

Shame, guilt and social anxiety: the role of perspective-taking and alexithymia

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree, or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no materials previously published except where due reference is made.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Frida Cheok

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between shame-proneness and psychopathology is well established, while most research suggests that guilt-proneness may be unrelated to psychopathology. The present study expands previous research concerning relationships between shame, guilt and social anxiety, and examines relationships of these variables with perspective-taking and alexithymia. Most prior research has focused on internal shame (which includes shame-proneness), but this study also examined external shame, identified as an area requiring further research. Findings were consistent with the literature in associations between shame-proneness and social anxiety (positive) and between guilt-proneness and social anxiety (no association). External shame was positively associated with social anxiety, adding to the limited research suggesting similar psychopathology as shame-proneness. Perspective taking did not play a role in social anxiety. Key new findings were: positive associations between alexithymia and both shame-proneness and external shame; and, indirect effects for both shame-proneness and external shame on social anxiety through alexithymia. The current research can help develop additional intervention strategies for social anxiety, a common problem in society, by identifying and targeting the risk factors of shame and alexithymia that may impinge on successful outcomes.

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