parents will acknowledge the **social** benefits of schools which educate children of mixed abilities yet, when considering the **personal** benefits to their own children will opt to send them to schools that select only the more able students.

⁵⁹⁸ This framing of shame as the more mature emotion has parallels in Lynd (1958, p. 236) who argues that ‘shame-prone’ people are primed to have sensitivity to others whereas ‘guilt-prone’ people live according to internal and external rules and not by recognition of feelings. While this has been criticised (see Miller, 1985, pp 144-145) in terms of the practical difficulties in differentiating guilt- or shame-prone people, Lynd’s view does support the view that shame is an affective-emotion, whereas guilt is an emotional cognate - see earlier discussion, Chapter Four.

show shame, not just personally, but by an appropriate ceremony that makes this shame visible. I can feel shame for the action that is not taken (by others as well as by me). In Richard's terms juvenile shame (and/or guilt) is for the thing I have done; adult shame for the things I have not done – which we can extend to include shame for the appropriate actions not taken by others also. To the extent that this is not the generally accepted view, our culture is immature.

This is not how much of the theoretical psychological literature sees it. From the outset, Darwin had difficulty in locating guilt in his schema for emotional expression, initially considering it alongside disdain, disgust and contempt, and then briefly in association with fear before locating it alongside shame among the expressions of awareness of the self. His path to this conclusion illustrates some of the difficulties that academics have had in locating guilt within emotion theory – difficulties that are unresolved today. Since then considerable effort has been devoted to differentiating and measuring the difference between shame and guilt.⁵⁹⁹ As I observed above, much of the reported difference relies on the way that guilt and shame are **defined** in terms of the focus on behaviour or the self respectively. In a way that is diametrically opposed to this study, shame is defined as externally imposed (with this process sometimes internalised) and based on a labelling of the self. In contrast guilt is seen as deriving from the individual's own values and being about behaviour and not about the self. Presented with a set of 'scenarios' describing situations in which people commit moral transgressions or social blunders, subjects are asked to choose between responses that reflect attributions of blame/responsibility to their self-image (shame) or their behaviour (guilt). The subjects do make such choices. But some of the conclusions drawn from this are questionable. For example gender differences between guilt and shame have been shown to depend on the choice of scenarios used.⁶⁰⁰ The maladaptive nature of shame (as compared to guilt) has also been questioned. The kind of 'guilt' implicit in the scenarios appears to routinely reflect what has been described as 'mild' guilt. Intense guilt, in contrast, 'has its bite in shame'.⁶⁰¹ It has been argued that, in terms of the range of people's experience, we simply cannot make a rigid segregation of guilt and shame, or the attribution of one to character (self) and the other to action. Furthermore:

⁵⁹⁹ Notably the work of June Tangney and colleagues (see: 1995, 1992), 2002, cited earlier). But see also Piers and Singer, 1953; H.B. Lewis, 1971; and Lindsay-Hartz, et al., 1995. A useful summary of the salient characteristics of shame and guilt (not too far removed from the framework of this thesis) can be found in Goldberg (1991, Table 3-1)

⁶⁰⁰ Ferguson et al, 1997, 2000a, 2000b.

⁶⁰¹ Sabini, et al. 1997, p 6.

“if there were a shameless guilt, it would be anaemic and unable to fulfil any important social or moral function.”⁶⁰²

Cognitively framing guilt (as inner-motivated and associated with behaviour) ignores the analysis of its learned origins outlined above. The neat distinction of ‘guilt for the act’ and ‘shame for the actor’ is hard to justify. In the everyday language used to describe these experiences, I can feel shame for my actions and see my-self as guilty at least as easily as I can feel guilt for what I did and see myself as ashamed as a result. In everyday use it is the **person** who is judged as guilty (labelled as a criminal or offender and punished) whatever he or she may feel about being guilty (or ashamed) of some offending behaviour. Shame may originate from such a situation where my behaviour is judged as wrong (morally or otherwise). But this is more likely if the significant others in my life see it that way, than if the judgement is made by an impersonal ‘society’ represented by judge and jury. Rather than shame being irrational, destructive, something we would be better off without, we need to consider the consequences of a world where such ‘shamelessness’ is a virtue.

“(W)hat keeps us many of us from doing things the world is better off without our doing is not guilt, but . . . shame.”⁶⁰³

Even if the research subjects of scenario-based studies (mainly US College students) see the distinction between shame and guilt in terms of negative self-consciousness vs. moral judgement of behaviour, I suggest this merely reflects aspects of the pathology of an immature shame-guilt culture. The a-priori definition of statements associating feeling with behaviour or self as ‘guilt’ or ‘shame’ based may be self-fulfilling. We can treat shame and guilt as separate entities but the studies that aim to differentiate them rely mainly on the way people think about and classify these. In English speaking cultures people do distinguish between them – witness the words we use – but this is perhaps all that the studies find.⁶⁰⁴

One way of seeing the distinction is in terms of the relative stress that one places on the beginning or the end of the sentence ‘*I should not have done **that!***’ I, (my-self) should not have done that (behaviour).⁶⁰⁵ Try feeling shame-embarrassment (at a not immoral but very embarrassing situation) and then shame-guilt, (where you did something illegal or morally wrong). Where do you throw the stress in this sentence in each case? How great was the difference, if any? Whichever balance I give this, the affect display will be similar and will be accompanied by a sense of being exposed – to the judgement of others or my own ‘higher’

⁶⁰² Ibid

⁶⁰³ Ibid. p 12.

⁶⁰⁴ Scheff & Retzinger, 2001

⁶⁰⁵ Cairns, 1993.

self. The difference, if any, is mainly in the cognitive **evaluation** of the feeling – i.e. the emotion. I make this evaluation in terms of the situation, with an overlay of past experience and other emotions associated with it. The distinction is, primarily at least, in terms of how we **think** about it: our cognition not our feeling or the affective display.

This is not to dismiss the significance of where we do place the stress – on the behaviour or the self. Labelling the person as offender or criminal may not appear very different from defining the behaviour as offending or offensive, but the implications can be profound. I can readily do something to change behaviour; changing my ‘self’ may be much more difficult. I recall discussing this with two friends in England. Brian is English. Emiko is Japanese. Their four-year-old boy Leo was being brought up bilingual. When Leo was naughty Brian would say, in English, “*Bad boy Leo.*” Emiko would say in Japanese, “*Leo, bad behaviour.*”⁶⁰⁶ The difference, though slight, is profound in terms of the way that attention is focussed – and shame is above all else a signal that focuses attention. The focus on behaviour allows for what has been called ‘correction without invalidation’.⁶⁰⁷ This permits both self- and other-validation of myself that sidesteps some of the shame spirals. It allows attention more easily to be directed to making the necessary behaviour changes that will turn the situation around and prevent its recurrence. I can achieve a sense of balance and distance from my behaviour while taking responsibility for it. Distancing from my-self sounds slightly schizophrenic.

I also think the dominant academic distinction between guilt and shame needs to be seen in its cultural context. Psychology has, by and large, valued individuation as a process of gradual emergence of the self as a separate identity – the separation of the personal psyche (with its conscious and unconscious elements) from the grip of the collective consciousness and its deeper archetypal or unconscious elements. The value attached to this process of individuation from the collective is almost unchallenged in the field, and it is this value framework that underpins the view that guilt is a more mature form of shame. The perspective that sees shame through the window of, indeed defines it largely in terms of, its pathology seems to be located among those who are influenced by the US academic psychological tradition. As I observed above, I am left with the feeling that when people from this academic tradition speak of shame they are talking about **shaming**; the imposition of shame. This may be the way that the US culture (and, to be frank large sections of the Anglo-speaking world) experience shame today – within a competitive culture that does not handle

⁶⁰⁶ Conversation with Brian and Emiko Revell June 2000.

⁶⁰⁷ I first encountered this formulation in work with Brendan Nicholls in his ‘Future Warrior’ and ‘Mastery’ programs. It neatly expresses the distinction between the (salutogenic) ability to feel shame (as a stimulus to reflect and change) vs. (the pathological) shaming or stigmatising (of or by the self).

shame well at all. The result is either an over-identification with being shamed, or the sense that others have imposed shame on them allows them to blame others for the feeling. The result is often that people become either overly shame**ful** or they become shame**less**.⁶⁰⁸

A more mature shame culture?

Despite these definitional, cultural and value-based differences, when we come to the detail of the conditions that mark a salutogenic rather than a pathogenic response, there is a marked similarity between those who privilege guilt, and those who, as I do, see shame as the more mature emotion. There is considerable agreement over conditions that might be seen as prerequisites for transition from the pathogenic/‘infantile’ or ‘juvenile’ to more mature behavioural responses.⁶⁰⁹ Rather than argue over the definitional differences it is more constructive to explore this common ground in terms of a stage in the cultural maturation of ‘shame’.

Whatever the truth in this current debate about shame and guilt, the real challenge is to grow a more mature shame-aware culture – one that systematically understands and creates the conditions (and institutions) through which shame can function salutogenically. One of the greatest obstacles to this is the way that shame is learned within the prevailing culture. Throughout this study we have seen the effects of confusing shame with fear, anger or other emotional ‘masks’ at the personal level. This can be seen as a pathogenic residue of a paternalistic culture, in which failure to conform to externally defined rules and duties is met with blame, judgement, labelling/stigmatisation and the threat of punishment. While ‘morality’ may emerge from this process, individuals are often limited in their ability to grow personally and socially, and this ‘immaturity’ manifests in various forms of social pathology. At a time when there is an increase in all-pervasiveness and intensity of the shame-humiliation experience within our culture, accompanied by a reduction in its acknowledgement, this is highly dangerous. The resulting ‘acting-out’ manifests, as Richard would have it, in violence and apathy, or as we have framed it more broadly, in bipolar patterns of aggression and alienation.

⁶⁰⁸ Lynd, 1958; points out that to be guiltless is an honorific. There is usually little honour in being shameless.

⁶⁰⁹ See Tangney and Dearing, 2002 pp 184-185.

This 'acting-out' (and/or acting-in') manifests as socio-pathology across a broad spectrum, from the personal to the geo-political. Unacknowledged shame-humiliation can be seen to lie at the root of the full spectrum of interpersonal violence from marital/interpersonal quarrels to wars between nations and ethnic/cultural genocide. In Chapter Four we explored how shame-rage patterns found in marital quarrels can be seen in the antecedents to World War.⁶¹⁰ Humiliation can be seen as a significant factor in the lives of violent prisoners in US Gaols;⁶¹¹ in the background of the young men who committed the Dunblane (Scotland), Port Arthur (Tasmania), Columbine (USA) massacres;⁶¹² and in the history of the recent 'sniper-murders' in the USA.⁶¹³ A similar case has been made for the role of humiliation in the German-European Jewish holocaust and inter-tribal genocide in Rwanda and Somalia.⁶¹⁴

More important however, we can see in this the seeds of something hopeful – driving us towards change. Shame is the inevitable consequence of societies in transition towards acceptance of human rights principles. Vulnerable minorities are scapegoated by elites who feel challenged, indeed shamed, by those they can no longer dominate. It seems that shame-awareness and cultural shame-maturity requires an understanding of the potential for intensification of shame in the very process of growth towards higher-order social values. What we are missing is the cultural awareness of the importance of acknowledging shame and the tools for working with it as a social change agent – both of which are critical for negotiating this transition.

So, the main point is not how we label the cultural pathology of shame. It matters little whether we see the processes described here as defining a 'guilt culture' or an immature 'shame culture'. What matters is that the cultural tendency to mask shame is indicative of an immature awareness of the social function of this emotion. The routine masking leads to shame-pathology, which comes to be seen as 'shame' itself. The result is that shame has become a self-conscious emotion, largely pathological and that this perspective becomes self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating. What operates at the personal level reinforces the view of the culture and vice-versa. Breaking this cycle will, I suggest, require intervention at both the personal and cultural levels.

⁶¹⁰ Scheff and Retzinger, 1991; and Scheff, 1994.

⁶¹¹ Gilligan, 1997.

⁶¹² Poulson, 2001.

⁶¹³ Greene and Fallis, 2002

⁶¹⁴ Lindner, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b.

A personal starting point

Earlier I shared the origins of some of my early shame-fear based scripts. The problem with such ‘nuclear’ scripts is that new experiences are often interpreted through the frame of these early distress patterns. If an incident that might reasonably trigger some embarrassment is interpreted through the frame of guilt then it will carry overtones of:

- Blame: ‘*{I must have done something wrong}*’;
- Judgement: ‘*{People must be thinking badly of me}*’; and
- Punishment: ‘*{There will be a price to pay for this}*’.

The response is often to become defensive (attack other) or self-blaming (attack self) or to hide/withdraw/avoid using strategies from the other poles of the shame compass. The behaviour is also often accompanied by affective overlay of other emotions (fear, anger, disgust, grief, humour etc) that mask the shame.

In my case, faced with criticism, I hear judgement and usually go into self-justification or some other form of the ‘attack other’ script; which, because it fails to acknowledge the legitimate cause for shame-embarrassment, usually makes matters worse. I usually end up further isolated from people whose initial criticism is more often than not intended to improve the relationship between us. The end result of the sequence is to reinforce the bad feelings associated with the embarrassment, criticism, judgement – adding further to the sense of not being good enough in others eyes and thereby inflated in my own.⁶¹⁵ The pathological reaction to restimulated shame scripts adds a further layer to the distress pattern, which is rooted in blame/fear and increases the likelihood of its re-stimulation in the future.

A simplified model for a shift from guilt (or infantile shame) to a more mature shame culture starts here: at the level of reframing the personal response and interpersonal interaction. There is a need to recognise the critical and pathogenic role of blame and judgment. These operate within a culture of power where imposed judgement and (often) the threat of punishment will activate fear – which in turn distorts the salutogenic functioning of shame. Earlier we saw how this operates when relational experiences (which should activate shame) are framed in terms of language of fear. ‘I’m afraid that . . .’ where there is no physical threat (but only a relational one) is indicative of a fear reaction; one that will override the shame signals to both ‘self’ and ‘other’. The reaction of others to fear is usually: fear, anger, sadness or contempt. It is rarely the kind of empathic relationship-healing response that we see with salutogenic shame.

⁶¹⁵ ‘Inflated’ in either the exaggerated self-judgemental sense: or the inflation overrides the criticism. {‘The others are wrong about me – I’m OK and don’t need this attack on my self-esteem’}.

Of course it is not only fear that is shown as a result of the guilt reaction. I can override both shame and fear with anger (attack other) or grief, where I attack myself self ‘*{before I am attacked further}*’. We have seen how ‘empathic’ responses to fear or distress are qualitatively different from reactions to shame. At best they are more sympathy than empathy, with elements of pity and superiority (each potentially shaming) that mitigate against mutuality and equality in the relationship. These responses from others are more likely to result in further alienation. It is the aesthetically distanced empathic-emotional response to unmasked shame that encourages cathartic discharge, rebuilding of connections and rebuilding of firm/flexible boundaries around which secure, long-term relationships can grow.

Unmasking takes courage. It involves arresting the scripted fear or anger, (flight or fight) reactions and a willingness to explore shame as an appropriate response to any break in our sense of connection with others - regardless of blame. I may have done nothing wrong but can I allow myself to feel shame for the breach – the ‘threat’ to the social bond? Can I show ‘shame’ over this and know that in doing so I signal to the other that, whatever the reason, I am concerned about the health of the relationship?

But shame doesn’t just operate at the personal/interpersonal level. Unlike immature shame/guilt, which is usually only felt for wrong that is done, occasionally for wrong-doing contemplated or action not taken; shame can be felt for things I have done, for things not done which my values suggest I should have done, and also for the actions and inaction of another. Shame has the potential to be a far more socially mature emotion – an emotional gateway on the path to a new level of social maturity.

Infantile, Juvenile, and adult shame.

. . . so long as most of society’s values remain competitive, aggressive, childish and hurtful, people reared on them can only grow up wanting to be either powerful fathers or favoured sons, and so the old regime persists. To establish the fraternal ethic, we must develop in people a feeling of shame for a-social, no less than anti-social attitudes. Both alike spring from social ignorance, the difference between them being only one of degree. . . .

Once the harm he has done was brought home to him, it should make him feel deeply ashamed, and anxious to outgrow such childish habits. . . . Only shame can prevent their recurrence and lead to compensation for the harm already done. Later on, as one moves further and further away from negative attitudes,

*even shame will be left behind as a mere starting point on the long journey in quest of social dignity and wisdom.*⁶¹⁶

Inherent in Richard's toolkit for social change is the idea that personal and social development grows through infantile and juvenile stages towards adult maturity. This might best be seen as a lifelong process, but with certain essential elements that mark the transition or threshold between the developmental stages. The infant/juvenile/adult framework can be applied to individuals, groups, larger sections of society and whole cultures.

The distinction between these stages of maturity might also be usefully applied to the concept of the 'shame culture' itself. We can evaluate the degree of maturity in the personal and political handling of shame against the salutogenic norms that have been identified here. To what extent does a culture promote the acknowledgement of shame, and its social bonding function, as part of everyday life through its day-to-day norms for interaction between people, and through its social structures and institutions? A detailed cross-cultural comparison is beyond the scope of this study. This is an area for future work.⁶¹⁷ It is, I suggest, critical for an Australian 'multi-cultural society', built on primarily Anglo institutions and social norms, but located in an Asian region. Understanding how shame may operate differently can assist the building of relations between cultures. But such understanding is, I submit, secondary to developing an overarching ability to acknowledge shame – to show and respond to it – whatever the more subtle differences in the circumstances that trigger it or the social behaviour that flows from it. It is here that, I suggest, all cultures are deficient in that there is scope for growth to greater shame-maturity.

We can identify some of the broad indicators of what constitute infantile, juvenile and adult patterns of handling personal, social and cultural shame. However, in keeping with the approach of this study to focus on change rather than stasis, it may be more useful to identify those elements that mark the transition or transformation of one stage into the next – to see what it is that marks the transition from the infantile to juvenile form and what might mark the transition from this juvenile to an adult or more mature shame culture.

⁶¹⁶Hauser & Hauser, 1962 p 97, 98.

⁶¹⁷ A useful indication of the kind of study needed can be seen in the attempt to identify the 'restorative' elements of shame culture in Japanese Schools by Masters, 1997.

The infantile to juvenile shame transition

Drawing on the restorative justice experience outlined in Chapter 5, I suggest the transition from ‘infantile’ to ‘juvenile’ shame is marked by five necessary elements:

1. Emphasis on behaviour not the person.

I can make mistakes, consciously or unconsciously. Acknowledging these as mistakes allows me to make changes in the future and repair the damage I have done in the past. I can do something about and with my behaviour. A general attribution of being a failure (and binding of shame to the ‘self’) is harder to change. It is largely unhelpful to others and meaningless unless it is translated into a change in my behaviour anyway. Richard would often say *‘to fail is honourable – to be a failure isn’t’*

In cultural terms we begin to make the transition from the infantile form when we say ‘bad behaviour’ rather than ‘bad boy’ to children who ‘are naughty’. Similarly, when we talk of ‘people who use (or resort to) violence’ rather than label them ‘violent offenders’. Labelling people is part of the old infantile blaming, judging, stigmatising, and ultimately shaming and humiliating pattern. The ‘shamed’ person can either reject this (attacking the labellers) or accept it (with attack-self consequences that follow). Either way it makes it difficult to achieve the kind of salutogenic human interaction that allows people to feel shame over breaks in connections, stand in this shame and feel respected (and reconnected) as a result of doing so. Only when it comes to be seen as ‘shameful’ to engage in labelling people in this way will our culture be making the transition to a more mature understanding of shame.

This applies across a range of levels. What may be seen as ‘judgemental’ shaming behaviour in the family and face-to-face community relationships can escalate to demonising (de-humanising) individuals, nations, or cultures at or from the other side of the world. In the scapegoating of individuals, groups, races, and cultures we need to see the ‘attack-other’ pattern whereby we project our frustrations (our shame) onto others; attempting to destroy in these ‘others’ the doubts we feel in ourselves!

2. Attention to the effects behaviour has had on other people.

It is not that the behaviour is illegal or disapproved of, but that it affects other people. We see in ‘restorative justice’ programs how this relational focus includes effects (and affects) on both the ‘victims’ and those close to us - family and supporters whose opinion we value - and how this brings the shame closer to the surface.

Guilt and infantile shame focus attention on maintaining ‘laws’ – themselves but one of the ways we regulate human social behaviour. A more mature response focuses on the effect of the behaviour and what can be done to repair the social relations damaged by it. The discussion of various aspects of the restorative justice experience throughout this study highlights the role of shame in signalling recognition of, and responsibility for the effects of actions that hurt another. Again this principle can be applied at various levels from interpersonal relations, through various aspects of socially hurtful behaviour through to dealing with the aftermath of serious social and political conflicts. An example can be seen in the ‘truth and reconciliation’ approaches adopted in post apartheid South Africa, and being considered for social reconstruction in Rwanda and East Timor. Hopefully we may see it used in the future for places such as Northern Ireland and eventually to repair some of the damage caused by colonisation and the genocidal impacts of cultural invasion on Aboriginal people around the world.

3. We seek outcomes that repair human hurts, restore and/or build connections between people.

The primary hurt is often found to lie in intangible things like the sense of being disrespected, violated, shamed or humiliated by another’s behaviour. The most important reparation often lies in the sincere apology rather than any material compensation. To the extent that ‘punishments’ or retributive forms of reparation are needed we have failed to deal with the core of shame often felt by ‘victims’ - we are still operating within the old cultural paradigm.

4. We develop skills for working with shame across the full spectrum through which it manifests.

Among these skills is the ability to recognise (self- or other-oriented) aggression and alienation as signals of ‘shame that has yet to be fully acknowledged’. We also recognise how displays of other emotions often serve as masks for shame which, if permitted expression, can be discharged allowing the shame to be unmasked. Again this can be applied to: interpersonal aggression; community concerns over violence, self-harm, addiction, isolation and social apathy; or their manifestations on a global scale.

5. We create supportive environments

This includes confidentiality, respect, (invitations and questions) and elements of mutuality. Note how in many of the examples given in this study it has been mutual feelings and/or displays of shame that have been critical to the healing process. In particular, we understand the importance of avoiding public shaming. Shame is inherent

in many situations where there is a desire or need for social connection – all we need to do is allow it to surface. Expecting it, requiring that another show it, is part of the culture of guilt/duty and ultimately power-over another person. The display of shame is instinctive and hardwired. The decision not to mask it needs to be freely chosen – an aspect of taking responsibility.

Creating this supportive environment involves building respect and trust between people at a variety of levels. It also means embedding such respectful relations in families, communities, workplaces, institutions and national political life. Here respect needs to be reflected not just in the relationships between people but also in the organisational structures (and their protocols) through which we ensure that these respectful relationships are systemic and likely to be comprehensive and enduring.

From Juvenile to adult shame

The above is very much what the best ‘restorative justice’ programs seek to achieve. Critically however, in the ‘juvenile’ form of shame described here, there is still an element of external control. In juvenile justice conferencing there is the possibility of sanctions if the offending behaviour is denied, unacknowledged and or appropriate compensatory behaviour is not undertaken. In many school discipline and conflict resolution programs there is a power hierarchy that underpins even the most enlightened shame-aware processes. We may have taken a step forward from the immature and immobilising shame-fear driven by punishment, but we are still short of adult responsibility, which is characterised by adoption of **freely chosen** burdens. Some of this is inevitable in institutions and social structures dealing with children but my argument is that our culture rarely creates examples of progression beyond this stage

What Richard, and many others involved in the social change process have highlighted is that the exercise of external control is dis-empowering. It renders people childlike in the face of ‘authority’. As one of the people I interviewed for the study (to be described shortly) on the Olympic Games put it:

“the moment you tell someone what to do it becomes your problem, not theirs!”

This highlights Richard’s distinction between ‘duty’ and ‘responsibility’. But to many, the idea of making the transition to a culture that treats people as mature adults who will act out of a sense of freely chosen responsibility (without external sanctions) sounds like the fantasy of an idealistic anarchist. The fear of breakdown that contemplating such a transition brings

up is enough to send most people running back to the old ways where what needs to be done is the function of an elite group and the exercise of it is supervised through a hierarchical chain of command and control.

And yet, what if our survival depended on making such a transition? Maybe not today or tomorrow. Maybe not even being able to say we had crossed a definite line at some point in the future. Rather perhaps, a progressive movement towards a more mature, sustainable, egalitarian, democratic social order; but where it would be seen as shameful to not subscribe to such cultural values. One where personal and social growth are driven by a sense of social shame. Where motivation towards this kind of growth is self-sustaining; and also self-moderating, so that it operates in the interests of the whole society. In light of what we have explored in this study, could this be done without salutogenically functioning shame? What other emotional driver could we use? What else would operate in the way that shame does to moderate the behaviour of the individual by alerting him/her to the social context and consequences of individual action? What else might motivate people to engage in social action on this scale?

I can think of one. An emotion touched on briefly in previous chapters. ‘Love’. But what is this ‘emotion’ we call ‘love’. If shame, in everyday use, is so narrowly defined in terms of its guilt/infantile cultural pathology as to be almost invisible, then ‘love’ in everyday use (once we allow it to step outside the purely ‘romantic’) becomes so broad as to be all encompassing – and hence just as invisible or at least intangible.⁶¹⁸ Notice how dictionary definitions of love use the term ‘ineffable’ to describe it.

If shame, throughout our cultural history, has been accorded a transcendent function, so no less has love. As T.S Eliot would have it:

*The dove descending breaks the air
with flame of incandescent terror
of which the tongues declare
the one discharge from sin and error,
the only hope, or else despair
lies in the choice of pyre or pyre –
to be redeemed from fire by fire.*

*Who then devised the torment? **Love.**
Love is the unfamiliar Name
behind the hands that wove
the intolerable shirt of flame
which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire*

⁶¹⁸ Tom Scheff, personal communication, UCSB shame list, December 2002.

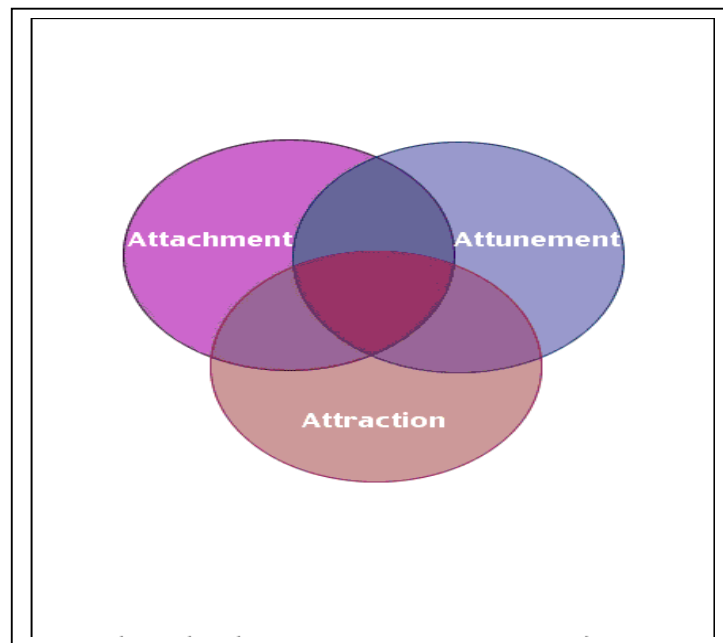
*consumed by either fire or fire.*⁶¹⁹

But what is love if not an other face of shame? Our analysis in this study shows that it is the acknowledgment of shame – with our willingness to show its face – that builds connections (attachments) through the hard-wired emotional process of empathy (attunement). All romantic love adds to this is a subtle, but hard to quantify, layer of physical (often sexual) attraction.⁶²⁰ Using a Venn diagram we can see how these three A's can be employed to create a diverse topography of this field of 'love'. See fig 8.4. There are three primary factors:

- Attachment - social bonds – monitored, repaired and strengthened by our sense of shame;
- Attunement - empathic shame-awareness that embodies feeling with another;
- Attraction - that physical, often sexual pull towards another

These create overlapping areas (each with and without the others) – and each with the potential for salutogenic and pathogenic functioning.

Fig 8.4 Three A's of 'Love': Attachment, Attunement and Attraction?



⁶¹⁹ Eliot, 1944, 'Little Gidding'.

⁶²⁰ Scheff (Ibid, communication) suggests the terms **attachment** (attributable to Bowlby) **attunement**, and **attraction** as the basis for defining three poles of a triangle of love.

For example, in love's pathology there may be lust (attraction without the emotional underpinnings of intimacy/connectedness or empathic feeling). This is alienated love in the sense of isolation or 'over-distancing' from feeling. On the other side of the same coin, there is often the sense of being overwhelmed or engulfed (under-distanced) by feelings for and of another. Indeed this sense of being overwhelmed is often seen as defining the feeling of (romantic) 'love' with little awareness of the need for appropriate boundaries that create a healthy balance between self-identity and other-identification. As we have seen it is shame that mediates this balance. This way of modelling 'love' could be explored further⁶²¹ but for my purposes here the point is that 'love' is closely interwoven with the processes involved in the functioning of shame.

Remember the language used by men describing their feelings for the person modelling the 5th exercise in the workshop? Ok, many of these are 'sensitive' men – but the same stereotype cannot be used to describe those in the anger management program. Feeling 'love' for the man standing in his shame was about not being in the feeling but knowing what it was like to be there – empathy (or attunement). Seeing this, led to a feeling of connection, connectedness, being connected with him. This we saw as social bonding, or as we describe above, attachment.

When I started this work I used the idea of an 'axis' of 'shame and pride'.⁶²² This informed the development of the shame workshop and indeed the interpretation of the emotional transformation experienced by the model in the pivotal workshop exercise (# Five). Witnesses describe the change as going from 'shame' to 'pride' – authentic ('not up-himself') pride. But the language used also talks of the man having 'self-respect'. Another way of framing this might be to say that he has gone from: self-loathing, disgust, inner directed anger and/or fear of how he would be seen in the eyes of others; to a state of self-love – or at least one of self-acceptance. In many cases he is displaying the 'positive' affects of enjoyment and interest – the face of contentment with himself and his peopled environment that we would expect if we were to ask him to put a face to a feeling of 'love' and/or 'being loved'. In this sense 'pride' can be seen as 'self-love'. Authentic pride is this mixed with a tinge of shame – signalling awareness of the eyes of the other and recognition of being seen as worthy in their eyes. Love and shame are thus intimately connected.

⁶²¹ For example we might explore all seven discrete zones of interaction in the diagram. Using a slightly different way of defining these primary elements and form of their interactions, Scheff (Ibid) suggests 24 discrete states for the experience of this emotion 'love'.

⁶²² Initially suggested by Terry O'Connell, derived from Nathanson, 1992.

But, 'Love' is part of what might be called a 'maximum value' system. Often, seeking perfection can be the worst enemy of the good. For example: in a Restorative Justice Conference it may be asking too much to expect 'forgiveness' for the offender from the victim. Understanding how s/he came to offend, and that she is now deeply aware of the hurt caused, is a more achievable goal. It may also be a more desirable one than forced forgiveness. On a broader scale, in developing a functioning social order, 'love' between neighbours, communities and cultures is often not possible. It may not even be desirable as an emotional basis for connection between people at this remove. The challenge within multicultural societies like Australia (and between cultures in an increasingly interactive but heterogeneous world) is less that of developing universal love than a 'civil' global society. One which treats those 'we' regard as 'other' than 'us' with civility. With a sensitivity to, and respect for cultural differences. One that provides a 'cool' alternative to the 'heat' of love or hatred.⁶²³ The ability to understand and negotiate shame and shame-empathy, though an inevitable but 'minimum' value system, may prove to be more useful as a basis for developing this civil society'.

Now what Richard suggests is that this sensitivity; this willingness to be aware of and identify or empathise with others, goes through stages of maturation. It defines the development of an individual's social age. As infants we are entirely ego-centric. We mature through child stages to adolescents, where our social identification applies to those close to us – 'our people', our 'family', 'peer group', 'tribe', 'culture', 'race' or 'nation'. The mark of maturation to the adult form (social age 15+) is where we begin to countenance *'the love of the objectionable'*. At maturity we can utilise the tools for social action. We are able to take responsibility for defence of the rights (and responsibilities) of others and teach (empower) them to engage in action on their own behalf. It is this level of personal and social maturity, I suggest, that marks the threshold we need to cross if we are to be moving towards a mature shame culture. A Juvenile shame culture is better able to reintegrate the individual into the existing community and society. In a mature shame culture the individuals are actively involved in changing the processes and structures through which the community and society express their cultural values, such that these better reflect the evolution of personal and collective human rights and responsibilities on a global scale.

Challenges on the path to shame-maturity

But the framework of infantile, juvenile and adult shame is, like Richard's other tools, an arbitrary scale. It has validity only to the extent that it assists us in evaluating the social

⁶²³ See Krygier, 1997, Chapter 3.

climate and our progress towards achieving personal and social growth. Let us now see how well we are doing in this journey from infantile shame-guilt through the juvenile towards an adult, mature shame culture. Let me illustrate our progress with some examples that may help us see how deeply rooted the infantile guilt/shame culture is still today and how far we have to go in developing a mature shame culture.

Example 1: Social Capital - building trust via shame?

Throughout this study I have suggested that part of the cultural shift we need includes a re-balancing of (personal) identity and (social) identification. The extent to which we succeed in valuing the social alongside personal self-interest, and the networks of relationships and the social structures we create to carry these values, are measures of what we now call ‘social capital’. This term was popularised in Australia by Eva Cox (Richard’s daughter by his first marriage) in the ABC Reith lecture series in 1975.⁶²⁴ She defines it largely in terms of the accumulation of trust that grows out of human social interaction in both formal and informal structures. This, as might be expected, emphasises the need for collective identification.

*“Our multiple links create, at best, robust societies where people can see themselves **through the eyes of many others**. We recognise our communalities in the diversity of humanity. Membership of multiple communities breeds civic confidence and civic virtue. This provides a basis for trust of strangers and enables us to work together to create social capital.”⁶²⁵*

*“. . . we are primarily social beings, defined by our relationships, linked to a broader society. The links between us are important because they define **who we are and how we see ourselves in relation to others**.*

*. . . we define ourselves through **how others see us**. We want to belong, we want to be accepted by the group*

Therefore, it is our social relationships which constitute society not our individuality. Putting the social back into political decisions seems almost self evident, but somehow we have had an excess of market forces and competition which divides us. We must design social processes which encourage us to stay connected and build stores of trust for the bad times.”⁶²⁶

But if ‘trust’ is to be established through the individual ‘being seen in the eyes of the other’ and ‘the desire to belong’ – to be connected socially to others - then this study suggests that shame will be at the core of the process. Indeed the difficulty we have in building social capital is directly related to our cultural immaturity in acknowledging and working with shame. It is in our inability to acknowledge the inevitable breaks in connections, and repair these through the salutogenic shame process, that we fail to build, indeed sometimes destroy, social capital through alienation and aggression – particularly towards ‘outsiders’.

⁶²⁴ Cox, 1995. The term **Social capital**, (derived from Putnam 1993), was chosen to attract attention of ‘hard-nosed’ economists. It locates the social alongside economic/finance, human/labour, and resource capital as a key element of political life.

⁶²⁵ Ibid, p 30, emphasis added.

⁶²⁶ Ibid, p 70 emphasis added.

Example 2: A war against terror – or against shame?

"Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervour, for patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword. It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind. And when the drums of war have reached a fever pitch and the blood boils with hate and the mind has closed, the leader will have no need in seizing the rights of the citizenry. Rather, the citizenry, infused with fear and blinded by patriotism, will offer up all their rights unto the leader and gladly so. How do I know? For this is what I have done. And I am Caesar."

Julius Caesar⁶²⁷

One example of our lack of awareness of shame can be found in the way that sometimes well-intentioned outside assistance can add to the level of humiliation and feed the potential for violence.⁶²⁸ From our understanding of shame it does not take much to see the events that led to, and have followed from, the 'terrorist' attack on New York and Washington in 2001 as an immature response to humiliated rage on both sides. In keeping with the unacknowledged shame thesis outlined above it is not surprising that many people in the USA cannot see the attack as a response to what a large section of the Middle Eastern and Muslim world sees as systematic humiliation of their people and culture.⁶²⁹ Similarly we can see the US led attack on Afghanistan and the global 'war on terrorism' (and perhaps the push for 'regime change' in Iraq) as a humiliated-fear response to having significant symbols of its global economic and military power destroyed (and seen on TV world-wide) by unconventional weapons that it neither anticipated nor could counter.

What is as disturbing however, is the response of many of those who represent more thinking and perhaps enlightened opinion in the USA; or at least that section of the population that is prepared to consider other than state-sanctioned violent responses to the humiliation. In the month following the 11th of September attack there were efforts to mobilise opinion for an alternative to war that purported to be an attempt to tackle the root problem of material and economic disadvantage among the Afghan population. Poverty, it was suggested, was part of the roots of public discontent in Afghanistan and hence and support for the Taliban regime. Slogans simplify, but also indicate the core of what campaigners think will tap into public consciousness. The suggested alternative was to offer aid - under the theme of *'bomb them*

⁶²⁷ The attribution is apocryphal. This was frequently cited in discussions on the internet in the period leading up to the war in Afghanistan in October 2001.

⁶²⁸ See Lindner, 2001a.

⁶²⁹ Osama Bin Laden referred specifically to 'humiliation' in two of the three charges that he levelled at the US in his declaration of *'Jihad'*: 23, February, 1998. For translation see Lewis, 1998.

with butter'. Well meaning as it might be, this idea of offering aid rather than violence took no account of the potential for such action to be seen as deeply humiliating to a culture that is still rooted in pride and honour, rather than the Western culture of materialism and its conception of individual human rights. It showed how little the progressive movement in the USA has learned from the debacle of the earlier US intervention in Somalia. Its focus was on the culture of power (military and economic) with its by-product in material deprivation, without considering the underlying issues inherent in the culture of shame-humiliation. My suspicion is that the 'war against terrorism' cannot be won militarily and will not even be solved by addressing the symptoms of power inequality around the globe without attention to **how** these are tackled, such that the sources of humiliation are also addressed.

What I am suggesting here is that, in developing a more mature shame culture, we need to understand those elements of shame that are inherent in both the perceived social/political problems and crises, and those that may also be inherent in some of the well-intentioned solutions we offer to these crises. In the past, liberating people from the powerlessness of 'colonialism' often merely replaced '*unbridled*' (feudal or totalitarian) power, which cruelly terrorised the population, with '*indecent*' institutions, that systematically shame and humiliate people.⁶³⁰ Today, many crises (whether at global or local levels) result from the imposed shaming and humiliating of sections of the community – shaming which is systemic to many of our organisational structures, and indeed some of our professed values, and often reinforced by our cultural and institutional reactions to these crises. We are often surprised when people who have been helped turn round and 'bite the hand that feeds them'. Should we be? Not if we understand how receiving such help can be shaming, and sometimes humiliating in the way it is offered. The 'shame' element of this tragedy of errors is often unacknowledged on both sides. Until it can be acknowledged we will make little progress in tackling the root problem.

Example3: Human rights institutions – guilt or shame-based?

Let me take this a step further. There is emerging an ever-increasing legitimacy for a culture that respects an international code of human rights. This is evident in, for example, the near unanimous support for codifying of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights at the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993.⁶³¹ But the shame culture that is needed for this to take root has yet to catch up. What is deeply disturbing is the emphasis placed on legal instruments and processes that are grounded in the Western, indeed English-speaking

⁶³⁰ Krygier 1997, p37.

⁶³¹ Drinan, 2001. .

culture's conception of law, with its focus on adversarial processes for determining guilt and punishment.

We should note that the 'law and order solution', of increasing the severity of punishment, has consistently failed to solve the problem of crime at the community level – particularly in urban environments. At the more serious level of 'war crimes' and 'genocide', we have seen how this legal system has failed to deal with those who used genocidal violence in Rwanda,⁶³² such that the government has all but abandoned the international system of court-based trials in favour of a much more rough and ready system of local tribunals. We should note how South Africa rejected the calls for retributive 'justice' against people who committed human rights crimes under the apartheid regime in favour of using a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' as the first, and primary vehicle for healing the past. This encouraged people to accept rather than deny responsibility and face those they hurt or their families in a more restorative process. Yet we persist in attempts to construct global legal structures based on this adversarial guilt culture.⁶³³ All this despite the irony of the USA (arguably the most predominantly 'guilt'-based culture in the world) refusing to accept supremacy of international courts dealing with some aspects of human rights for fear that its own citizens might be tried and found guilty under such a regime.

Example 4: Restorative or transformative justice?

There is a disturbing lack of debate at almost every level about more appropriate local, national and international institutions than those rooted in a system of criminal justice founded on a culture of guilt and retribution. There is little public debate about alternatives that might draw on the understanding of the power of social reintegration through shame.

Throughout this study I have drawn heavily on encouraging signs of a move towards a more mature understanding of shame in a wide range of programs and processes that fall under the rubric of 'restorative justice'.⁶³⁴ Here we see both practical innovation and a body of systematic research that asks questions of where and how (and with what safeguards to protect disadvantaged people) we can use community-based processes that invite people to

⁶³² Drumbi, 2000.

⁶³³ E.g. Use of the international courts to deal with the 'ethnic cleansing' of Bosnia and Kosovo in the former republic of Yugoslavia, and the suggestion a similar system be used to deal with the Indonesian military-inspired militia massacres following the vote for independence in East Timor.

⁶³⁴ See earlier references to Braithwaite, Bazemore & Schiff; Ahmed, Harris et al.; and the recent works by Strang and Braithwaite, 2002; and Zehr, 2002. The international restorative justice network now has an annual conference and various Web/E-mail forums: see for example www.restorativepractices.org and www.tja.com.au.

explore and take responsibility for hurt caused to others by their actions, and seek outcomes that repair the interpersonal and social damage that results from such hurtful actions.

The body of evidence in favour of 'restorative' processes is impressive. What is only just emerging in this debate is that such processes can do more than merely restore individuals to standing within the community – the process of reintegration of the offender through processes that acknowledge shame. They could also work to influence the social conditions (themselves often shame-based) that contributed to the offending behaviour or community conflict in the first place. What we are only just recognising is the need for 'transformative' rather than merely restorative justice.⁶³⁵

Let me illustrate this with a small example from my Youth Justice Conferencing experience. A young man was arrested for spray painting graffiti on the underside of a local railway bridge. In preparation for the conference he complained bitterly that he and his friends had nowhere to practice and display their 'art' – and his was 'art' rather than just random 'tagging'. As usual, the conference explored the impact of his 'illegal' behaviour on various sections of the community: the considerable cost to the railway, and hence community, for removal of this 'graffiti'; the sense of offence felt by the community over the general prevalence of local graffiti; the effect on train drivers of seeing people on the line and impact on them when people are injured in the course of such activity; not to mention the embarrassment of his (divorced) parents – one of whom was a high profile environmental campaigner. But the conference also invited him to take responsibility for the social problem he had identified as the cause of the offence. The outcome plan (which he contributed to designing) involved him working with a local artist to create a youth art wall. They organised the donation of some large boards and permission for these to be fixed to some ten metres of unattractive fencing at the local youth club so they could be used for 'wall art' spray painted by local youth. The conference with its 'reintegrative' shame core led to a project that made a difference in the community - tackling the lack of facilities for (and lack of voice for) young people and community art. The response from the juvenile justice system was less than enthusiastic. There was concern over 'preparation time' spent working with people inside and outside the conference process so that such an outcome would be feasible, and complications the bureaucracy saw in monitoring an outcome that was about achieving results rather than a young person putting in a set number of 'community service hours' at

⁶³⁵ Crawford and Clear, 2001.

specified times and places. The transformative, as opposed to merely restorative, nature of the outcome went unremarked and unappreciated.⁶³⁶

Example 5: From shame to pride – the Sydney 2000 Olympics

As anyone who has been involved in workplace change knows full well the process is hard work. It often seems that we are battling both structural inertia and resistance to change at an emotional level from the very people in whose interests the changes are being proposed.

It is important to remember that people do not resist change; they resist imposed change! Given the choice there are often many changes we would like to make. All too often the process of exploring what these might be and developing ownership for changes by the people most affected is not undertaken. This is why action-research methods (such as action surveys and search/consensus-conferences) place the emphasis on building democratic processes through which people become empowered to make changes that affect their lives. The emphasis is as much on making changes **with** the people whose lives will be affected, as they are about defining the specific changes themselves. Yet building social relationships that permit collaborative working with other stakeholders cannot be done if inherent shame is routinely unacknowledged and meetings between people do not have processes that permit its expression and salutogenic processing. This is especially so where change is contemplated within hierarchically structured organisations.

Nowhere are the limitations on developing a more mature shame culture more apparent, and perhaps more relevant, than in the world of work; particularly in the area of formal industrial relations. It is one of the great contradictions of modern society, founded as it is on the idea of democracy, that we so often structure workplace relationships in a hierarchical, authoritarian and profoundly undemocratic fashion. Over the years I have been involved in various initiatives around workplace change. The most advanced of these have sought to achieve personal and social growth through appropriate **structural** changes: flattening organisational structures, sometimes removing layers of management, developing team working etc. These changes involved reframing the way that the whole workforce saw the task. This involved seeing the enterprise through the eyes of its external customers and suppliers – with similar attention to the internal supplier-customer relations between teams that form links on the processing chain. This work involved: expanding horizons,

⁶³⁶ A similar lukewarm and bureaucratic response greeted the outcome of another conference, where a young offender involved in credit card and Internet fraud, assisted police in developing an education program for school pupils of his own age.

benchmarking the enterprise against world-best practice; and strategic planning through defining key performance indicators and setting goals, objectives, targets or milestones. Alongside the workplace changes there was a nationally accredited program for recognition of competency based training to develop both the practical and relational skills for such new ways of working, and appropriate national and enterprise agreements to reward these new competencies through pay structures.⁶³⁷

Growing out of this experience I was invited to coordinate a research study in 2001 of the industrial relations behind the organisation of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. What emerged is an interesting story that illustrates some aspects of the shame-culture thesis.⁶³⁸ It is often not appreciated that the delivery of the Games involved something in excess of 200,000 people, a third of them volunteers. Their jobs included constructing and/or converting the various venues for the event and providing all the essential services that made this two-week event possible. In addition many of these people were involved two weeks later with the Paralympic Games. I need to say at the outset that I'm a sports cynic and far from impressed by the spectacle of athletes caught up in the ever-increasing commercialisation of physical competition. That said, I was impressed by the change in the social climate that occurred in Australia and Sydney in particular during the Games and, as I looked into it, the marked change in industrial relations culture that, I think rightly, earned Sydney the accolade of 'the best Games ever'. What was it that prompted this cultural shift – from a highly confrontational industrial culture in which power is contested on a variety of fronts to one that appeared to have achieved a genuine pride in collaboration?

This is how one of the key players described this culture of collaboration.

*“Firstly it is about building **trust** – practical trust – you need to see both sides of the fence and have people from both sides engaged in the process. The outcome can be people who trust each other – despite fundamental differences of views – to negotiate and work through to an outcome that both sides agree is fair. Each knew they wouldn't be 'duded' by the other – so could speak their mind and respect the other's opinion without having to agree with it. This issue of **fairness** – overseas people commented on Advance Australia 'Fair' – they had a different take – a different slant on our national anthem. It's closely tied to **respect** – there was the example of the union delegate who tended to get on his high horse in a confrontational style – but he was respected and valued nevertheless. **Empowerment** – it's also about empowering people at all levels – it's easy if not empowered to keep referring matters to the masters before making decisions. In general the culture was one where people didn't – they were empowered to make decisions and there to fix problems. **Openness** was also critical – ability to share problems and not necessarily have the answers – to search together for a solution and to back each other in finding it (and*

⁶³⁷ For a summary of this approach see Ogden, 1994; Ogden and Webb, 1995

⁶³⁸ Webb, 2001.

*selling it after the event) – for example occasions in the Industrial Relations Commission when SOCOG was assisted by the Labor Council in explaining the point to the Commissioner – a cooperative or collaborative approach rather than the usual adversarial one. **Self-Esteem** – positive self-images not bound up with ego - not God/right on my side and/or the knight in shining armour stuff. In this culture the **outcome** was what was important – not ‘win-win’ but something that was **rational, fair, logical and timely**. People felt they were right and at end of day were vindicated. The culture we built was one of ‘don’t prevaricate’ – ‘get on with it’ – and ‘we’re not doing this for practice’ and a lot of it was about understanding the Australian culture.”⁶³⁹*

These comments were reinforced throughout the study in a number of significant areas of achievement. Examples where the wheels almost fell off during the Games preparation illustrate not just how some players failed to achieve this culture shift, but the way the relationships and trust embodied in the over-arching collaborative culture permitted containment and rapid resolution of the crises when they occurred. When successes like this occur it is easy to identify the key activities and the changes to structures that occurred result. The study identified many of these and suggested valuable lessons for future major events and longer-term national projects.⁶⁴⁰ However, culture change is something much harder to define and even harder to document. This is what really interested me in this study of the Games. In particular, given so marked a change in the way people felt about the process and the result, what drove this change? What were the emotional factors that contributed to this ‘sense of pride’? In particular I was interested to see if there was a shame element to this and, if so, what was it and how did it operate?

What the study showed was that the catalyst for the shift from an industrial ‘culture of power’ to one of ‘pride in collaboration’ was indeed shame. Inherent in being in the spotlight of global attention, there developed a culture of shame-embarrassment that prompted many of the key players to reflect and change. In the words of one of the leading (left-wing) trade union organisers, the driver for success was initially fear of failure in the full glare of the spotlight of world attention.

“No one wanted - I mean there was big potential for a stuff-up. The whole experience was based on cooperation – this might be seen as the extreme end of the spectrum of union organising but a major concern was to avoid confrontation. This started within the union movement – cooperation between unions about how we were running things on the ground – working together rather than having disputes over demarcation.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, p 67. Interview with Rob Forsyth, industrial relations manager for the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), April 2001

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid. Chapter 5, which identifies lessons applicable to significant environmental programs e.g. Murray-Darling river basin restoration.

“My initial thinking – I had some scepticism about the Olympics – like a lot of people. My questions were: What can we get out of it for the union movement and those workers who would be employed. And could we have a unionised Olympics – with the best ever wages and conditions. Along the track the other questions became important: ‘We can’t afford to stuff it up!’ and then seeing we had a positive role – making it genuinely the best ever Olympics.”⁶⁴¹

The head of Olympic security expressed a similar sentiment when he said

“We were condemned to success - we simply could not be seen to fail and hence collaboration was necessary.”⁶⁴²

Somewhere in the process, the fear of being seen to make a mess of it turned over to genuine pride and became wanting to be the best. As one junior project officer with the task of training volunteers for transport work said:

“Our worst fear was that we’d be mediocre – just good enough – we wanted to be excellent – the best!”⁶⁴³

And yet, for all the achievement, there was a limit to the culture shift that was possible. Throughout the study the ‘shame’ elements that prompted changes in relationships between the actors were masked. Occasionally ‘embarrassment’ would be mentioned but rarely ‘shame’. A debacle over public access to Games tickets was resolved by a shamefaced public apology from the Olympics Minister. He delivered a speech in which he said ‘sorry’ 17 times in 45 seconds. There were no excuses, just a display of appropriate shame, and within weeks the issue was all but forgotten. But the significance of this, and the contrast with earlier attempts by the head of the Organising Committee to justify withholding tickets for high priced sponsorship programs, went unremarked.⁶⁴⁴

As we have seen throughout this study there is a tendency in our culture to use the language of fear to frame the issue of ‘threats’ to social relationships. This is not entirely misplaced. The culture remains socially stratified with power over others being a function of one’s place in various hierarchical structures. For all the progressive changes in work practices that were prompted by the spotlight of attention, ultimately the shame-pride culture that emerged retained elements that locate this as ‘juvenile’ rather than adult/mature shame. Note how Michael Knight, the Games Minister frames the shame-fear elements that drove this culture.

“... the key figures, senior people in SOCOG, OCA, ORTA⁶⁴⁵ always wanted to achieve the best Games – always knew the spotlight of attention would be on

⁶⁴¹ Ibid: Chris Christodoulou, interview January 2001

⁶⁴² Ibid: Paul McKinnon, interview May 2001

⁶⁴³ Ibid: Simon Bowak, interview Jan 2001

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid: Interview with Tom Forrest, Ministerial advisor, March 2001.

⁶⁴⁵ Acronyms for: Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, Olympic Coordination Authority, and Olympic Roads and Transport Authority.

the Games – knew they'd be judged by the nation favourably or critically. They knew this beforehand. Also this view was there in the unions and the workers. It was hardest to find at some levels of SOCOG where this had morphed into an arrogance over what they were doing versus an objective assessment and a fear that it wouldn't happen. The people I liked were those who had a constructive anxiety. Some, only a few, were paralysed by fear. Some were just 'confident' they would pull it off. Both these were not much use. The third group – most of the people involved – had this constructive anxiety – an awareness of the cost of failure and the benefits of success – were a little scared the whole time – ran a little scared the whole time. These were the most useful.⁶⁴⁶

At the end of the study I asked the Minister what lessons we might take from the Games for future events and projects. His reply indicates clearly the limitations imposed by our cultural evolution on the emergence of adult collective responsibility.

"The short answer is, perhaps, some unpalatable things. . . . There was . . . a centralisation of authority – a level of power and authority that was unprecedented in government in NSW or in Australia. It may be that (the Games) is a one-off – that we can never replicate this. Concentrating this level of power may be needed – in that it is likely to get the job done – but there are clearly anti-democratic elements in it. So the lessons may not be appropriate to other projects – or may be unpalatable in terms of democratic principles of another government. But a strong concentration of power and authority, combined with high levels of political accountability, did help deliver an Olympic Games that enhanced Australia's reputation. There was a broad consensus that the Olympics was so big and so important that it couldn't be done any other way. That then begs the question: what else is important enough to our nation's future to again do whatever is necessary to make sure we deliver?"⁶⁴⁷

So, in the context of the culture developed around the Olympic Games, shame operated as a driver for change. It led people, if not to abandon old patterns of acting out with aggression/competition, to at least reflect on the consequences as they would be seen in the eyes of the watching world. But there is little understanding of the nature of this as 'shame'. Where it did occur, such awareness was couched in the language of fear-anxiety which, as we have seen, is still the language of 'infantile' and 'juvenile' guilt/shame cultures. Furthermore, while the initial sense of potential for shame led to: creative team working, the building of a collaborative culture, and genuine pride in collective achievement; these were not universally adopted. Some players did not get in on the act but still continued to operate out of the old culture of power and competition. This led to breakdowns in some critical areas that required highly authoritarian interventions. The study details examples of conflict over: the conditions for manufacture of Olympic uniforms in overseas 'sweat-shops'; the State government

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid: p 180, Interview with Michael Knight, May 2001.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid: p 193

intervention to forestall breakdown of management and logistics in the private bus transport sector;⁶⁴⁸ and details of the government intervention that effectively sidelined SOCOG senior management in January 2000.⁶⁴⁹ It is clear that the devolved-responsibility culture failed to deliver in some crucial areas. It is an open question whether this was due to its inherent nature, to particular mistakes, unforeseen circumstances or the personality of some of the key management people. I suspect a combination of all of these. But we see authority figures intervening to impose, in Michael Knight's words "*unprecedented power and control*"

There was a combination of:

- Awareness of embarrassment potential;
- Significant reflection and change from the old culture of competition/power;
- Creation of strategic framework to support collaboration, openness (allowing willingness to admit mistakes, expression of shame and personal inadequacies) and the building of respect and trust;
- Devolving of responsibility through the organisational structures.

These suggest a maturing shame culture – evolution beyond the infantile to the juvenile form.

On the other hand there was also:

- The residue of the language of fear/guilt;
- Ambivalence over collaboration/competition - with some areas where old ways are retained and threaten to undermine the collaborative gains; and
- The exercise of 'parental' style authority;

These characterise the shame culture of the Sydney 2000 Olympics as 'Juvenile' rather than adult.

The lessons from this case study of the Games indicate just how far we have to go and how much work will be needed before we can make the transition from the juvenile to a mature shame culture

A long way to go

Overall, what I am suggesting in these examples is that,

- We have a long way to go in making the shift from a culture based on guilt;
- And, even, then we have a long way to go in developing a more mature shame culture.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid: p 136-150.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid. p 182-189.

Perhaps a juvenile form is the best we can achieve at this stage. We are still a culture in transition, even in struggle, over such culturally defining issues as: the social values of participatory democracy vs. authoritarian control; responsibility as a freely chosen social burden vs. duty defined by authority; shame vs. guilt; and the balance between individual identity (with its potential for personal growth in integrity and sense of purpose) and collective/social identification with others. We have yet to achieve collective awareness of shame as the root of violence and the twin poles of alienation and engulfment – let alone acceptance of the role of shame in both rebuilding social connections and firm and flexible boundaries between self and other. We are only just beginning to understand empathy in the frame of over- and under-distancing of emotions at the interpersonal level and have hardly begun to appreciate its impact in terms of social growth. In a culture still following the trajectory that has distorted the balance between the personal and the social we have yet to reclaim a place for measuring personal growth in terms of ‘social age’ and the parallel development of a culture that values and expresses this. And we have a long way to go in extending this identification to the wider ecological environment. These changes will constrain the extent to which any one initiative can express a different value system reflected in the idea of a mature shame culture. The movement towards this will be a long process.

What might mark the transition to a more mature form? The tragedy of the two thousand plus year experiment with guilt as the vehicle for framing the opportunity for ‘growth-through-shame’ is that, while it attempts to place the focus on behaviour rather than self, it offers little by way of a behavioural response that would encourage social growth. It is almost entirely negative – ‘I shouldn’t have done that!’ Enmeshed as it is within the cultural drift towards ever-increasing individuation, it offers little scope for social engagement – and where it does, it offers little beyond restoration of standing within the community. While a juvenile shame-awareness does prompt social engagement with the community (the experience of which might lead to social identification with others outside of the self) such engagement is often limited to the peer group and rarely challenges conformity to the social order through social action. Using the framework suggested by Richard’s social age scale, this defines it as at best ‘juvenile’ rather than mature, ‘adult’ shame. Indications of a more mature form would be, as Richard suggested a long time ago, the transformation of a culture of rights and duties to one of rights and responsibilities where shame prompts not just the individual but whole sections of society to constructive engagement in the processes of social transformation. It would be to observe not just social reintegration of the self-oriented individual through appropriate ‘ceremonies of shame’ but the transformation of social relations and social structures through the application of shame-awareness at all levels of society. But we have few models for what such shame-aware social action would look like.

We have indeed a long way to go. Seen through the lens of shame, much of our social pathology is the result of social shaming – the witting or unwitting imposition of shame on individuals groups, even whole sections of the global community, by those who exercise social and economic power and superiority. Such behaviour is dangerous in a global village where reaction to such imposed shame now threatens the sense of security and wellbeing of many if not most of us. **Yet the tragedy is that this behaviour is not generally seen as shameful.** If it were then perhaps we would be on the path to a more secure future, evolving socially towards a more humane, just, economically, socially and ecologically sustainable future.

The first steps to shame maturity lie, I suggest, in our ability to shed those elements that characterise guilt: the assumption of superiority and the exercise of external control via blaming, judgement and punishment. Growing maturity involves the expression of shame emanating from within. Not as ‘self’-consciousness but as the modest, sometimes embarrassed and always shamefaced recognition of connectedness to others. As we struggle with conflicts over values we do so in a way that respects the other. We signal that the differences, where they lead to distance between us, is a source of shame. It involves building into our structures and institutions for social/political interaction the kind of environment that permits and supports this kind of shame awareness. All institutions! Schools, workplaces (especially!), statutory and voluntary community agencies, financial institutions and the structures through which we engage in the political debates within and between nations and cultures. Idealistic? Certainly! Impossible? Perhaps within the framework of our current cultural myths, but maybe necessary if we are to have a sustainable future. And perhaps to compound the challenge we may need to extend this to the relationship between people and the natural environment. But then as I said at the start this is a long-term project. It began with the emergence of human social interaction. My sense is that we are now at a point of transition – one of both crisis and opportunity.

Conclusion

Actually, more of a pause for breath than a full stop. I suggested at the start if this study that developing a more mature shame culture was perhaps a two hundred year project. What I have attempted here is to fill some of the gaps in theory and practice that might allow us to

see in shame a potentially powerful tool for social and cultural change. In western European culture throughout the past 2,500 year span of history there have always been enlightened people who could see in shame a force for positive growth. We have touched on the honour and shame cultures of ancient Greece, 'feudal' Europe of the middle ages and the 'renaissance' period through to the present day culture of 'guilt' and self-conscious shame. Throughout there has been the potential for shameful experience to stimulate either growth or paralysis.

Seen in this broad cultural context we can observe a common theme and a couple of underlying trends. The common theme is one where shame achieves an exalted place as a stimulus for change and personal growth. The first underlying trend is that, paradoxically, alongside the breakdown of the patriarchal, hierarchical social structures, we see an increase in the incidence of social shame. As people's expectations for freedom and equality have increased, so the contemporary social and economic structures appear to leave them feeling marginalised; shamed and humiliated. This now operates on a global scale. No longer is the 'inferior' status of large sections of the world's population hidden from them, bound by ignorance of privilege or by hegemonic acceptance of caste and class. The second underlying trend is that, at the same time as there is an increase in day-to-day incidence of shame, there is a decrease in the awareness of this emotion. Most people seek to avoid feeling it. It is, as we discussed at the beginning, the emotion that scarcely dare speak its name. It is as though it has gone underground. It remains unacknowledged, unspoken, un-displayed. Instead we see an increase in patterns of 'acting out', leading to increased incidence of outer and inner-directed aggression and alienation. It is the essence of my thesis that this avoidance, the failure to recognise and acknowledge, lies at the heart of the cultural pathology of shame. It contributes not just to personal pathologies of aggression and alienation but to the broad social crises we face at all levels from the interpersonal, face-to-face level through to those appearing on a global scale.

At this point in the study it matters little whether we choose to name this avoidance as characteristic of a 'guilt', 'guilt/shame' or 'shame' culture. What we have described are some of the key patterns for immature responses to the affective emotion of shame across the full spectrum of its manifestation – from humility to humiliation. We now have a clearer understanding of the patterns of immature shame-avoidance and their links to psycho-social pathologies. We also have a perspective that allows us to frame this psycho-social shame pathology in a broad historical and cultural context. The task before us is to translate this understanding into action. Our understanding of shame in this study has been developed in face-to-face interactions, small groups and local community settings. The task is now to

explore how we might use this micro-sociology of shame to influence the growth of a more mature shame culture - from the micro to macro levels of our global community.

It was Richard Hauser's gift to be able to see the opportunity and challenge inherent in a wide range of personal, social and values crises as a whole. He saw the task as to begin to fill in this 'whole' with theory and practice emerging from work across a wide range of social issues (from local to global). He appreciated, valued and sought tools for working with: emotion; rational strategic thinking and questioning; and above all engagement of people in social action. In this study, what we have added is a significant reframing of the emotional experience, not as a blockage or restraint on rational thought, but as something inherently salutogenic. Richard's view was still locked within the zeitgeist of his time. Though he understood (at least in practice) better than most the importance of catharsis, this was still framed in terms of the need to 'discharge' negative (i.e. pathological) emotions in order to grow beyond them – rather than seeing these as **the vehicle** for this growth. What we now have is a normative framework for understanding the social psychology of shame and shame-empathy that could be the basis for everyday experience when shame is unmasked. From this frame we can re-evaluate emotional and social pathologies and more clearly identify how these arise from the failure to engage with the shame experience. The salutogenic framework allows us to develop first a normative theory for shame in the context of emotion, cognition and culture and, from this base offer explanatory theory for understanding and changing the personal and social pathologies of aggression and alienation.

Behind this is a significant challenge to much that is common-sense today. The common view is that human nature is a- or anti-social, self-interested and needing to be restrained by civilisation. On the contrary, I am suggesting that we are endowed with emotional-cognitive faculties that have evolved to serve both personal and social functions and that, if anything it is our 'civilisation' that has created the causes of personal and social dysfunction. I am reminded of the oft-quoted comment from Mahatma Gandhi who, when asked,

'What do you think of Western Civilisation. Mr Gandhi?'

replied,

'I think it would be a good idea.'

Changing this 'civilisation' process will result in fundamental changes to the way we frame the relationships between people, and people and their environment - at all levels, across and between all cultures. But I am with Richard in asserting that this involves not just change but **personal and social growth** in people and groups based on emotional as well as rational faculties.

My challenge at this social-psychological level goes beyond simply challenging the assumption that human psychological development is one of increasing ‘individuation’ - the development of the individual personality both over the course of a lifetime and, on a longer time frame, its emergence from the collective identity of class, race, culture and religion. This has been the trend for two millennia and more. The challenge is even greater than recognising the need to balance this development of personal identity with social identification. It is a fundamental challenge to our concept of ‘self’ – to see this in inter-subjective terms, as a boundary concept, inextricably bound to the concept of ‘other’, with this latter including ever-widening circles of other people and the even wider concept of ‘environment’ and ecology. There is a parallel here with biology. We are coming to see the cell wall less as a barrier separating inside and outside, and more as a zone of intense interaction where many processes essential to the health, wellbeing and growth of the organism occur.

Shame is a primary vehicle for the embodiment of the self and its location in the inter-subjective framework through which we come to know human existence.⁶⁵⁰ Shame mediates both the bridge and the boundary between self and other, self and environment. What we have shown is how the empathic response to shame operates to build connections, bonds, and bridges between people, and at the same time, how shame helps build healthy boundaries – firm and flexible, neither too rigid nor too weak. This locates it as an essential component for our understanding of alienation, how to overcome it and so begin to reconstruct society and culture.

Our theoretical understanding of social evolution has evolved through various frames that have included those that stressed God-given stasis, social Darwinism, conflict models, equilibrium (structural-functional) models, and self-organisation models.⁶⁵¹ We now seek to ‘empower’ people as ‘stakeholders’ in various social issues to define and take action on their own and others behalf. The challenge of feminism has been to give a voice to the personal within the realm of political action. But so far, the various challenges to the status quo have been framed within the language of powerlessness-empowerment – within the frame of a culture of power. What our work here has shown is that, underlying and indeed embedded within the feeling of powerlessness, is the often-unacknowledged feeling of shame. I have also indicated how men, operating within a new and emerging culture of masculinity, have begun to incorporate this shame-awareness into group work and programs for tackling issues of aggression and alienation at community level.

⁶⁵⁰ A similar view can be found in Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, pp 552-568.

⁶⁵¹ Hudson, 2000.

I came into this work believing that anger against injustice could empower social action. I started this study because I sensed that this was insufficient, even when combined with the questioning tools suggested by Richard for working with curiosity as the antidote to social apathy. What we have now is a ‘relational-cultural’ model⁶⁵² for shame-empathy that has implications for work on a wide range of personal-political issues characterised by various forms of aggression/violence, depression/self-harm, isolation/apathy, and addiction/engulfment – the poles of the compass of shame. I believe this adds significantly to the tool kits for personal growth and social action. In the previous chapters I indicated how this perspective emerged through, and has been applied in a variety of localised face-to-face interventions on social issues. What I was seeking was a way of reframing shame as a salutogenic experience - in order that it could be utilised as a stimulus for personal emotional and social growth through taking responsibility for social action. This evolved into a frame through which we see it as a natural healthy emotion with its own unique function and its pathology as the result of co-assembly with other emotions, the display of which interferes with this functioning. This perspective challenges the current perception of shame. Seen in the context of the long-term cultural trend towards shame-avoidance, it is this avoidance, rather than shame itself, that results in the perception of shame as an emotional burden. The burden arises because shame is avoided. The primary mechanism for avoidance is to mask it with anger, fear, disgust or distress. These masks interrupt the otherwise salutogenic shame-empathy process – leaving us with a residue of unresolved shame that manifests in terms of the residues of anger, fear disgust and distress that we used to mask the shame. These residues are what we commonly refer to as ‘our shame’ – in fact therefore not shame at all.

Challenging or contradicting this requires first that we become aware – that we notice the physical display of shame affect and acknowledge this. No small task, but one made much easier in the context of others who are able to be aware, to see shame as a result of behaviour rather than a general self-condemnation. We interrupt the condemnation of self (whether this is by or of our-self or others) in favour of acknowledging the display of shame-awareness as a doorway to understanding and change. We interrupt particularly the ‘guilt’ processes of blame-judgement and punishment (again, by or of self or other) in favour of acknowledgement of shame as the signal of ‘other awareness’ – that we are ashamed because behaviour has damaged the social bonds between people. And we notice that this shame is shared, even if not fully acknowledged, by all those who are aware of the damage - regardless of who caused it.

⁶⁵² See Jordan, 2001.

In place of guilt-punishment we offer a model of: shame – compensation – restoration - social transformation – achieved through the vehicle of responsibility. Responsibility is a shame-related concept. To achieve its potential it needs to grow beyond the framework of duty – that sense of obligation to others which is so intimately bound to the imposed feelings of guilt, and shame-humiliation at failure to live up to expected standards. It also needs to break out of the guilt trap of failure to live up to individualistic ideals. Not that these are unimportant, but we must recognise that these are framed within a culture that has distorted the individual/collective balance and that we need a new balance of personal and social responsibility. We approach shame maturity when our facility with shame is such that it prompts not just a personal transformation in terms of self-image and relationships to others, but also impels us towards engagement with the task of social transformation. When it prompts a mature, strategic, informed attempt: to change the social conditions; to change existing or create new structures and institutions; to work on the root social (i.e. shame-based) causes of the problems faced by others as well as ourselves.

Finally . . . Well perhaps not. There is no convenient full stop or closing point that can be made to bring this study to a close. What it has done is reframe elements of the challenge. But, just as data is not necessarily information, and information is not necessarily knowledge; knowledge is not necessarily wisdom and none of the above is a substitute for action. I have indicated some of the areas where I propose to develop these ideas in social action. The task of progressing towards a more mature shame culture is embedded in the greater challenge of achieving social growth towards a more just, respectful and sustainable future. What I hope is that this exploration has added a few new tools to the kitbag we carry into this work.

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Appendix: The Richard & Hephzibah Hauser Archive

Background

Richard & Hephzibah Hauser were a significant influence on the lives and career of many people, particularly those involved in the struggle for social change, or as they would prefer, social growth. Their work was both theoretical and practical though, again as they would say, measurable more in terms of the influence on the work of others than the results of their own, numerous and wide-ranging projects.

Little of their work was published in their lifetime. The books in English: *The Fraternal Society* (1962/1963), *The Homosexual Society* (1962); and in German: *Die kommende Gesellschaft: Handbuch für Soziale Gruppenarbeit und Gemeinwesenarbeit* (Pfeiffer 1971); plus the booklet: *Social Responsibility and Social Planning* (1975) are all that are routinely available through traditional search tools. Some of the core ideas have recently (1993-2002) been published in the series of papers in German by the Zentrum für Gruppenstudien und Gemeinwesenarbeit e.v. Köln. Also recently (2002) the Akademie fuer Sozialarbeit, in Voralberg, Austria has shown an interest the Hausers' work and is planning to make such information as it can gather more widely accessible to people in Austria and elsewhere.

Despite these recent activities, much of Richard's and Hephzibah's thinking, and information on their numerous project activities is still not routinely available. Much of what does exist is in the form of unpublished papers. The bulk of these are stored by their daughter Clara in Beaufort, S. Carolina. Below I provide a brief summary report on the archive produced as a result of my visit to Beaufort in June 2000. I have updated this with a brief summary of additional/alternative papers located in London in late 2002 by Sabine Steinbacher, a researcher working for the Akademie fuer Sozialarbeit, and a list of the papers published by the Zentrum für Gruppenstudien.

The Archive in S. Carolina.

The material housed in S. Carolina by Clara Menhuin-Hauser was shipped from London following Richard's death in 1991. Since then the volume of material has been reduced to an essential core by removing duplicate/multiple copies and discarding some material judged to be 'irrelevant'. The extent of the remaining archive has now been identified, and sorted into new and hopefully more useful categories and re-stored in more durable and easily accessible containers. This should allow easier physical access to the material as a whole and to

particular papers and other material in the future. This report hopefully provides the starting point for a more comprehensive catalogue in the future.

What is now in storage falls into four categories.

- The core material.
- Papers on issues of concern.
- Correspondence re the work.
- Personal correspondence, papers and photos.

These are stored in separate containers as follows:

Box # 1 – The core material - linking theory and practice

This summarises Richard and Hephzibah's theories about social growth and how it could be promoted through training of catalysts/activists/leaders. It includes:

- **How to do it:** Copies (much used and ageing badly) of three different versions of the paper *How to make a social action survey*. This is the basic tool for Richard and Hephzibah's practical work – and as such these documents are probably worth more in terms of the history of social activism than the rest put together
- **The Book:** The unpublished manuscript (in English) of the book: *Coming of Social Age: tools for learning and unlearning* as written circa 1971 with, possibly a few but not many later changes up to circa 1975.
- **The Handbooks.**

This is material that Richard worked and reworked through training sessions with groups involved in different projects, with overseas students, and with family and the people working closely with him at the Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities in London. His aim was to present the body of his ideas in a three-part format: the key concept; how to teach it; and simple sketches that carried the idea which could be reproduced in training sessions. Various versions of this material were produced over the years. The Archive includes:

- The published version of the handbook (in German) – *Die kommende Gesellschaft: Handbuch für soziale Gruppenarbeit und Gemeinwesenarbeit* (Pfeiffer 1971) complete with sketches/graphics not incorporated in the text of the English manuscript.
- An A4 (lever arch) binder with an early manuscript version of the text of the handbook titled: *The new society*. Most sections are dated C 1967 but some are later and with handwritten margin comments. Some of this material was produced (but not formally published – copyright not applied for) in Chicago 1969 by the Urban Training Center, Director David Jehnsen.

- Three plastic binders of sketches with accompanying notes on *Basic fraternal theory* – these represent some (possibly some of the latest) versions of the working drafts of the sketches for the handbook.
 - A bound copy in German of *Skizzen zum grundprogram fur soziale gruppenarbeit* - a small booklet of sketches and notes produced, I think, by (or for) Fritz Karras at Zentrum fur gruppenstudien und gemeinwesenarbeit in Koln.
 - A ring binder, *The book of sketches* (many with dates indicating their evolution) and filed alphabetically by idea they represent. (from ‘Apathy’ to ‘Values’)
 - A small plastic folder with miscellaneous notes and sketches for the handbooks
 - Two A5 ring binders of English translations from the German of sketches and several loose plastic bound copies of sketches grouped by topic.
- **Papers on the Social Crises.** These are the reference point for Richard’s thinking on the ‘why’ of his work. They detail his ideas that the world is facing an unprecedented crisis. Included here are: Two papers *The last chance, but the best* (1994) and *The last chance and the best* (1994/5) which, despite similar titles and theme, are very different in form and content. These represent the culmination of a long period of working and reworking the ideas around the need to avert what Richard saw as impending breakdown resulting from multiple crises (sometimes recast as mega-crisis). Various versions of the papers on *The Crises* – which list various numbers of these crises – e.g. 14, 31, 61 100+ (and various other numbers). The ‘Crises’ file is not complete. There are other versions filed with the remainder of the papers (see below). These might be collected together later as the archive is reworked and a decision made then on where best to store this aspect of the work.
- Copies of *The briefing booklet* and *The leaders manual* by Bernard Lafayette and David Jehnsen of the Martin Luther King Inst for Non-violence. These acknowledge Richard’s work in terms of the sketches used. In fact a reading of these indicates that much of the material has been drawn from Richard and Hephzibah – an example of where others can take this work, but perhaps an indication of the need for fuller acknowledgement. Stored with these are copies of correspondence from D. Jehnsen and a catalogue of the material originating with Richard and Hephzibah held by the Institute.

Box # 2 – The Papers

This contains copies of papers produced by Richard and Hephzibah on various issues at different times. Most of these are undated. There is an idiosyncratic number referencing system the code for which has been lost. In general, the higher the number, the later the version of the paper. As such this part of the archive indicates the development of ideas on various issues over time and the relative emphasis/priority given to issues at different times. The archive box contains:

- Papers stored in lever arch files in roughly alphabetical order by issue/title of paper. (C and S have their own binder).
- In addition there are (with only some overlap) papers on particular issues notably:
 - **The prison papers** – detailing early work with Wandsworth H&K wings 1959-63 through to latest thinking on this in the 1980s.
 - Work on **The Face** – an extension of very early work on observation (and intuition) that was revisited in the 1980s – though he appears not to have known it there was significant parallel work being done mainly in the US that has subsequently radically restructured the framework underpinning psychology based on observation of ‘affect’. This also intersects with his groundbreaking work on guilt and shame – something he did not develop much in later years beyond his early propositions– and which was the reason for my visiting the Archive.
 - **The inner city project** – a compilation of old, new and reworked papers relating to the multiple issues affecting cities. This was a major project in the 1980s and the file contains much work in progress and indications of how this was to be progressed.
 - **The ‘Clara’ papers** – copies (some duplicated elsewhere) of papers sent to Clara Menhuin-Hauser indicating what he was working on at particular times in the 80s. These contain samples of notes on meetings discussing issues and intermediate drafts of papers not found elsewhere in the archive. [NB Many of these are on thermal paper – even if kept away from light, they will degrade rapidly – they need recopying!]
 - **The Unemployed papers** – of particular personal interest as this was the project I worked on with Richard and Hephzibah in the early to mid 70’s. None of my papers remain. There are a set of papers post this/my period indicating the development of a rights and responsibilities approach to the issue and with links to his ideas on alternative economic systems – barter etc. that he later extended to global issues such as 3rd World Debt etc.

- An old study on **Coffee** – possibly not by Richard (though he shared this addiction – and he worked in this industry as part of his family business in Austria). Elements of this essentially technical study reappear in his work on Costa Rica many years later.
- The **Southall paper** produced in 1975/6 following a series of race riots in this London borough in association with Peter the ex monk I introduced him to.
- **The Northern Ireland Paper** – seems to be all that is left in the archive from this major project from the 70's – with all the successes and tragedies.¹
- A very interesting file of some late-dated work on **Depression** – seen through the lens of socio-pathology rather than psycho-pathology.
- A small file of papers on **Play** – a wonderful example of the kind of detailed thinking (and breadth of it) that went into the work.
- And finally – a file labelled “**Richards current work**” some of the issues/ideas still active in the late 80's and 90's.

Boxes #3 and #4 - The Correspondence:

These contain the ‘business correspondence’ of the various organizations through which Richard and Hephzibah worked from the 1960s through to the mid 1980s – Mainly ‘The Centre For Group Studies’ and the ‘Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities’.² This material provides a window on the life and work – with letters making proposals, urging action, pleading causes, or confirming details of discussions held: all filed alongside the gas and phone bills etc. This contains material of historical interest – both in relation to Richard and Hephzibah and the local national and world events and issues they were involved in.

Boxes – #5 + – The personal correspondence.³

Containing:

- The personal letters between Richard & Hephzibah and the family
- Many photographs.
- Details of Hephzibah's concert work which so often provided the financial base from which the other work could continue.

¹ See earlier note on the ‘tragedy’ of Sammy Smith, ex UDA shot by his own side when he outgrew the life he'd lived up to then. If Richard and Hephzibah needed (and they don't) one example of a turnaround to justify what they worked for then Sammy would be the example I'd nominate.

² The correspondence is contained in Lever Arch files or manila archive packets and is grouped roughly by date order in some cases by a single year, in others spanning several years or a decade.

³ Additional Box numbers to be added by Clara Hauser when these are sorted.

- Some personal books

Also in this section currently are the personal diaries, telephone books and visitors books - the source for Richard's handwriting analysis as much as a record of the many who passed through the house in Pimlico.

This material remains largely un-sorted and uncatalogued. Discussions with Clara Hauser have explored possibilities of:

- Sorting and storing this material as a parallel (personal) archive
- Inter-sorting and storing the personal material alongside the business/project material (at least by year)

Either way this material gives a fuller picture of the interconnected nature of the personal and political that characterized Richard and Hephzibah's working and living.

Material held elsewhere

In addition to the material held in S. Carolina, elements of the archive can also now be found in Europe (Germany, Austria, London). As part of this study, copies of some material is now also held in Australia.

Material copied with permission and held in Australia includes:

- An early draft of the m/s for the Handbook for the new society most sections dated Circa 1967 – format similar to that published in German in 1971
- A carbon copy of the m/s Coming of Social Age
- The two 'Last Chance and/but the Best papers'
- A Social Option – suggestions for an overall community social planning approach to the problems of Northern Ireland. March 1975
- How to make a social action survey – various versions 1967-1975

Issues papers –

Global

July 1986	Torture Torment Terror – Tools of manipulation
287060	Preparing for an Atomic Accident
888091	Conciliation in Africa
No #	The international conspiracy – the great task ahead for the free trade unions of the world and their potential allies
3860	A new deal for aboriginals - summary
	The world crises (summary)

Inner City

680502	The newseum
4811	A new Youth World
862161	Introduction to Social-Organic health
686012	Old to Elderly - A new purpose in the third age
781050	Old to Elderly – A new third age

No # (1970's)	Social Planning Pilot Project introducing generalist education into the school and via the school into the community
No # (1975)	Paper for discussion on Southall
868041	Social Planning for Minorities in Britain
Undated	Several of the unemployment papers
288081	Preliminary Notes on Prison Reform (early paper)
680502	Prisons (late paper)

Tools

887010	Dignity – the fight against psychosocial manipulation
481081	Human Rights and Responsibilities
1821	The six dimensions -

Copies of various sketches and untitled/numbered/dated papers

Papers held in Europe

Papers now at the **Academie für Sozialarbeit, Vorarlberg, Austria** include many of the above with a few noteworthy additions⁴ viz:

- ***Recommendations to the Department of Health and Social Security – regarding the problems of disaffected young people with reference to the review of the 1969 Children's Act*** (Institute for Social Research; 9 pages; March 1975)
- ***Disarmament*** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 17 pages; March/April 1976)*
- ***A European Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities*** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 6 pages; 2nd June, 1976)
- ***Cyprus – a discussion paper*** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 14 pages; November 1975)*
- ***Social Catharsis*** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 5 pages; November 1975)⁵
- ***UNESCO Paper*** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 3 pages; 12th May, 1976)
- ***Beyrouth – Proposals for Human Rights Centres*** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 6 pages; 14th June, 1976)
- ***A new beginning for the unemployed*** (Institute for Social Research; 21 pages; 1st June 1981) and ***A new beginning for the unemployed Part II*** (Institute for Social Research; p 22 – 48, undated)*

Undated papers

- ***The Centre for Group Studies*** - A Re-statement of its purpose and framework (The Centre for Group Studies; 8 pages; undated)

⁴ Some (or versions) of which (marked *) I believe also exist in S Carolina.

⁵ This is the only copy of this paper I am aware of – it locates the cathartic process in a more overtly social context than the other published material.

- **First paper on a new syllabus for social education** (The Centre for Group Studies; 3/67; 16 pages; undated)
- **Third, fourth and fifth year syllabus** (summary) (The Centre for Group Studies; 5 pages; undated)
- **Paper on Torture** (The Centre for Group Studies; 7 pages; undated)*
- **Human Rights and Responsibilities in Education** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 9 pages; undated)
- **Proposal – U Thant Memorial Centre** (Centre for Human Rights and Responsibilities; 4 pages; undated)
- **The world wide crisis of social mental health – Introduction to a pilot project for the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association – Australia** (Institute for Social Research; 7 pages; Nr. 58708I; 18th July, 1985)

Papers published in German by **Zentrum für Gruppenstudien und Gemeinwesenarbeit e.v. Köln**, include:

- Karas, F. & R. Hauser (ca 1993). Sozialerziehung in Schulen durch Arbeit von Schülern im Gemeinwesen**
- Hauser, R. & F. Karas (1993). *Soziales Planen.*
- Hauser, R. (1996). *Die neue Struktur der Schulklasse.*
- Hauser, R. (1996). *Jugendkultur.*
- Hauser, R. (1997). *Zeichnungen für Gruppenarbeit.*
- Hauser, R. (1997). *Der erste und der zweite Wohlfahrtsstaat.*
- Hauser, R. (1997). *Eine neue Schulklassenstruktur.*
- Hauser, R. (1997). *Das unsichtbare Gemeinwesen.*
- Hauser, R. & R. Jungk (1997). *Die Zweitausendjahreskr.*
- Hauser, R. (1997). *Beispiele für Wachstum und Nichtwachstum.*
- Hauser, R. (1997). *Einige Bemerkungen zur Behandlung sozialer Behinderung von Kindern, die auch anderweitig behindert sind.*
- Hauser, R. (1998). *Profil der Schule - Profil der Gegend.*
- Hauser, R. (1998). *Die 32 sozialen Krisen unserer Zeit.*
- Hauser, R. (1998). *Bericht über ein Versuchsrehabilitierungsschema im Zuchthaus zu Wandsworth.*
- Hauser, R. (1998). *Erziehung in der Schule auf der Grundlage einer Vierstufenstruktur.*
- Hauser, R. (1998). *Der erste und der zweite Wohlfahrtsstaat.*
- Hauser, R. (1999). *Bericht über ein Versuchsrehabilitierungsschema : im Zuchthaus von Wandsworth.*
- Karas, F. & R. Hauser (1999). *Sozialerziehung in Schulen durch Arbeit von Schülern im Gemeinwesen.*
- Hauser, R. (1999). *Das unsichtbare Gemeinwesen* (Aus dem Engl. Übers.: von Dietrich von Bodelschwingh).
- Hauser, R. (1999). *Der Sündenbock.*
- Hauser, R. (1999). *Ermöglichungsfaktoren für soziales Wachstum und Gemeinwesenentwicklung.*
- Hauser, R. (1999). *Der Gemeinwesenjugendpfleger : ein neuer Typ des Jugendleiters.*
- Hauser, R. (1999). *Sozialerziehung in Schulen.*

- Hauser, R. (1999). *Aktionsformen in der Gemeinwesenarbeit*.
Hauser, R. (1999). *Zeichnungen für Gruppenarbeit*.
Hauser, R. (1999). *Der Dritte Abschnitt des Lebens* (Übers. Brigitte Goldmann)
Hauser, R. (2000). *Generalistische Erziehung und Sozialplanung*.
Hauser, R. and F. Karas. (2002). *Soziales Planen*.

Discussions are continuing with interested parties regarding the future of this archive material and how to make it more widely available.

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