

## Exploring the Consequences of Humiliating a Moral Transgressor

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When people transgress, they are often publicly condemned for doing so. This punishes the behavior and presumably induces moral emotions and the desire to make amends. Public condemnation can also be humiliating, an experience that may work against such reactions. In three studies, using vignettes and retrospective accounts, we explored the nature and consequences of humiliation. Public condemnation, when intentional and severe, heightened the experience of humiliation along with the negative consequences of anger, hostility, and vengeful urges, despite the fact that the humiliated person had transgressed in the first place. These intentional and severe forms of public condemnation failed to increase the moral emotions of shame and guilt. However, unintentional publicity and mild reprimand generally enhanced both moral emotions and intentions to apologize without increasing hostility.

Benjamin Franklin spent a considerable portion of his life serving as a diplomat in England. For the majority of this time, he was an ardent royalist who valued the relationship between the colonies and England. However, as matters between the colonies and England became strained, he found himself caught between the interests of his home country and of England. Toward the end of this period, he found himself in the possession of several private (and incriminating) letters written by the Royal Governor of Massachusetts. Franklin took the private correspondence and, though he himself reportedly disapproved of such practices (Brands, 2000), forwarded the letters back to the colonies

with the intent that they be read by officials (but not published). Against his wishes, the letters were published with great spectacle, creating a scandal for Franklin. Many in England wanted this “betrayed of confidences” (Brands, 2000, p. 471) severely punished. Consequently, Franklin was called to a public meeting and was lambasted by the British solicitor general in front of a hostile, jeering crowd. The actual text of the diatribe was so foul that the London papers would not reprint it (Brands, 2000), but witnesses reported that the solicitor general was “furious” (Brands, 2000, p. 471) and called down “a torrent of virulent abuse” (Issacson, 2003, p. 277) upon Franklin. In one particularly telling moment, the solicitor general charged that Franklin had “forfeited all the respect of societies and of men” (Brands, 2000, p. 471).

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## PUBLIC CONDEMNATION, PUNISHMENT, AND MORAL EMOTIONS

People behave badly from time to time. When they do, societies often punish them by publicly condemning their behavior, often in severe ways (e.g., Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwartz, 1996; Gilligan, 1996; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Linder, 2006; W. T. Miller, 1993; Scheff & Retzinger, 1997). Before the modern era severe public condemnation in various forms was a common means of punishment. Colonial America had its stocks and pillories, for example. Even in recent American history, public condemnation of wrongdoing has occasionally taken the form of forcing wrongdoers to wear sandwich board signs (which tell passersby of their misdeeds) in very public places.

Those who still use severe public condemnation as a means to punish wrongdoers may sometimes have well-intentioned goals. They may believe it a fitting punishment, rather than a “cruel and unusual” one. Perhaps, more important, they may assume that it will awaken moral emotions, such as shame or guilt in wrongdoers. Doing so would seem to be an especially good idea, as moral emotions are thought to “provide the motivational force . . . to do good and avoid doing bad” (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007, p. 347). Guilt, for example, is commonly thought to “involve an appraisal of an action’s wrongness and often leads to . . . reparation and apology” (Giner-Sorolla, Castano, Espinosa, & Brown, 2008, p. 520; also see Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Similarly, “shame involves an appraisal that one’s core self is somehow defective or flawed” (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008, p. 520; see also Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tracy & Robins, 2006) and in need of modification. If public condemnation actually leads to such outcomes, then it might be a very useful strategy for dealing with wrongdoers.

### HUMILIATION: THE UNFORTUNATE EFFECT OF PUBLIC CONDEMNATION

Public condemnation can also produce the experience of humiliation, the state of being “brought low in condition or status; reduced in dignity; humbled” (“Humiliation,” 1913/1996), and “the especially mortifying, painful lowering in pride and respect that the experience is assumed to entail” (“Humiliating,” 1998). Although humiliating a wrongdoer may seem a fitting and norm-establishing punishment for misdeeds (e.g., Grasmick & Green, 1980) designed to promote the related but distinctive moral emotions of guilt and shame, a number of analyses of humiliation suggest

that it may actually arouse resentment and anger in wrongdoers, despite the clear fact of their own immoral behavior (e.g., Braithwaite, 2006; Harris, 2006; Morrison & Ahmed, 2006; Massaro, 1997; Nussbaum, 2004). Rather than promoting beneficial moral emotions, as well as intentions to make amends for the wrongdoing, a humiliated person may feel attacked, unfairly treated, offended, outraged, and consequently vengeful. Moral emotions the wrongdoer might have felt as well as any inclinations to make amends may be obviated by a feeling that he or she is now more the wronged than the wrongdoer.

Why should public condemnation produce such reactions? After all, a moral transgressor has committed a wrongdoing and therefore “deserves” punishment. One possible explanation follows from the disproportionate nature of the punishment. Although most wrongdoers believe that they deserve some kind of punishment, humiliating public condemnation crosses some subjective line of fairness and proportionality. Indeed, as Klein (1991) noted, “*people believe they deserve their shame; they do not believe they deserve their humiliation*” (p. 117). Consequently, wrongdoers may shift focus from their own immoral actions to the inappropriate actions of the humiliator, who now appears to have lost the moral upper hand. This turning of the moral tables may release wrongdoers from feelings of shame or guilt and breed anger and resentment in their stead.

This was undoubtedly the case for Franklin. He almost certainly realized that he had behaved improperly and appears to have felt some level of guilt over his role in the letter scandal. In time, according to Isaacson (2003), Franklin realized that he would need to take his medicine, and he came forward about his role in the matter. Yet, during the course of his being berated, he clearly came to feel that the crimes being committed against him outweighed the crimes he himself had committed. Surely he deserved some form of punishment, but the way he was publicly attacked was beyond the pale. One sympathetic witness recalled that the rebuke was beyond “all bounds and measures” (Brands, 2000, p. 471). Consequently, where once Franklin may have experienced moral emotions, the actions of the solicitor general possibly canceled out those feelings and instead created intense anger and bitterness (Brands, 2000; Isaacson, 2003) in Franklin. After his public dressing-down, Franklin took a measure of revenge by writing increasingly bitter essays and newspaper columns in the British press. Arguably, the humiliation Franklin suffered changed the course of history (Schiff, 2006) as it may have been a critical moment in his transformation from a loyal British citizen into an ardent American revolutionary.

## EMPIRICAL WORK ON HUMILIATION

Although the historical example of Franklin's experience before the solicitor general, as well as theoretical claims made about humiliation, offer useful perspectives on the nature of the experience, what is the empirical evidence for these claims? There is little empirical research on humiliation, but in one unpublished study, Jackson (2000) had participants write about their own humiliation or shame experiences. Consistent with theoretical claims, participants who wrote about humiliation experiences reported significantly more publicity, perceptions of unfair treatment, anger, and a desire for revenge than did participants who wrote about shame experiences. In another study, presented in a chapter by Elison and Harter (2007), participants were asked to consider the kinds of events that might cause them to feel humiliated. In general, events linked to humiliation included being taunted or teased by a bully in front of a laughing or mocking audience. Furthermore, fully 86% of participants expected such events would cause them to feel anger, and many also reported a probable desire for revenge.

In another expansive study, Elison and Harter (2007) attempted to distinguish the experience of humiliation from other related states (i.e., shame, guilt, and embarrassment). They constructed nearly 100 vignettes in which they varied several features of interest, including publicity of the event described in the vignette (large, small, or no audience), the type of instigating event (either a moral transgression or an attribution, trait, or behavior having no moral overlay), as well as the intent of the audience (sympathetic or hostile). Participants reacted to all of the vignettes and reported that 27 of the vignettes were exemplars of humiliation. In all these, an audience was present, and in 22 of the 27, the audience appeared to display some form of hostile intent (e.g., mocked the victim). They concluded that regardless of instigating event (i.e., either moral or nonmoral), the presence of an audience can make the situation humiliating, and that the hostility of the audience usually plays a considerable role in amplifying the experience. Although humiliation was generally reported when a hostile audience was present, shame and guilt were more often reported as a result of some moral failing, public or private, than a nonmoral failing.

In sum, theoretical and empirical treatments of humiliation clearly suggest that humiliation is an experience that occurs as a result of a severe (and likely disproportional) public condemnation of a moral failing (or nonmoral characteristic). Public condemnation likely causes wrongdoers to think that they have been reduced in dignity in an inappropriate, unfair way. Consequently, they are likely to become angry and possibly vengeful. Moral emotions, such as

shame or guilt, seem less intrinsically associated with public condemnation, although they do appear linked more to moral failings compared with nonmoral failings, as would be expected.

## THE CURRENT STUDIES

The goal of the current set of studies was to consider the experience of humiliation in situations in which a person has committed a moral transgression and therefore "deserves" some degree of reckoning. This kind of situation (which parallels Franklin's experience) may be fairly common, because the fact that the person has committed a moral transgression may tend to bring out seemingly deserved public condemnation from others. More specifically, we examined aspects of public condemnation that should create the experience of humiliation, possibly causing individuals to feel mistreated, angry, and therefore vengeful—despite their initial transgression. Like Elison and Harter (2007), we manipulated level of publicity, but, unlike this prior research, we also manipulated the intentionality of publicity (unintended vs. intentional) and the severity of condemnation (mild vs. severe). In addition, we used between-participant designs, in an effort to reduce the potential for experimenter demand. We also examined the effects of these aspects of public condemnation on the moral emotions of shame and guilt. Presumably, many (but certainly not all) people who humiliate others do so because they suspect that their actions will engender such useful moral emotions. Yet scholarly claims and theorizing suggest that this may be a wrongheaded belief. Might humiliation impede these potentially useful effects? In Study 1, participants read scenarios in which a person committed a moral transgression. In most of the scenarios, the wrongdoer was reprimanded (severely, moderately, or not at all) in public or in private. In Study 2, participants again read scenarios in which a person morally transgressed. We again manipulated publicity and severity of reprimand, and also examined the effects of intentionality of the publicity. In Study 3 we prompted participants to recall events from their own lives that fit with key features of a humiliation experience.

### STUDY 1

Actual experiences of humiliation linked to moral transgression are challenging to study under controlled conditions because of ethical concerns (Saurette, 2005). In Study 1 we used participants' imagined reactions to hypothetical situations in which we manipulated two variables of interest. We constructed detailed,

hypothetical vignettes describing a moral transgression committed by a student. Participants took the perspective of this student and imagined how he or she would be feeling and thinking. We manipulated the degree of publicity by varying whether a superior discovered the transgression individually (low publicity) or among a group of other people (high publicity). We also included a private control condition in which the wrongdoing went undiscovered. In addition, we manipulated the degree of reprimand received by the student: no reprimand, a mild reprimand, or a very severe reprimand. For purposes of within-method replication (Smith & Harris, 2006), we constructed two sets of vignettes, one involving stealing and the other involving plagiarizing.

We expected greater reports of humiliation following increasing levels of publicity and severe reprimand. We also expected this pattern to be similar when examining the effects of these variables on perceived mistreatment, anger, and vengeful intentions, reactions that should have links with the experience of humiliation. More important, we expected that the joining of publicity and severe reprimand would produce the most intense reports of humiliation, as well as its associated negative effects.

Secondary hypotheses concerned the moral emotions of guilt and shame. As noted, a humiliator may humiliate in order to evoke moral emotions such as guilt and shame, but we expect that this goal should fail. However, we did expect that reports of shame (but not guilt), would increase as a result of mere publicity, that is, when comparing the private control condition with the mere publicity (no reprimand) condition. A long tradition of thinking on shame and guilt, as well as some empirical work (Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002), suggest that shame, unlike guilt, has strong links with the mere public exposure of a wrongdoing. This would be especially likely when the emotion is closely linked to negative evaluation from others (i.e., “external” shame) as opposed to when it closely linked to negative evaluation from the self (i.e., “internal” shame; Gilbert, 1998; Smith et al., 2002). We expected to replicate this pattern.

## Method

### *Participants*

One hundred seventy-five undergraduate (100 female, 75 male) volunteers participated in the study as partial fulfillment of their introductory psychology course requirement.

### *Design*

The study employed a 2 (publicity: individual vs. group)  $\times$  3 (reprimand: no reprimand, mild reprimand, vs. severe reprimand) between-participants design.

In a private no reprimand condition, the transgression went undiscovered. We collapsed across the additional factors of gender and vignette version (stealing or plagiarizing), because they did not produce any systematic effects.

### *Procedure*

Participants, in groups of approximately 50, read a short vignette about a student like themselves. They were asked to read the vignette carefully and to do their best to take the perspective of the person in the passage. The experimenter stressed the importance of imagining what the person in the vignette would be thinking and feeling. After reading the vignette, participants turned the page and completed a series of questionnaire items containing the measures of interest. Then, they were debriefed, given credit, and dismissed.

### *Vignettes*

Each vignette was approximately two-thirds of a page of single-spaced text in length and described a same gender individual committing a transgression (stealing or plagiarizing). For example, in the plagiarizing scenario, John (Jody) is a research assistant in a lab. The lab group meets weekly to discuss the results of their research and to allow students an opportunity to give a research presentation. John is scheduled to present his topic of interest next week. The presentation includes a brief paper about the topic to be handed in a few days earlier. John is very nervous about the presentation. He wants to make a good impression with both the paper and presentation. He comes across a research article that nicely captures what he wants to get across in the paper, and he ultimately decides to take a risk and to plagiarize the article.<sup>1</sup>

### *Publicity*

Following the wrongful act, the publicity of the wrongdoing was manipulated (individual or group) by having the professor (also same gender) discover the wrongdoing in advance of the presentation and either confront John individually (individual condition) or confront him in front of a group of other lab assistants (group condition).

### *Reprimand*

The level of reprimand (no reprimand, mild, or severe) was manipulated by including information that described one of three possible reactions the professor had to the wrongdoing. In the plagiarizing vignette, in

<sup>1</sup>Vignettes are available from the first author upon request.

the no reprimand condition, the professor informs John that he has discovered the wrongdoing but that he will “overlook it just this once.” In the mild reprimand condition, the professor tells John that he has discovered the wrongdoing and states calmly that “plagiarism is wrong” and that he “shouldn’t do this sort of thing.” He also adds that he will “overlook it, just this once.” (This last phrase was included in all conditions to control for general expectations about the negative academic consequences of the wrongdoing. In the mild reprimand conditions, adding negative academic consequences may have seemed incongruous. Having such consequences only in the severe reprimand conditions would have confounded reprimand with another form of negative consequence.) In the severe reprimand condition, the professor tells John that he has discovered the wrongdoing, and then he gets extremely angry. He screams at John, accusing him of having “cheated” and implies that John is a flawed person. Finally, he says that he should probably throw John out of the research group, but he would “overlook it, just this once.” In the private, no reprimand control condition, John’s wrongdoing is never discovered.

#### Manipulation Checks

Two items (scale values = 0 [*not at all*] to 6 [*extremely*]), averaged together, assessed perceptions of publicity (*evaluated in public by a lot of people, more than one person knew what happened*;  $\alpha = .78$ ). Two items, averaged together, assessed the degree to which the person in the vignette was reprimanded (*severely criticized, scolded*;  $\alpha = .70$ ).

#### Primary Dependent Measures

Several measures, made up of items averaged together, were designed to assess perceived humiliation and humiliation-related reactions. Two items measured humiliation (*felt humiliated, humiliated*,  $\alpha = .85$ ), two items measured perceived unfair treatment (*unfairly treated, mistreated*;  $\alpha = .85$ ), three items measured anger at others (*angry at person in charge, angry at others, was livid*;  $\alpha = .81$ ), and two items measured a desire for revenge (*vengeful, hostile*;  $\alpha = .76$ ). Several additional measures focused on shame (*ashamed, shame, flawed, unworthy*;  $\alpha = .82$ ), and guilt (*guilty, guilty conscience, guilt ridden*;  $\alpha = .80$ ). Additional items assessed other reactions (e.g., *self-focus, other-focus, and duration*), but they were not directly relevant for our purposes.

## Results

Separate two-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) using a 2 (publicity: individual vs. group)  $\times$  3 (reprimand: no

reprimand, mild reprimand vs. severe reprimand) between-participants design were conducted on all composite variables of interest.

#### Manipulation Checks

**Publicity.** As anticipated, for the measure of perceptions of publicity, there was a robust main effect for publicity such that participants in the group publicity condition reported more publicity than did participants in the individual publicity condition. There was also a main effect for reprimand. A series of Fischer’s least significant difference (LSD) tests indicated that participants in the severe reprimand condition reported more publicity than did participants in the mild reprimand condition, and in the no reprimand condition. (See Table 1 for all main effects.)<sup>2</sup>

**Reprimand.** Also as anticipated, for the measure of reprimand, there was a robust main effect for reprimand, a series of Fischer’s LSD tests indicated that participants in the severe reprimand condition reported more reprimand than did participants in the mild reprimand condition and in the no reprimand condition. Unexpectedly, there was no difference between the mild reprimand condition compared with the no reprimand condition. There was a main effect for publicity; participants in the group publicity condition reported more reprimand than did participants in the individual publicity condition.

#### Primary Analyses

As expected, an ANOVA on the measure of humiliation produced a significant main effect for publicity. (See Table 1 for all main effects.) Participants in the group publicity condition reported more feelings of humiliation than did participants in the individual publicity condition. There was also a main effect for reprimand. Follow-up Fisher’s LSD tests indicated that, as hypothesized, participants in the severe reprimand condition reported significantly more humiliation than did participants in the mild reprimand condition and the no reprimand condition. Of importance, individuals in the group publicity severe reprimand cell reported significantly more humiliation than participants in each of the other conditions. (See Table 2 for all cell means.) There were no interactions.

<sup>2</sup>Not surprisingly, publicity and reprimand appeared naturally confounded with each other. We reconducted the analysis for the publicity manipulation check using reprimand as a covariate. Doing so did not alter the effects for publicity. Also, we reconducted the analysis for the reprimand manipulation check using publicity as a covariate. Doing so did not alter the effects for reprimand.

TABLE 1  
Main Effects, for Humiliation, and Related Measures as a Function of Publicity and Reprimand (Study 1)

Main Effects	Publicity		Main Effect <i>F</i> (1, 144)	Reprimand			Main Effect <i>F</i> (2, 144)
	Group <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Individual <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		Severe <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	No <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	
Manipulation checks							
Publicity	4.28 (1.42)	1.66 (1.80)	98.5**	3.50 (2.20) <sub>a</sub>	2.81 (1.92) <sub>b</sub>	2.63 (2.05) <sub>b</sub>	3.80*
Reprimand	3.47 (1.36)	2.63 (1.56)	20.9**	4.35 (1.06) <sub>a</sub>	2.32 (1.26) <sub>b</sub>	2.47 (1.30) <sub>b</sub>	51.1**
Humiliation-related measures							
Humiliation	3.85 (1.09)	3.01 (1.26)	21.9**	4.12 (1.16) <sub>a</sub>	3.22 (1.13) <sub>b</sub>	2.91 (1.15) <sub>b</sub>	16.1**
Unfair treatment	2.87 (1.31)	1.56 (1.35)	51.1**	3.35 (1.38) <sub>a</sub>	1.61 (1.18) <sub>b</sub>	1.65 (1.18) <sub>b</sub>	38.4**
Anger at others	2.51 (1.40)	1.58 (1.33)	21.0**	2.91 (1.39) <sub>a</sub>	1.64 (1.39) <sub>b</sub>	1.57 (1.11) <sub>b</sub>	18.1**
Desire for revenge	2.39 (1.60)	1.42 (1.24)	16.5**	2.71 (1.49) <sub>a</sub>	1.60 (1.48) <sub>b</sub>	1.38 (1.19) <sub>b</sub>	13.2**

Note. All means (within rows) with different subscripts are significantly different at  $p < .05$ . Scales range from 0 (not at all) to 6 (extremely).  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

All other humiliation related measures produced similar main effects in the predicted directions. For the unfair treatment index, the anger at others index and desire for revenge index, separate ANOVAs found that participants in the group publicity condition reported more unfair treatment, more anger at others, and a greater desire for revenge than did participants in the individual publicity condition. There were also main effects for reprimand such that that participants in the severe reprimand condition reported significantly more unfair treatment, more anger at others, and a greater desire for revenge than did participants in the mild reprimand condition and in the no reprimand condition. Of critical importance, as with the humiliation ratings, participants in the group publicity severe reprimand cell reported significantly more unfair treatment, anger at others, and desire for revenge than did individuals in each of the other conditions. There were no interactions for any of these humiliation-related measures.

### Shame and Guilt

As predicted, there were no effects for the shame, guilt, or negative self-attribution indices. However, as predicted, the effects for shame and negative self-attributions increased from the private control condition to the mere publicity condition but did not increase further.

### Control Condition Comparisons

Finally, we took the opportunity to make several additional exploratory control group comparisons. Specifically, we tested for differences between the private control condition and the individual no reprimand and mild reprimand conditions for the primary dependent measures. Participants in the private control condition reported significantly less feelings of humiliation than did participants in the individual mild reprimand condition, as well as the in the individual no reprimand condition. Of interest, participants in the private

TABLE 2  
Cell Means and Differences for Humiliation, Shame, Guilt, and Related Measures as a Function of Publicity and Reprimand (Study 1)

	Group			Individual			
	Severe <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	No <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Severe <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	No <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Control <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Humiliation cell means							
Humiliation	4.40 (0.94) <sub>a</sub>	3.72 (1.06) <sub>b</sub>	3.39 (1.05) <sub>b</sub>	3.83 (1.31) <sub>b</sub>	2.72 (0.98) <sub>c</sub>	2.48 (1.09) <sub>c</sub>	1.20 (1.10) <sub>d</sub>
Unfair treatment	3.96 (0.95) <sub>a</sub>	2.24 (1.09) <sub>b</sub>	2.40 (1.16) <sub>b</sub>	2.74 (1.48) <sub>b</sub>	0.99 (0.93) <sub>c</sub>	0.96 (0.68) <sub>c</sub>	0.79 (0.80) <sub>c</sub>
Anger at others	3.29 (1.33) <sub>a</sub>	2.05 (1.15) <sub>b</sub>	2.21 (0.96) <sub>b</sub>	2.54 (1.36) <sub>b</sub>	1.24 (1.16) <sub>c</sub>	0.98 (0.91) <sub>c</sub>	0.72 (0.82) <sub>c</sub>
Desire for revenge	3.20 (1.47) <sub>a</sub>	2.07 (1.64) <sub>b</sub>	1.86 (1.38) <sub>b</sub>	2.22 (1.36) <sub>b</sub>	1.13 (1.16) <sub>c</sub>	0.94 (0.76) <sub>c</sub>	0.84 (0.88) <sub>c</sub>
Shame	4.44 (0.94) <sub>a</sub>	4.41 (0.86) <sub>a</sub>	4.00 (1.16) <sub>a</sub>	4.04 (1.16) <sub>a</sub>	3.77 (1.23) <sub>a</sub>	3.88 (1.23) <sub>a</sub>	2.90 (1.48) <sub>b</sub>
Guilt	4.76 (1.06) <sub>a</sub>	4.71 (0.97) <sub>a</sub>	4.79 (1.09) <sub>a</sub>	4.45 (1.45) <sub>a</sub>	4.32 (1.17) <sub>a</sub>	4.58 (1.39) <sub>a</sub>	3.98 (1.48) <sub>a</sub>
Neg. self-attribution	3.46 (1.38) <sub>a</sub>	3.26 (1.19) <sub>a</sub>	3.06 (1.12) <sub>a</sub>	3.18 (1.69) <sub>a</sub>	2.96 (1.37) <sub>a</sub>	3.46 (1.47) <sub>a</sub>	2.24 (1.48) <sub>b</sub>

Note. All means (within rows) with different subscripts are significantly different at  $p < .05$ . Scales range from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). Neg. = negative.

control condition did not differ from participants in the individual no reprimand or the individual mild reprimand condition on the measures of unfair treatment, anger, or desire for revenge.

### Correlations

As expected, humiliation was moderately correlated with shame,  $r(150) = .530$ , and guilt,  $r(150) = .350$ . Also, Hotelling's  $t$  tests for dependent samples correlations indicated that the relationships between humiliation and unfair treatment, anger at others, and desire for revenge were substantially stronger than the relationships between shame and the same items. Specifically, the relationship between humiliation and perceptions of unfair treatment,  $r(150) = .732$ , was significantly stronger than the relationship between shame and perceptions of unfair treatment,  $r(149) = .335$ ,  $t(172) = 7.81$ ,  $p < .001$ . Similarly, the relationship between humiliation and anger at others,  $r(149) = .612$ , was significantly stronger than the relationship between shame and anger at others,  $r(148) = .250$ ,  $t(172) = 8.70$ ,  $p < .001$ . Finally, the relationship between humiliation and desire for revenge,  $r(150) = .643$ , was significantly stronger than the relationship between shame and desire for revenge,  $r(149) = .341$ ,  $t(172) = 5.19$ ,  $p < .001$ . *Guilt* was not significantly correlated with any of the primary measures of interest.

### Discussion

As in Franklin's experience, our most intense reports of humiliation, unfair treatment, anger, and revenge occurred in the condition that joined group publicity and severe reprimand, suggesting that it is a combination of publicity and severe ridicule that cause humiliation and its associated effects to spike. This is not to suggest that people never experience humiliation and its associated negative effects absent these conditions. Indeed, people reported a degree of humiliation, unfair treatment, anger, and a desire for revenge in the private severe reprimand condition. However, these feelings were not as intense as those reported by individuals in the group publicity severe reprimand condition. Furthermore, the private severe reprimand condition did not differ from the public mild and public no reprimand conditions.

Mere publicity of a wrongdoing was enough to produce reports of humiliation compared to the private control condition. However, these reports were not accompanied by any reports of unfair treatment, anger, or desire for revenge beyond those reported in the private control condition. This suggests that, although mere publicity may evoke reports of humiliation, reports of humiliation derived from mere publicity are of a different flavor than reports of humiliation proper.

Reports of shame increased when moving from the private control condition to the mere publicity condition, supporting prior findings by Smith et al. (2002), which suggest that shame can be evoked as a result of the mere publicizing a wrongdoing. However, consistent with our predictions, reports of shame did not increase with heightened publicity or reprimand. Also reports of guilt were not affected by *any* increased publicity or reprimand. These results suggest that if a humiliator intends to engender moral emotions, boosting publicity and reprimand seems a wrongheaded approach, as these factors have effectively no effect on shame or guilt. Instead, boosting publicity and reprimand only appears to produce greater reports of humiliation, perceptions of unfair treatment, anger, and a desire for revenge.

The results of Study 1 suggest that the combination of publicity and severe reprimand produce the most intense reports of humiliation, as well as its associated negative effects. Based on the findings for the manipulation checks, there was also a sense in which both reprimand and group public exposure influenced and enhanced the other, despite our efforts to separate these two constructs in creating the materials. Although the manipulation of publicity most strongly affected perceptions of publicity, enhanced publicity also augmented a sense of being reprimanded. In addition, although severe reprimand most strongly affected perceptions of reprimand, it also augmented a sense of publicity. This is understandable. The superior's actions caused the publicity and could be viewed as making the reprimand more forceful. Also, a reprimand given in public, probably enhanced a sense of public scrutiny. In other words, these two factors are naturally confounded with each other. This may be one reason why the combining of severe reprimand with publicity appears likely to bring about heightened humiliation, causing people's negative reactions to included vengeful urges. Indeed, our results closely parallel the experience of Benjamin Franklin. As noted, by many accounts, Franklin may have felt like he deserved some sort of punishment, even a public punishment, but the "torrent of abuse" he received likely made him feel as though he was not being punished but unfairly attacked. The solicitor general, at least in Franklin's mind, crossed a line of fairness and helped drive Franklin to rebellion.

### STUDY 2

When Franklin was humiliated, it would have been clear to him that his experience was intentionally orchestrated by those who wanted to see his punishment. He was not berated in front of passersby by accident; instead, the audience was deliberately invited to the spectacle with the intention of making Franklin's

berating a public affair. The intentional publication of a person's wrongdoing should make perceptions of humiliation all the more intense and should heighten the hostile, negative emotions associated with humiliation (Gilbert, 1998). Thus, the fact that Franklin's public downfall was planned likely added to his anger and desire for revenge. In Study 1, the intent of the publicizing superior was always ambiguous. The superior reprimanded the wrongdoer and others were simply around to hear the reprimand. In Study 2, we adjusted the vignettes to include an intentional public, unintentional public, and single individual publicity condition, along with a two-level manipulation of reprimand, at mild and severe levels. This gave us an opportunity to partially replicate the effects for publicity and reprimand found in Study 1 and to explore the importance of intentionality in creating the experience of humiliation and its associated negative thoughts, feelings, and behavioral intentions. As in Study 1, we included a number of items to tap participant shame and guilt as well as several other items of interest. We also speculated that, as in Franklin's experience, when a humiliated individual feels that his or her humiliation has been intentionally orchestrated, not only will reports of humiliation and its associated negative effects increase, but reports of moral emotions such as shame or guilt might actually be reduced.

## Method

### Participants

Two hundred-forty-eight undergraduate (182 female, 66 male) volunteers participated in the study as partial fulfillment of their introductory psychology course requirement. The study employed a 2 (reprimand: severe vs. mild)  $\times$  3 (publicity: intentional group publicity, unintentional group publicity vs. individual publicity) between-participants design. As in Study 1, we collapsed across two additional factors, vignette version (stealing vs. plagiarizing) and gender, because they did not produce any systematic effects.

### Procedure

The basic procedure was the same as Study 1. However, we altered the high publicity conditions such that the publicity either was intentionally engineered by the superior or came about accidentally. For example, in the plagiarizing scenario, in the intentional conditions, the professor deliberately brought in the rest of the lab group into his or her office before reprimanding John (Jody); in the unintentional conditions, the lab group accidentally overhears the reprimand with *only* John, and not the professor, being aware of this.

### Dependent Measures

A set of measures (scale values = 0 [*not at all*] to 6 [*extremely*]), averaged together, were designed to assess publicity (*evaluated in public by many others, several others knew of the wrongdoing, at least a few others were aware of the situation, evaluated in public*;  $\alpha = .82$ ), severity of reprimand (*felt ridiculed, scolded, ridiculed*;  $\alpha = .85$ ), intent (i.e., *felt like the person in charge intentionally publicized the situation, intentionally disgraced*;  $\alpha = .75$ ), humiliation (i.e., *felt humiliated, ridiculed, felt ridiculed*;  $\alpha = .74$ ), unfair treatment (i.e., *what happened was totally unfair, felt treated unfairly, unfairly treated*;  $\alpha = .85$ ), anger at others (i.e., *angry at others livid, angry at others involved*;  $\alpha = .76$ ), and desire for revenge (i.e., *wanted to get revenge on others, vengeful, wanted to get revenge for what happened*;  $\alpha = .85$ ). A set of three-item measures (averaged together) assessed shame (i.e., *ashamed, shame, felt ashamed*;  $\alpha = .74$ ), and a single item assessed deservingness (i.e., *felt like he got what he deserved*). A final, two-item measure tapped feelings of guilt (i.e., *guilty, apologetic*;  $\alpha = .68$ ). As in Study 1, additional items assessed other reactions (e.g., *self-focus, other-focus, and duration*, but they were not directly relevant for our purposes).

## Results

Separate two-way ANOVAs using the 2 (reprimand: severe vs. mild)  $\times$  3 (publicity: intentional group publicity, unintentional group publicity vs. individual publicity) between-participant design were conducted on all composite variables of interest.

### Manipulation Checks

**Publicity.** As expected, for the measure of publicity, there was a strong main effect for publicity, and Fischer's LSD tests indicated that participants in the intentional group publicity condition reported more publicity than did participants in the unintentional group publicity condition and in the individual publicity condition. There was also a significant difference between the unintentional group publicity condition and the individual publicity condition. In addition, there was a main effect for reprimand; participants in the severe reprimand condition reported significantly more publicity than did participants in the mild reprimand condition (see Table 3 for all main effects).<sup>3</sup>

**Reprimand.** Also as anticipated, for the measure of reprimand there was a strong main effect for reprimand

<sup>3</sup>As in Study 1, we reconducted the analysis for publicity and reprimand manipulation check using reprimand and publicity as a covariate respectively. Doing so did not alter the reported effects.

TABLE 3  
Main Effects for Humiliation and Related Measures as a Function of Publicity, Intent, and Reprimand (Study 2)

Main Effects	Publicity			Main Effect $F(2, 234)$	Reprimand		Main Effect $F(1, 234)$
	Intent $M (SD)$	Unintentional $M (SD)$	Low $M (SD)$		Severe $M (SD)$	Moderate $M (SD)$	
Manipulation checks							
Publicity	4.86 (1.08) <sub>a</sub>	4.12 (1.20) <sub>b</sub>	1.87 (1.69) <sub>c</sub>	117.58***	4.13 (1.64)	3.14 (1.95)	30.91**
Reprimand	4.40 (1.37) <sub>a</sub>	3.93 (1.42) <sub>b</sub>	3.36 (1.54) <sub>c</sub>	11.37***	4.46 (1.04)	3.30 (1.60)	43.41***
Intention	4.45 (1.39) <sub>a</sub>	2.80 (1.75) <sub>b</sub>	2.02 (1.57) <sub>c</sub>	65.60***	3.83 (1.65)	2.43 (1.82)	63.35***
Humiliation measures							
Humiliation	4.66 (1.25) <sub>a</sub>	4.11 (1.16) <sub>b</sub>	3.71 (1.25) <sub>b</sub>	8.82***	4.63 (0.94)	3.87 (1.40)	31.33***
Unfair treatment	2.65 (1.57) <sub>a</sub>	2.17 (1.52) <sub>b</sub>	1.70 (1.35) <sub>c</sub>	6.72***	2.84 (1.38)	1.55 (1.40)	31.26***
Anger at others	2.76 (1.56) <sub>a</sub>	2.42 (1.40) <sub>b</sub>	1.95 (1.39) <sub>b</sub>	5.52**	2.88 (1.35)	1.44 (1.48)	16.99***
Desire for revenge	2.01 (1.32) <sub>a</sub>	1.97 (1.33) <sub>a</sub>	1.39 (1.13) <sub>b</sub>	5.11*	2.20 (1.18)	1.37 (1.37)	22.19***

Note. All means (within rows) with different subscripts are significantly different at  $p < .05$ . Scales range from 0 (*not at all*) to 6 (*extremely*).  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .005$ .

such that participants in the severe reprimand condition reported more reprimand than did participants in the mild reprimand condition. There was also a significant main effect for publicity such that a series of Fischer's LSD tests indicated that participants in the intentional group publicity condition reported more reprimand than did participants in the unintentional group publicity condition, and in the individual publicity condition.

### Primary Analyses

As expected, an ANOVA revealed a main effect for publicity on each of the composite indices of interest (again, see Table 3 for all main effects). Follow up Fisher's LSD tests indicated that participants in the intentional group publicity condition reported significantly more humiliation, perceptions of unfair treatment, and anger than did participants in the unintentional group publicity condition and in the low publicity condition. There was also a main effect for

publicity on desire for revenge. Participants in the intentional and unintentional group publicity conditions did not differ from one another, but each differed from the individual publicity condition.

There was also a main effect for severity of reprimand such that participants in the severe reprimand condition reported more humiliation, unfair treatment, and anger than did participants in the mild reprimand condition. As in Study 1, there were no significant interactions for any of our primary measures.

It is also important to note that participants in the intentional group publicity severe reprimand cell reported significantly more humiliation, perceptions of unfair treatment, and anger at the agent of humiliation than did participants in all other cells. Individuals' desire for revenge was similar in the intentional and unintentional publicity severe reprimand cells, though these conditions were significantly greater than all other conditions (see Table 4 for all cell means and cell differences).

TABLE 4  
Cell Means and Differences for Humiliation, Shame, Guilt, and Related Measures as a Function of Publicity and Reprimand (Study 2)

	Intentional		Unintentional		Individual	
	Severe Rep $M (SD)$	Mild Rep $M (SD)$	Severe Rep $M (SD)$	Mild Rep $M (SD)$	Severe Rep $M (SD)$	Mild Rep $M (SD)$
Humiliation	5.02 (0.84) <sub>a</sub>	4.33 (1.46) <sub>b</sub>	4.85 (0.81) <sub>a</sub>	3.87 (1.31) <sub>b,c</sub>	4.27 (1.04) <sub>b,d</sub>	3.42 (1.29) <sub>c,e</sub>
Unfair treatment	3.26 (1.30) <sub>a</sub>	2.12 (1.62) <sub>b</sub>	2.00 (1.39) <sub>b,d</sub>	1.43 (1.33) <sub>c</sub>	2.45 (1.36) <sub>b,d</sub>	1.07 (.99) <sub>c,e</sub>
Anger at others	3.26 (1.26) <sub>a</sub>	2.42 (1.70) <sub>b</sub>	2.95 (1.26) <sub>a,b*</sub>	1.81 (1.37) <sub>c</sub>	2.42 (1.44) <sub>b,d</sub>	1.55 (1.23) <sub>c,e</sub>
Desire for revenge	2.36 (1.14) <sub>a</sub>	1.69 (1.40) <sub>b</sub>	2.45 (1.22) <sub>a</sub>	1.46 (1.27) <sub>b,c</sub>	2.00 (1.15) <sub>a,b</sub>	.91 (0.83) <sub>d</sub>
Shame	4.94 (1.17) <sub>a</sub>	4.89 (1.19) <sub>a</sub>	4.86 (1.02) <sub>a</sub>	5.24 (0.93) <sub>a</sub>	5.15 (0.74) <sub>a</sub>	4.85 (1.07) <sub>a</sub>
Guilt	4.31 (1.43) <sub>a</sub>	4.52 (1.28) <sub>a</sub>	4.55 (1.20) <sub>a</sub>	5.12 (0.80) <sub>b</sub>	4.63 (1.29) <sub>a,b</sub>	4.66 (1.29) <sub>a,b</sub>
Neg. self-attribution	3.95 (1.27) <sub>a</sub>	3.48 (1.24) <sub>a,b</sub>	3.71 (1.10) <sub>a,b</sub>	3.94 (1.13) <sub>a</sub>	3.83 (0.97) <sub>a</sub>	3.27 (1.30) <sub>b</sub>
Deservingness	3.36 (1.37) <sub>a</sub>	3.64 (1.34) <sub>a</sub>	3.59 (1.19) <sub>a</sub>	4.52 (1.11) <sub>b</sub>	3.84 (1.34) <sub>a,c</sub>	4.12 (0.97) <sub>b,c</sub>

Note. All means (within rows) with different subscripts are significantly different at  $p < .05$ . Scales range from 0 (*not at all*) to 6 (*extremely*). Rep = reprimand; Neg. = negative.

\* $p < .10$ .

### *Shame, Guilt, and Related Measures*

As we expected, reports of shame were not affected by any of our manipulations. Of interest, as we speculated, reports of guilt were diminished by increased publicity, intentionality, and reprimand. Reports of guilt were highest in the unintentional publicity mild reprimand cell and were significantly lower as the manipulations of publicity, intentionality, and reprimand were increased. Also, reports of deservingness were diminished as publicity, intentionality, and reprimand increased (see Table 4). There were no significant interactions for any of the shame- or guilt-related analyses.

### *Correlations*

Humiliation was moderately correlated with shame ( $r = .34, p < .05$ ) and slightly correlated with guilt ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ). Although humiliation was distinctive in its strong correlations with perceptions of unfair treatment ( $r = .46, p < .05$ ), anger ( $r = .47, p < .05$ ), and desire for revenge ( $r = .41, p < .05$ ), neither guilt nor shame was positively correlated with these measures. In fact, both were negatively correlated with revenge (guilt,  $r = -.21, p < .05$ ; shame,  $r = -.06, ns$ ), perceptions of unfair treatment (guilt,  $r = -.30, p < .05$ ; shame,  $r = -.14, p < .05$ ), and anger at others (guilt,  $r = -.25, p < .05$ ; shame,  $r = -.06, ns$ ). Guilt and shame were also distinctive in their positive correlations with deservingness (guilt,  $r = .51, p < .05$ ; shame,  $r = .37, p < .05$ ), whereas deservingness was unrelated to humiliation ( $r = -.12, ns$ ). A Hotelling's  $t$  test for differences between dependent samples correlations indicated that guilt ( $r = -.21$ ), was more negatively correlated with revenge than shame ( $r = -.06$ ),  $t(245) = 2.40, p < .05$ . Guilt was also more negatively correlated with anger ( $r = -.25$ ) than shame ( $r = -.06$ ),  $t(245) = 3.12, p < .05$ .

### *Discussion*

The results for Study 2 replicate and extend the results obtained in Study 1 and also help clarify the role of intentionality in producing the experience of humiliation and its associated negative effects. The manipulation of intentionality of publicity clearly aggravated reports of humiliation and the humiliation-related measures. Consistent with theoretical tradition and with Franklin's experience, intentionally publicized severe reprimand produced the greatest amount of humiliation, perceptions of unfair treatment, and anger. A desire for revenge was present in both the intentionally publicized and unintentionally publicized conditions, provided the publicity was accompanied by severe reprimand.

Humiliation was also related to our other measures in ways that help solidify an emerging picture for how humiliation is likely to be experienced. Even if the person in the vignette had committed a wrongdoing, experiencing humiliation was associated with feeling unfairly treated, angry (at the agent of the humiliation), and vengeful.

The findings for guilt, shame, and related measures were also of interest. Reports of guilt and deservingness *decreased* as publicity, intent, and reprimand were increased. Shame was not increased as a result of publicity, intentionality, or reprimand, though shame also did not decrease as the experience became more humiliating. This might be because shame, as opposed to guilt, has sometime been shown to be related to publicity (see Smith et al., 2002).

It is particularly important to emphasize that the findings for Study 1 and Study 2 emerged in the context of a wrongdoing. It would hardly be surprising for people to feel unfairly treated and angry if criticized when they had done nothing wrong or had blundered in some nonmoral way (e.g., tripped and spilled a drink; see Ellison & Harter, 2007). However, in the context of a wrongdoing, a degree of criticism would seem expected and deserved. The present findings suggest that ratcheting up the reprimand in a broad public context (and all the more so when intentionally created) creates results that are clearly at odds with the goals a humiliator might have. Our results strongly suggest that when people transgress they may well feel as though they deserve some form of punishment, but the pairing of publicity (especially orchestrated intentional publicity) with severe reprimand crosses a line in the minds of the wrongdoer and seems to push individuals from feeling like a wrongdoer to feeling like the wronged. The results of Study 2 suggest further that even if a humiliator has the goal of evoking moral emotions, such as guilt or shame, humiliating is a wrongheaded approach. Humiliating may even inhibit or reduce such useful feelings.

### STUDY 3

It is clear from Studies 1 and 2 that public reprimand, especially when severe, intentional, and broadly public, has strong links with the experience of humiliation and its associated negative effects. This appears to be the case despite the fact that a wrongdoing precipitated the reprimand, which, one could argue, implies that some sort of reprimand is actually deserved. Wrongdoers should take their medicine. However, there seem to be no beneficial effects of severely reprimanding someone in a public setting. Furthermore, as noted previously, there is also a very real possibility, as alluded

to in Studies 1 and 2, that not only will humiliation create anger and a desire for revenge, humiliation may also quash the existence of any useful moral emotions the wrongdoer may have been feeling before they were humiliated. This was clearly Franklin's experience.

Study 3 was designed to further explore the possibility that public condemnation leads to increasing the experience of humiliation (and its associated negative effects of hostility and vengeful urges) and a decreasing of the comparatively more sought after reactions of guilt and shame. This possibility of decreasing moral emotions, such as guilt or shame, is especially unfortunate because, as noted, such moral emotions "provide the motivational force...to do good and avoid doing bad" (Tangney et al., 2007, p. 347). If humiliation causes a transgressor to feel unfairly treated, then the transgressor may not focus on his or her self-related shortcomings and, consequently, may fail to address any self-related problems that may legitimately need modification.

In Study 3, we used an alternative to the vignette approach of Studies 1 and 2.

We asked participants to remember an occasion in which they did something morally wrong that was never discovered, discovered by another individual, discovered by another individual who reprimanded them, discovered by another individual who then reprimanded them in front of many other people, or discovered by another individual who reprimanded them maliciously in front of many other people. We examined how the degree of publicity and accompanying condemnation affected the experience of humiliation, guilt, shame, and associated feelings and behavioral intentions. We expected that increasing levels of public condemnation would serve to increase the experience of humiliation, unfair treatment, anger, vengeful urges, as well as possibly decrease feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse.

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

Two hundred fifty-five undergraduate students (122 male, 133 female) participated in the study in exchange for class credit. Data from an additional 7 participants were excluded from all analyses because these participants did not follow directions. Data from 1 participant were excluded after regression diagnostics revealed an erratic response pattern. The design of the study was a 2 (gender: male, female)  $\times$  5 (condition: private, individual no reprimand, individual reprimand, group reprimand, and group severe reprimand) between-participants factorial. Participants rated how "morally wrong" their transgression was, and these

ratings were included in the analyses as a covariate to control for expected variation in the degree of wrongness of the initial transgression across participants.<sup>4</sup> Because there were no effects for gender, we collapsed across male and female responses.

### *Procedure*

Participants were run in groups of 10 or less and were seated in positions far enough from each other to ensure privacy. Each participant received a questionnaire packet representing one of the five conditions and completed it at his or her own pace. Participants were asked to recall an experience corresponding to one of the conditions (private, individual no reprimand, individual reprimand, group reprimand, and group severe reprimand), to write down details of this experience, and then to complete a set of items assessing their experience. After completing the experiment participants placed their packet in a large manila envelope with many other packets. No identifying marks (except gender) were made on any of the packets and anonymity was assured to all of the participants. After turning in a packet participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

### *Dependent Measures*

Single item dependent measures assessed humiliation, unfair treatment, and desire for revenge. Sets of items measured guilt ("guilty," "guilty conscience," and "remorse";  $\alpha = .88$ ), shame ("ashamed" and "shame";  $\alpha = .94$ ), and anger ("anger" and "hostile";  $\alpha = .78$ ). Participants indicated how morally wrong they thought that their transgression was on a 15-point scale from 1 (*very mild*) to 15 (*very wrong*).

## Results

### *Humiliation and Humiliation-Related Measures*

*Humiliation.* An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) on reports of humiliation yielded a significant main effect for our primary manipulation, follow-up Fisher's LSD tests revealed that in every condition humiliation ratings were higher than in the private condition (see Table 5 for all results). The differences between the private condition and each other condition were statistically reliable at the .001 level, and ratings in the group reprimand and group severe reprimand

<sup>4</sup>Because participants remembered their own accounts, it is possible that the wrongness of their transgressions varied across conditions. To control for this variability, we used participants' perceptions of the wrongness of their transgression as a covariate in all the analyses. Doing so did not alter the pattern of findings.

TABLE 5  
Means and Standard Deviations for Humiliation, Shame, Guilt, and Related Measures (Study 3)

<i>Humiliation Measures</i>	<i>Private M (SE)</i>	<i>Ind. No Reprimand M (SE)</i>	<i>Individual Reprimand M (SE)</i>	<i>Group Reprimand M (SE)</i>	<i>Group Severe Reprimand M (SE)</i>	<i>Main Effect (4, 244)</i>
Humiliation	3.90 (0.65) <sub>a</sub>	8.31 (0.69) <sub>b</sub>	7.73 (0.65) <sub>b</sub>	9.84 (0.66) <sub>b</sub>	8.33 (0.68) <sub>b</sub>	11.42***
Anger	2.98 (0.49) <sub>a</sub>	4.79 (0.52) <sub>b</sub>	5.33 (0.49) <sub>b</sub>	6.34 (0.49) <sub>b</sub>	5.96 (0.51) <sub>b</sub>	5.26***
Unfair treatment	3.13 (0.50) <sub>a</sub>	4.35 (0.53) <sub>a,b</sub>	5.13 (0.50) <sub>b,c</sub>	5.85 (0.51) <sub>c</sub>	5.91 (0.52) <sub>c</sub>	5.21*
Desire for revenge	2.21 (0.43) <sub>a</sub>	2.55 (0.45) <sub>a</sub>	3.30 (0.43) <sub>a,b</sub>	2.77 (0.43) <sub>a</sub>	4.02 (0.44) <sub>b</sub>	2.69*
Guilt	9.41 (0.41) <sub>a</sub>	11.30 (0.44) <sub>b</sub>	10.13 (0.41) <sub>a,b</sub>	10.32 (0.42) <sub>a,c</sub>	9.45 (0.43) <sub>a,c</sub>	3.00*
Shame	8.90 (0.49) <sub>a,c</sub>	11.18 (0.52) <sub>b</sub>	9.97 (0.49) <sub>b,c</sub>	11.03 (0.49) <sub>b</sub>	9.46 (0.51) <sub>a,c</sub>	3.80**
Apologetic	6.29 (0.62) <sub>a</sub>	10.57 (0.65) <sub>b</sub>	10.08 (0.61) <sub>b</sub>	9.62 (0.62) <sub>b</sub>	7.98 (0.64) <sub>a</sub>	7.76***

Note. All means (within rows) with different subscripts are significantly different at  $p < .05$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .005$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

conditions were descriptively greater than in the individual no reprimand condition.

All other humiliation-related measures including anger, unfair treatment, and desire for revenge produced similar significant main effects. In each case, there was a general upward trajectory for reported anger, perceptions of unfair treatment, and desire for revenge with each increasing level of public exposure and reprimand (see Table 5).

#### *Guilt, Shame, and Related Measures*

In general, the results of the guilt, shame, and related measures shared a similar pattern. An ANCOVA on the measure of guilt produced a significant effect (again, see Table 5 for all results). Follow-up Fishers LSD tests between conditions revealed two significant differences. Specifically, differences existed for the private condition and the individual no reprimand condition and the individual no reprimand condition and the group severe reprimand condition. Guilt reactions showed a marked increase from the private condition to the individual no reprimand condition, and then a steady decrease over the subsequent three conditions. An ANCOVA on the measure of apology produced a main effect for public reprimand. Follow-up Fishers LSD tests revealed a sharp significant increase from the private to the individual no reprimand condition. The private condition was also significantly lower than the individual reprimand condition and the group reprimand condition but not the group severe reprimand condition.

An ANCOVA on the measure of shame produced a significant effect for and follow-up Fisher's LSD tests revealed statistically significant differences between the private and individual no-reprimand conditions such that participants in the individual no reprimand condition reported significantly more shame than participants in the private condition. Furthermore reports of shame were significantly reduced in the group severe reprimand condition.

#### *Correlations*

Humiliation was positively correlated with shame ( $r = .56, p < .05$ ) and guilt ( $r = .34, p < .05$ ) as well as with anger ( $r = .38, p < .05$ ) and feelings of mistreatment ( $r = .32, p < .05$ ). It was distinct in its significant positive correlation with desire for revenge ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ). Shame was moderately correlated with anger ( $r = .29, p < .05$ ) and unfair treatment ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ), but not with desire for revenge ( $r = .09, ns$ ). Guilt was negatively correlated with desire for revenge ( $r = -.18, p < .05$ ). Humiliation ( $r = .36$ ), shame ( $r = .36$ ), and guilt ( $r = .55$ ) were each significantly positively correlated with desire to apologize though shame,  $t(252) = 1.98, p < .05$ , and guilt,  $t(252) = 2.96, p < .05$ , more so than humiliation.

#### *Discussion*

The results of Study 3 provide additional evidence for the nature of the negative effects that can result from the public condemnation of a wrongdoer. As the intensity of the publicity and reprimand for an actual wrongdoing increased so did participant reports of humiliation (although the result for results were somewhat weaker than anticipated), anger, and the desire for revenge. Mere publicity, in the form of single individual who was present but did not reprimand the participant, as in previous results, increased reported humiliation. However, these reports did not appear laced with humiliation-related reactions. Only when the individual was reprimanded did these negative reactions begin to rise and to increase further still at successive levels of reprimand and publicity.

The pattern of effects for feelings of guilt and shame supported the prediction that the negative experience of humiliation and humiliation-related reactions, precipitated by public reprimand, would be accompanied by a decrease in these moral feelings, especially at high levels of reprimand and publicity. At these high levels,

feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse dropped to levels equivalent to what was reported when the wrongdoing went undiscovered.

One striking finding was that mere publicity, and to some extent publicity combined with mild reprimand, did not appear to produce the overly bitter reactions associated with more severe public reprimand. Indeed, the generally negative humiliation related feelings began to show some increase, yet so too did reports of guilt and shame. In fact, feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse peaked. And because these reactions were unaccompanied by the same level of intensity of anger, or vengefulness, these feelings could be construed as welcomed reactions. Thus, mere publicity may be at least somewhat beneficial in its effects on moral emotions. The private committing of a transgression worked against an acute sense of moral failing. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, merely publicizing moral failures does not appear to have deleterious effects, and Study 3 indicates that a little sunlight jump started moral emotions.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

These three studies enhance an understanding of how people are likely to respond to public exposure of a wrongdoing and the increasingly severe public condemnation of a wrongdoing. These studies also further an understanding of the nature of the experience of humiliation as well as the associated experiences of guilt and shame.

### Implications for Understanding the Experience of Humiliation

What causes people to feel humiliated? In the context of having committed a wrongdoing, the mere public exposure of the wrongdoing (to a single individual) appears enough for a person to report some level of humiliation. This could be seen in the Study 1, using the vignette methodology, and in Study 3, using remembered accounts, when comparing the private conditions with the individual no reprimand conditions. Clearly, public exposure of a wrongdoing, even at a minimal level, can lead to increased reports of humiliation.

Reports of humiliation increased further when public exposure broadened beyond a single individual (Studies 1, 2, and 3), when this broadening was intentionally created by another person (Study 2), and when it increased beyond mild reprimand (Studies 1, 2, and 3). Critically, however, the flavor of the experience was different from humiliation created by mere public exposure to a single individual. The manipulations of publicity and reprimand in Study 1 and Study 2, the manipulation of intentional publicity in Study 2, and various combinations

of publicity and reprimand created effects for the predicted humiliation-related variables of perceived unfair treatment, anger, and desire for revenge similar to what was found for humiliation.

This sense that the experience of humiliation can refer to either a hostile, vengeful experience or one that is more self-focused and lacking in hostility fits with a how the term "humiliation" is used in everyday language. One sees examples of people who report feeling "humiliated," and there seems little sense that they blame anyone for the experience. The source is simply that something about themselves, either a moral failing or a nonmoral characteristic, has come to public light. The experience may be equivalent to embarrassment writ large (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; R. S. Miller & Tangney, 1994). It is important, however, to emphasize how transformed the experience of humiliation becomes when influenced by intentional and broad publicity and by severe reprimand. Consistent with theoretical views on the nature of humiliation (as a negative, enraging experience; e.g., Elison & Harter, 2007; Gilbert, 1998; Jackson, 2000) and some prior research (Elison & Harter, 2007; Jackson, 2000), participants experiencing humiliation tended to perceive unfair treatment, to be angry with others, and to have vengeful urges. The present studies add to existing empirical work by helping to clarify the roles of publicity, the intentionality of publicity, and levels of reprimand in producing the experience of humiliation and its associated negative effects.

Future research might examine more fully these and other factors that further contribute to the experience of humiliation, such as the emotional tone of the reprimand, the length of time between reprimand and reported feelings of humiliation (e.g., Ferguson, Olthof, & Stegge, 1997), the precise roles of social image and self-evaluative threat (e.g., Rodriguez-Mosquera, Fischer, Manstead, & Zaalberg, in press), and the relevance of these issues for intergroup relations (e.g., Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006; Linder, 2006). Further research also needs to explore additional important distinctions between humiliation, shame, and guilt and other related experiences such as embarrassment (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; R. S. Miller, 1992; Parrott, Sabini, & Silver, 1988; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). Yet another important issue that should be examined concerns the distinction between the experience of humiliation based on a moral transgression, the focus of the current research, versus humiliation linked to a nonmoral characteristic (such as an inferior trait or physical feature). Judgments of what is moral or nonmoral may be difficult to demarcate (Tangney et al., 2007), however, we would expect "non-moral" humiliation to be even more intense in its negative effects than humiliation following a transgression,

as the humiliated person should feel the humiliation less deserved.

Studies 2 and 3 provided evidence that severe (especially when intentional) public reprimand may reduce guilt, shame, remorse, and a desire to apologize to levels equivalent to situations in which the transgression went undiscovered. Guilt suggests that transgressors have internalized the sense that what they did was wrong (e.g., Smith et al., 2002). Inducing such feelings is a goal distinct from punishment and provides another safeguard against repeating the offense. Therefore, these findings suggest that severe public reprimand will not serve this goal. Also, shame suggests that transgressors have determined that something about the self is flawed and needs adjustment. The experience of humiliation seems to diminish such feelings making it unlikely that even if a person does need to adjust something about the self, humiliation will not point a person in this direction. Humiliation, in short, appears to reduce the likelihood that people will feel enhanced guilt and shame, even in the context of their having transgressed.

### The Effects of Mere Public Exposure

The varied effects of introducing mere public exposure (to a *single* individual accompanied by *no* reprimand in the present studies) are also worth emphasizing. There were strong effects on reports of humiliation but, as noted, there was little evidence that the overall flavor of these reactions contain accompanying hostility toward others. On the contrary, mere, minimal public exposure seemed to heighten the wrongdoer's appreciation of the wrongness of their behavior. In addition to increasing guilt and shame (Study 3), it tended to breed a desire to apologize. Again, these reproaching, self-related reactions and reparative feelings and intentions were unaccompanied by hostility. Such a pattern of findings seem an appropriate response, given that the individual reporting their reaction had either done something wrong or imagined how someone who had done something wrong would feel. Thus, one important implication of the present research is that mere and minimal public exposure of a moral failing may have beneficial rather than negative consequences (e.g., Lindsay-Hartz, 1984; Rodogno, 2008).

### Humiliating Versus Shaming

The present findings raise the issue of whether humiliating another person is different from "shaming" them. Shaming, like humiliating, requires the active participation of another person. However, Loader (1998) suggested that shaming can have useful effects (e.g., "realistic self-appraisal... a sense of one's place in a

larger world"; p. 47), whereas humiliation is of less clear value. When people shame us, it seems important that there be a match between the nature of the shaming and the severity of the transgression. As noted earlier, the shaming must fit the wrongdoing. When people are humiliated, on the other hand, shaming has crossed a subjective line between appropriate criticism and inappropriate derogation.

It is interesting to note again that mild reprimand by a single individual was not associated with marked negative effects in the vignette studies. Similarly, in the remembered accounts of Study 3, negative effects began their upward trend but the effects were not extreme. These conditions might represent minimal level "shaming." The transgressors had their wrongdoings pointed out in a mild way in private. However, adding severe reprimand or group public exposure (even unintentional), created clear negative effects. Arguably, these additional features led to a territory where shaming ends and humiliation begins. Ironically, "shame" either remained constant (in the vignette studies) or tended to go down (in the remembered/imagined account studies.) when shaming "crossed the line."

The present research suggests that to examine the negative effects of moral emotions, researchers need to take into account how moral emotions are evoked. Shamed individuals are not necessarily feeling the same shame as people who are only made aware of a transgression. As research by Tangney, Marschall, Rosenberg, Barlow, and Wagner (1995) using couples indicated, shamed partners were significantly angrier, more likely to engage in aggressive behavior, and less likely to elicit conciliatory behavior from their perpetrating significant other. Thus, "shamed" (or humiliated) individuals are likely to be susceptible to the shame-rage spiral described by Lewis (1971) and Scheff (1987). Clearly, future research is needed to explore such issues.

### Implication for Legal Settings

The potential disconnect between the aims of shaming and its actual effects are captured by the controversies associated with the use of shaming in legal settings (see Rodogno, 2008, for a review). As legal scholars such as Massaro (1997) have pointed out, some theorists argue that the deliberate shaming of law breakers is an efficient, effective way of satisfying the public's desire for punishment as well as helping prevent the repetition of the law breaking. And, in recent years, there are numerous examples of communities allowing judges to introduce such measures as part of the penalty for crimes (e.g., special license plates for DUI). However, other theorists question these procedures on a number of grounds. First, there is little evidence that shaming

actually leads to lower recidivism (see Massaro, 1997, for a review), thus casting doubt on both efficiency and prevention claims. Second, it is unclear, psychologically, what the nature of the pain is that is being inflicted on people when they are being shamed. As the present findings suggest, the line between shaming and humiliation is crossed very quickly. Sufficient shame probably results from being placed in the public eye when caught committing a crime in the first place. Adding further public insult to this self-inflicted injury brings humiliation rather than shame. In so doing, this may produce a state of mind in the law breaker that may well increase the likelihood of recidivism rather than reduce it. Furthermore, because the effects of shaming are usually to humiliate, the punishment tends to lose any claim of proportionality that would normally be a goal in the meeting out of justice. Finally, when a society condones humiliation, even though it believes that is only shaming, it may end up violating norms of decency and therefore runs the risk of doing something shameful.

Because of the counterproductive and potentially indecent effects of shaming in legal settings, a number of legal scholars advocate and have implemented programs of “reintegrative shaming” that both blend appropriate levels of shaming with mechanisms that lead to integration of the wrongdoer back into the community (e.g., Braithwaite, 1989; Harris, 2006; Makkai & Braithwaite, 1994). This perspective emphasizes the importance of wrongdoers receiving the shame-inducing disapproval from those they have harmed. However, this disapproval is communicated respectfully without the goal of stigmatizing the wrongdoer as evil or inferior and with the aim of possible forgiveness rather than permanent lower status (Harris, 2006). This perspective fits well with the implications of the present results. Mere publicity at the individual level, accompanied by mild reprimand, increased shame but was not associated with negative consequences. However, the combination of severe and group public exposure tends to corrupt the profile of emotions and behavioral intentions.

### Strengths and Limitations of the Present Findings

Humiliation is a challenge to study in experimental settings, as we noted earlier. Each of the methodological approaches taken in the present studies has inherent methodological pitfalls (Parkinson & Manstead, 1993). However, the general consistency in the findings across approaches provides a degree of confidence in their validity (Smith & Harris, 2006). The vignette studies relied on participants taking the perspective of a hypothetical person and then imagining how this person would be feeling. The details of each vignette were designed to enhance the ease in which participants could take this perspective and perform with task of imagining a

hypothetical person’s perspective. We created male and female versions for this purpose as well, and we created two sets of vignettes focusing on two different wrongdoings. The results replicated across the two sets, amplifying the validity of the findings. In Study 3, we relied upon participant’s actual experiences as opposed to asking them to speculate about the experience of a hypothetical person. Therefore, the results of Study 3 nicely solidify the picture of humiliation, which emerged in Studies 1 and 2.

### CONCLUSIONS

These studies provide a clear portrait of how wrongdoers are likely to react to the public condemnation of their wrongdoing. Although mere publicity, unaccompanied by condemnation, appears to create agreeable moral emotions and a nonhostile form of humiliation, public condemnation is likely to create largely hostile forms of humiliation. Furthermore, public condemnation fails to increase moral emotions or consistently encourage intentions to make amends. In general, the experience of humiliation is associated with an antagonistic set of emotional reactions and motivations in wrongdoers, despite the fact of their wrongdoing. From the point of view of the wrongdoer, public condemnation appears to shift the focus of the event from his or her own wrongdoing to the perceived mistreatment by the agent of the condemnation.

This was certainly the case for Franklin. Although the British solicitor general probably felt justified in his public condemnation of Franklin, his approach ultimately had profoundly negative repercussions (from the point of view of the British Empire). The evidence from Franklin’s experience, theoretical treatments, and the current studies each strongly suggest that humiliating a moral transgressor is a wrongheaded, counterproductive approach to punishment.

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