THE COMPLEXITIES OF ‘SHAME’: AN EXPLORATION OF HUMAN CONNECTION

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

This dissertation is about one of the most controversial emotions: shame. The foundational question is: What constitutes the experience of shame as both an emotion and a dynamic of power, with an emphasis on women’s gender roles? The topic is inspired by my lived experience. Expressions of my narratives and those of others are integral to this work.

The discussion begins with an overview of the history of ideas on emotions and shame. Shame was considered more important than other emotions because of its evaluative cognitive dimension. The overview highlights the continuum of inherited scholarly and culturally based gender stereotypes.

Through exploring current interdisciplinary scholarly research on shame, a common theme emerged: the irrevocable presence of the ‘other’ in the shame experience. Discussions around this theme led to two basic principles: 1) the individual and the social
are deeply intertwined, 2) shame is a declaration of one’s interest, need to belong, and love. The discussions show the significance of our connection with others initiated through various expressions: telling one’s story, art, and writing. When one’s expressions are not aligned with social norms, we are often shamed and alienated. This is shame’s painful and controlling power. However, I argue that acknowledging shame’s pain can instigate critical thinking about our roles within existing social structures. Shame’s productive face allows us to reflect on our ideals in relation to whom and what we love, what interests us, and where we belong.

My conclusion highlights the intriguing complexity of shame’s two faces: the controlling and the productive. One negates and excludes; the other motivates critical self-reflection.

I end with the implications of my work for education. I discuss the importance of: 1) lived experiences, 2) culturally relevant narratives, 3) emotional learning, 4) recognizing the shame embedded in refugees’ experiences, and 5) in grading systems.
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The topic of this dissertation would not have seen the light if it hasn’t been for the bold encouragement of my late mentor and professor Roger Simon who gently nudged me to face shame head on. The topic was born in his class and in his presence, and our preliminary discussions created the backbone of the dissertation. I am forever grateful to his brief yet impactful presence in my life.

My sincere gratitude to my family members, my father Hassan Kahil and my mother Hadia Hamade. I am in awe of their ability to support, encourage, and keep
pushing me to have a Doctorate degree, when such a move creates challenging
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I dedicate this dissertation to the most important and resilient women and man in my life: My mother Hadia, my daughter Louloua, and my son Nour. May the shame you encounter guide you into what you genuinely care for, the places you want to belong to, and what and who is deserving of your love.
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Chapter One:

Introduction

Don’t walk like that. 3aib.

Don’t ask questions when you’re told what to do. 3aib.

What are you wearing? 3aib. Don’t sit like that. 3aib.

Maan Jalal (Fifty shades of ‘3Aib”)

When translating the word shame to Arabic, the closet one can get to is the word “3aib” (pronunciation of 3 as guttural A). In his online blog article ‘Fifty Shades of 3Aib” (April, 2017), Maan Jalal defines the word 3aib as “a set of decorums we are expected to live by in order to reach the goal of appearing, at all times, the ideal person or family to the outside world” (Jalal, 2017). Jalal’s blog is an expression of a common reality about one of the most controversial emotions, shame (or 3aib). The above quote is an all too familiar reality as I was raised hearing these sayings and still continue to experience in part of the world I originally come from: Lebanon1. These statements are specifically addressed to women.

When recounting and listening to personal histories and childhood experiences in Lebanon, the word 3aib (shame2) seems to be an inseparable part of most conversations. Whether at a personal level or during group conversations, shame (articulated verbally or experienced viscerally) lingers on. Whichever way I think of and speak about shame,

1 Lebanon as a context will be a point of reference throughout this dissertation. Narratives from Lebanon are a representation of lived experiences that ground the theoretical academic discussions I chose for the dissertation.

2 In the context of the dissertation, I will use the English word “shame” to discuss this emotion. My purpose behind starting with the Arabic translation of the word ‘shame’ is to attract the reader’s attention to this word’s contextual roots.
context tends to play a central part. Memories that bring forth feelings of shame are directly related to the cultures I live in. The relationship between shame and context is especially highlighted during conversations with my woman-identified friends. These conversations shed light on the connection of shame to duties and responsibilities expected by each person’s community, culture, and religion. Whether or not we explicitly agree with the values of our cultures and religions, many of us live by its norms (related but not limited to gender) and take them for granted. When we feel shame we are reminded of our fragility and need for connection and belonging. Such feelings leave us baffled by the contradictions between what we think is right for us and what we ‘ought’ to continue doing in order to secure this sense of belonging and connection.

**Context and Question**

My interest in this topic is related to my general interest in emotions and the way they are portrayed and interpreted in different contexts. In Lebanon, most emotions are ascribed to women and children and characterized as a sign of weakness. Such perceptions impact access to positions in the public realm, gendering public service positions as unsuitable for women due to their emotionality. As a result, many women learn these patriarchal rules about emotions and seek instead to embody the role of the “rational” and “collected” individual. Through years of practice, most become experts at hiding their emotions and shying away from the connotations of being “emotional”, often labeled as “irrational”, “shameful”, and “hysterical”.

Although my interest in emotions was reinforced by my exposure to academic discourses and readings on the topic, my specific interest in shame is related to my personal history and lived experiences. I was raised on cultural stories (transmitted down
the generations) that emphasize the role of shame in family and community relations. Most of these stories were about women and the impact their shameful behaviors had on their families and communities. Statements like “shame on you!”, “she should be ashamed of herself!”, and “you have no shame!” form a large portion of my culture’s linguistic descriptions around community and consequently its people’s worldview.

Choosing shame as a topic for my dissertation is the result of one specific lived experience during my Doctoral studies. In one of my graduate courses and in an attempt to explain an academic article on pain, I referenced a personal story about the Lebanese civil war as well as a story about the 2006 Israeli invasion of the country. Although the preparation for my presentation seemed smooth, the telling of the story proved otherwise. I found myself crying in front of my classmates and teacher. The tears that welled up took me by surprise, but the shame that engulfed and accompanied me for some time afterwards was overwhelming. I could not go to class for a while and look my teacher and classmates in the eye.

Telling my story, along with the feelings that emerged, peaked my interest in shame as a topic of research. I realized that my shame is related to crying in public and to my self-judgment as weak, irrational, and not collected enough. I also realized the presence of many layers of shame in me, many of which are related to my worldview about the roles I embody and expectations I have of myself as a woman.

The experience made me wonder about story telling and the way it can elicit hidden pain and shame. I wondered about the ways in which shame creates and controls boundaries between the self (a woman) and others (people, norms, society, academia etc.). I wondered about the judgments I carry regarding others and myself, about emotionality
and subjectivity. Most importantly, I wondered about the different roles we embody as women, the expectations adhered to them, and the implicit (and sometimes explicit) shame we feel when we do not meet these expectations.

Butler (2005) explains the necessity of telling one’s story as a way of giving an account of oneself. She also explains how the act of telling reveals our deep interconnectedness, even when such realization is suffused with pain and shame. The shame I felt upon my retelling of my experiences of war was experienced only in the presence of others whom I care for and want to connect with. This background and personal account of shame, women’s roles and expectations, along with the interconnectedness to the social, bring about the major question of the thesis: What constitutes the experience of shame as both an emotion and a dynamic of power, specifically with regards to women’s gender roles?

The Argument

I start my discussion about the thesis question with the following premise: Shame is a powerful emotion and is used as a tool for control over behavior and roles, on both an individual and group level. I extend this to argue that shame is used as a tool of control over women’s roles and behaviors in ways that keep the patriarchal status quo strong and alive. However, as my argument around the controlling powers of shame develops, another component emerges: shame’s productive powers. Accordingly, my argument

3 In Chapter Four, I explain in details Butler’s ideas on narration and its relevance to connection with others. Her discussion on pain and shame is related to what she calls the ‘opacity of the self’, or to the individual’s inability of full narration.

4 In the context of the thesis, by “the social” I mean: norms, rules, and the social body that one relates to and lives through.
advances to include two faces of shame: one that is painful and controlling and another that is productive and generative.

My initial argument, or the idea of shame as a tool of control, starts to unfold through an analysis of the history of emotions and shame. The background reveals the general devaluation of emotions across historical eras, and its connection to women (and the subsequent devaluation of women). My historical analysis illuminates the primacy of reason and its connection to men as well. I argue that such knowledge is embedded in and emphasized through cultural shaming practices that reinforce gender roles. My argument confirms the controlling power of shame. The discussions also reveal how experiences of shame involve cognitive evaluative components about the self as less than others and defective. Such cognitive processes are painful and felt at physical and psychological levels. The pain created is two-fold: it isolates the individual from the social because the individual is defective and non-conforming, while also isolating the individual from one’s self—especially when the shamed believes in one’s defects.

My discussions bring forth an important theme: The persistent presence of the other in the shame experience. I discuss that the other in the shame experience can be present or absent, one or many, and represented in the cultural norms we live through. Discussions on this theme lead to an important realization on the tight and inevitable connection between the individual and the social/Other--a connection especially highlighted in shame experiences. I continue to argue that not any other can elicit shame; the other has to be someone or something we are interested in, long to belong to, care for or love. Shame is a result of the interruption of our interest, need to belong, and love. The above discussion on the connection between the individual and the social, and the
interplay between shame, interest, need to belong, and love expands my initial argument and reveals another face of shame: a productive one. Shame’s productivity lays in its ability to alert us to the possibility of losing what we love and care about. Shame’s pain helps us reflect and critically think about what shames us, what we are interested in and care for; things that we often take for granted. This movement between shame’s controlling pain and its reflective generation is what makes it productive.

My initial argument about shame develops as follows: Shame is a strong emotion and a power dynamic that works as both a tool of control that keeps the status quo intact, and as a productive power that allows us to rethink social structures, norms, and worldviews we carry and accept. The significance of my argument on shame stems from its acknowledgment of two faces: its controlling (negative) and productive (positive) faces/aspects. My argument reveals how shame’s power dynamic can painfully exclude individuals and groups from the social, but can elicit critical reflective thinking about power structures embedded in all the norms (social, religious, cultural, familial, factional, tribal, etc.) we live in. Most importantly, my research brings a fascinating significance on the connection between shame and love. It shows the impact love has on marginalization and exclusion. It makes us wonder about how we impose our worldviews in the name of love, and the price we pay for refusing worldviews imposed on us in the name of love.

My argument allows us to rethink political structures: our own and those belonging to others we love and emulate.

Overview of the Chapters

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction. Chapter Two is a historical overview of the history of emotions and shame. Chapter
Three is a move towards the conceptualization of shame, while Chapter Four develops my thesis argument on shame as a phenomenon. The concluding chapter revisits the main argument along with an analysis of my argument’s significance and implications for education.

Chapter Two - Emotions and Shame: Historical Accounts

Chapter Two is comprised of two major parts, the history of ideas on emotions and the history of ideas on shame. In both parts, I present a summary of the Western history of ideas on emotions and shame. The overview covers the following eras: Classical Greek, Judeo-Christian/Medieval, and Post Medieval/Scientific. The summary on the history of ideas on emotions shows a prominence of reason over emotions and explains the impact of mainstream epistemology on current views on rationality and subjectivity as it connects to gender roles. In each era, I focus on prominent scholars/philosophers whose work influenced mainstream epistemology and emotions.

I start this part with the Classical Greek era. I provide examples and interpretations on how emotions were viewed by some of the Greek philosophers of the time (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle). Generally, I find that emotions were not considered to be a separate discipline of study and were devalued. For example; Plato described emotions as passions and considered them to be a form of “destructive animal passion” in

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5 This dissertation does not seek to provide a universal history of ideas on emotions. Indeed, this section barely scratches the surface. It only focuses on the Western history of ideas on emotions along with the classical Greek philosophers’ influence and ideas. Yet, it is important to point out that the historical progression of ideas (on emotions as otherwise) is not linear. Ideas about emotions are borrowed and used by theorists as seen fit for the time, context, and discipline.

6 Plato’s parable of the chariot and steeds shows the primacy of reason (figured as the charioteer) as it controls “baser” passions and desires (figured as the steeds). Although Aristotle gave more attention to emotions, he too emphasized the importance of reason, presenting a cognitive evaluation of emotions.
need to be checked and controlled by reason\(^7\) (Lazarus, 1999, p. 5). For Aristotle, emotions are a combination of the ‘cognitive’ and ‘affective’ life of humans; they are “evaluations of events in term of their importance” (Oatley, 2004, p. 43). The discussions show that during the classical period, the primacy of reason (the ability to think rationally, objectively, with control over emotions) was the common theme\(^8\).

Following the classical Greek is the Judeo-Christian era, marking the beginning of the medieval period. This era saw a shift to a greater valuation of the faith in God, as revealed by the scriptures. However, the influence of Plato and Aristotle’s ideas on prominent theologians\(^9\) thought was clear. The classical Platonic duality of mind and body was adapted into the dichotomy between mind and soul. Accordingly, “a mediaeval philosopher theologian had to choose whether to place emotions in the soul or in the body…” (Lyon, 1980, p. 27). Both Saint Augustine and Saint Aquinas, theologians/philosophers\(^10\) of the time, believed in the prominence of reason over emotions. For example, Saint Augustine (trans. 1948) believed that the only way to appropriately experience affections is when they are directed towards one principle: love - mainly love of God! Although Saint Aquinas (trans. 1970) recognized three levels of the soul (intellectual, vegetative, and sensitive), he gave primacy to the first.

\(^7\) In this chapter, I will present more examples on the classical philosophers’ interpretations of emotions and the primacy of reason and objectivity.

\(^8\) Although Stoics and Epicureans (schools of Greek philosophical thought succeeding Plato and Aristotle’s period) gave different interpretations of emotions, they followed in their predecessors’ footsteps emphasizing on the importance of reason in controlling emotions. For a full account of that period’s prominent schools of thought on emotions, refer to the works of William Lyon (1980).

\(^9\) I reference the impact of Classical Greek thought on mainly Saint Augustine and Saint Aquinas, two theologians of the time.

\(^10\) The works of both St. Augustine and St. Aquinas were predominant in this period. Both theologians’ works were impacted by Plato and Aristotle.
The scientific revolution/post medieval era followed the above epoch with a characteristic emphasis on observation and experimentation. Discussions in this section show how this era’s focus on objectivity and cognition further diminished the importance of emotions. In this section, I present scholarly overviews on emotions from four post-medieval schools of thought: Cartesian, behavioral, psychoanalytic, and existential. The discussions show the Cartesian influence on the Western thought for decades afterwards. For Descartes, emotions are actions of the body that, when impressed on the mind result in passions of the soul. It is mind and reason that make us uniquely human. (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006, p. 8).

Further discussions in the chapter on various schools of thought continue to show the primacy of reason over emotions. For example: in psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud’s work seemed to mark a return to emotions. However, Freud’s interest was not in emotions per se but in understanding the roots of his patients’ emotional disorders. Through analyzing their narratives, Freud hoped to bring their maladaptive behavior to the fore. Hence, the significance of the intellectual objective achieved through the analysis of narratives highlights the primacy of reason in Freud’s work. Similarly, the existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1948) affirms the prominence of reason over emotion. He asserts that we are rational beings capable of controlling our emotions and making rational choices. Emotions are valuable only insofar as they help us transform the world to fit our desires.

This history of ideas on emotions reveals a common theme: emotions are of a lower standard than reason. The discussions also show that women and men’s roles are constructed largely on the view that emotionality is irrational, illogical, and primarily a
feminine characteristic. Highlighting the historically dominant views about emotions illustrates their impact on knowledge construction and is especially important for my study on shame. In patriarchal societies, such views on emotions are spread through many institutions (religion, family, cultural groups, schools/universities, and so on), reinforcing the construction of certain beliefs, and reinforced through shame.

I, then, explore the history of ideas on shame specifically, which highlights the power shame has in keeping social norms/expectations intact. Due to the belief in shame’s cognitive evaluative components, Classical Greek and Medieval philosophers considered it to be better than other emotions. In this section, I discuss how shame is considered to be a learning tool because it is a reaction to the exposure of one’s ills and defects in front of an ‘Other.’ For instance, Socrates used shaming elenchus in public to teach his interlocutors, while Plato and Aristotle believed that the fear of shame is a deterrent of reprehensible actions. This section also shows the intersection of Augustine and Aquinas’ work on shame with the works of Plato and Aristotle. Both theologians express the significance of public exposure and disclosure in shame, discuss the learning experience in shame, and consider it to be a deterrent force. The above-mentioned philosophers’ ideas on shame illustrate the following: the presence of the other is a fundamental part of the shame experience and shame is most painful when faults and bad deeds are exposed in the presence of others we care for and are important to us.

Due to the post-medieval era’s obsession with the scientific nature of emotions, research and discussions on shame almost disappeared from scholarly work for a period

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11 By certain beliefs, I refer to those that reinforce men’s supremacy over women in most aspects of public and private life. In many patriarchal societies, Lebanon included, such beliefs originate from certain interpretations of holy texts and from following outdated rules adopted during the eras of Ottoman and French colonization. Specific examples will be pinpointed throughout the chapter.
of time from Descartes to Freud. I discuss that despite the gentle reemergence of shame in the work of Sigmund Freud, it was still devalued and described as a characteristic only of women. However, shame was resurrected through the works of two important scholars of the modern scientific era: Jean Paul Sartre (1956) and Helen Lewis (1971). I offer a detailed description and discussion of both scholars on shame, which focus largely on shame’s cognitive components. However, Sartre’s discussion is most significant to this dissertation. I show how his interpretations of shame bring forth an ontological component to the emotion similar to that discussed by Classical Greek philosophers: shame elicits a cognitive evaluative component about the self in relation to its positioning to an other. This recurrent theme became an important premise that led to the original expansion of my argument on shame as a tool of control.

Chapter Three: Towards A Conceptualization of Shame

This chapter is a review and discussion of current scholarly work on shame. In this chapter, the scholarly work I discuss informs different themes around shame. The chapter is comprised of three sections: a comparison between shame and guilt, current debates around shame from different disciplines, and a discussion of shame as an ontological and intersubjective experience. The three sections provide a common theme: the irrevocable presence of the other in the shame experience. This leads to two general conclusions that inform my conceptualization of shame in chapter four: 1) There is an inseparable connection between the individual and the social; and 2) though felt by individuals, experiences of shame are a declaration of interest, care, and need for belonging.
In this chapter, I include personal narratives that are based on my lived experiences and inform specific topics and discussions about shame. Moreover, the narratives bring context to the academic theoretical discussions about shame and remind us of the original argument: shame is a tool of control over women’s roles. For example, when talking about humiliation and anger as manifestations of shame, I recount two stories, one about my neighbor and another about my brother.

I start the chapter with a comparison between shame and guilt. The comparison helps demystify the common confusion about the two concepts. It shows that although both emotions involve some kind of evaluative judgment, the focus of each evaluation differs. It also indicates that in guilt, one focuses on the (wrong) behavior, while in shame one focuses on the (wrong) personal self. The discussions indicate that shame is the only experience directed inwards toward its subject and not outwards toward an “Other”.

Although both emotions are different in their evaluative focus, they can be felt simultaneously about the same event. One emotion could start where the other ends and both can get interweaved in the human psyche. I hence conclude that attempts to make a descriptive distinction between both emotions are not simple.

In the second section of this chapter, I present an in-depth examination of shame as an emotion. I discuss different and differing scholarly definitions and interpretations of shame, characteristic reactions of shame experiences impressed on the body and psyche, and different manifestations of shame experiences (like humiliation, embarrassment, fear, or rage). The scholarly discussions in this section are divided into two camps: a majority that considers shame a negative emotion and another that considers it a beneficial and necessary experience for humanity. What both camps have in common is their definition
of shame as an embodied experience felt at multiple levels (physical, emotional, cognitive). However, while some scholars consider shame to be an experience that creates isolation, self-negation, inferiority, and pain, others consider it a moment of discovery of the self, what makes us human. While some discussions conclude that shame is a tool for social control focused on the individual self that does not conform to social ideals, other scholars consider the ‘exposure’ and connection to others through shame as a tool for self-knowledge and ontological understanding. Accordingly, the different scholarly discussions further assert the complexity of shame, indicating that it is a complex phenomenon that can neither be theoretically described nor prevented from occurring. However, in spite of the different scholarly views on shame, a common theme has been persistent: The irrevocable presence of the Other in the shame experience.

The third section tackles the experience of shame as an ontological and intersubjective phenomenon. My discussions in this section are informed and inspired by the works of the existential philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. According to Sartre, only through the shaming gaze of an Other we are alerted to our presence in the world as an object amongst other objects and not at its centre. Based on my discussions on Sartre, I argue that shame is ontological because it is based on the discovery of an important part of the self. However, the only way one discovers this part of the self is through an encounter with an Other; rather, imposed upon by the Other’s gaze making shame intersubjective. Once again, these two aspects about shame bring to light and reaffirm the inevitable presence of the Other in the shame experience. Further discussions in this section show a scholarly consensus regarding shame: it alerts us to our presence in the world in connection to an Other. The discussions also reveal that shame is more prevalent
in personal connections. Hence, my discussions in this chapter confirm a strong ontological ‘being-in-the-world’ experience, one that bears a strong reference to the physical, relational, and social aspects of an individual’s world. I conclude by showing that the individual and social are intertwined and entangled through the mere existence of an Other whom we encounter through love, care, and interest; factors that allow shame to crawl through the individual and social psyche.

Chapter Four: Shame, A Controlling, Productive and Inevitable Human Phenomenon

This chapter is a personal account and synthesis of my understanding of shame as an emotion and power dynamic, which leads to my argument about the two faces of shame. The discussions are based on the two conclusions I arrive at in the previous chapters: 1) There is an inevitable and inseparable connection between the individual and the social; and 2) shame experiences are a declaration of interest, care, and need for belonging. In this chapter, the entanglement between the individual and the social is further analyzed showing how it is inevitable, especially when the Other is someone/something we are interested in and love. The discussions and analysis of the above conclusions lead to my synthesis on shame as a phenomenon with two faces: controlling and productive. However, although some of the scholarly discussions in this chapter do not directly discuss issues related to social gender roles, I include multiple narratives that make the link between both explicit. The narratives present a clear example of how shame’s power dynamic is both controlling and productive. This is particularly evident in social gender roles, practices, and social expectations in the
context of Lebanon. The narratives include examples of shame brought on by the need to belong, our interests, and loves. Such narratives map the two faces of shame.

My synthesis on shame is inspired and informed by the works of the following authors: Judith Butler (2004/2005), Kelly Oliver (2004), Elspeth Probyn (2005), and Sarah Ahmed (2004/2008). I divide the chapter into three sections leading to my synthesis of shame as a power dynamic between two faces: controlling and productive.

The first section addresses the intimate connection between the research and the researcher, the centrality of lived experiences, and the necessity of narration as a form of ‘self INAUGURATION’ into the social. Personal narratives bridge the dissertation’s theoretical discussions with the reality of one’s day-to-day experiences. In this section, I utilize Judith Butler’s discussions on the necessity of narration, ‘telling one’s story,’ as a form of self INAUGURATION into the social realm. The discussions in this section affirm my first conclusion on the inseparable connection between the individual and the social in shame.

The second section further highlights the inevitable connection between the individual and the social. In this section, I utilize the work of Kelly Oliver to show the importance of sublimation12, expressing one’s desires in order to make meaning for oneself, and belonging to the social. I describe how an individual’s expressions are only accepted so long as they are aligned with set cultural ideals and expectations. I discuss the inability to fully sublimate and define oneself within cultural boundaries and expectations bring about feelings of shame. I explain how by being ‘different’ from the social, the individual is perceived as defective and is marginalized and shamed by others.

12 In this dissertation and based on Kelly Oliver’s (2005) work, the meaning of sublimation expands from its Freudian psychoanalytic definition as directing sexual desires into artistic expressions. Oliver refers to sublimation as an expression of one’s needs, wants, and individuality. It is a necessity for subjectivity and meaningful participation in the social. For more reading on Oliver’s definition of sublimation refer to her 2014 book ‘The Colonization of Psychic Space’ page XX.
Yet, at the same time this individual begins to ‘believe’ in her deficiencies and keeps longing for the very social structures that reject her as an inferior. My discussion reveals shame’s strong controlling face and power, wherein it controls its subjects’ emotional psyche in tandem with the subject’s positioning within external existing structures.

Section three continues to unpack the two faces of shame. My discussions are based on the second conclusion: shame is a declaration of interest, need to belong, and love. My discussion then expands my original argument on shame as a tool of control to reveal another aspect: its productive face. The discussions show that the productivity of shame stems from its ability to elicit critical thinking regarding the same structures that use shame as a tool of control. I argue that shame is strongly felt in connection to what we care for, what interests us, where we need to belong, and what we love. I expand on Probyn’s ideas on the connection between shame and interest: shame does not indicate the end of interest but its continuation. I utilize Ahmed’s work on love to show who we love is related to the ideals and values the people closest to us teach us as we grow up. I argue that failing to live up to such ideals signifies a failure of love towards others and self, which in turn elicits the controlling sense of shame. However, I argue that shame in love does not imply love’s end. It affirms love’s ‘continuation’ despite its interruption. In this sense, shame becomes productive. I discuss that shame can only be productive when it demands acknowledgment, i.e. when its pain urges a reassessment of ourselves in connection to what we are interested in, what we long to belong to, and who and what we love despite the shame that love elicits.

I end this section by asserting that shame’s productive face does not eliminate its controlling one. Instead, there is a fluid movement between the two sides. This movement
is an expression of our humanity and is inevitable as we keep struggling between new and old ways of thinking, as we continue to long for a sense of belonging.

Chapter Five: Shame, Conclusion Significance: Implications for Education and the Future

Discussions in this chapter compile some of the major points about the experience of shame: its complexity, intensity, and the impossibility of a universalized definitive description. The discussions are enriched with shame narratives that declare the importance of the contexts and values we carry, all of which make the shame experience unique to each individual and culture. The narratives are related to women’s gender roles in Lebanon, representing examples on the power dynamic shame creates in patriarchal societies, where women are on the margins. The chapter is divided into three sections: section one reiterates my conclusion on shame and offers a summary of the dissertations’ chapters. Section two is a discussion on the significance of my conclusion on shame. Section three includes a discussion on the implication of my work on shame for education and recommendations for future research on the topic.

I start section one with a reiteration of my conclusion about the phenomenon of shame. The conclusion speaks to the dissertation’s central question: What constitutes the experience of shame as both an emotion and a dynamic of power, with an emphasis on women’s gender roles? I reiterate the two major elements/conclusions that constitute the experience of shame: 1) the intertwined and inseparable relationship between the individual and the social, and 2) since this relationship is embedded in interest, the need to belong, and love, shame becomes a persistent partner. I explain how my original argument about shame as a tool of control over roles and expectations, especially for
women, expands to include another component. I argue that shame’s controlling pain can create immediate and involuntary reflections about the same structures that control and marginalize, showing its productive face. I highlight the importance of utilizing my narratives to show shame’s power dynamic and conclude by announcing shame to be a phenomenal emotion of two faces: a controlling and productive one.

In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the significance of my conclusion on shame: 1) Shame is neither a negative nor positive phenomenon, but an experience of two faces: controlling and productive. I discuss how taking one side diminishes shame’s uniqueness, keeps it obscure, and does not acknowledge its productivity. 2) Including lived experiences/narratives within scholarly discussions makes my research accessible to the academic and non-academic communities. 3) I argue for the productivity of shame which is a unique phenomenon. It is one that does not function as a deterrent of behaviors not accepted by the norms, but one that invites reassessment of the very same norms that shame and marginalize because of ‘non-normative’ ways of expression and behaviors. 4) Presenting a productive face to shame brings hope and possibility to what is considered to be a negative phenomenon, and disrupts archaic social structures, norms, and beliefs. 5) The unique connection between love and shame explains the power dynamic shame imposes on the psyche in the name of love. I argue that such realization brings forth shame’s productive face, as well as hope and agency to many marginalized groups, especially women. 6) The fluid movement between shame’s two faces shows our ability to explore new possibilities, take risks, and keep moving in the flux of interest, care, longing to belong, and love. These are components that have the power to shake us free
of shame’s controlling side, while being reflective of the productivity of our choices and actions.

In the third section of the chapter, I discuss the implications of my dissertation for the field of education. I explain my stance on education as a hybrid of ‘knowledges’ learnt from family, culture, streets, neighborhood, religious groups, schools, and colleges. I identify five implications for education: 1) The importance of lived experiences and subsequent worldviews. I explain how staying cognizant of others’ lived experiences can decrease the shame elicited by clashing worldviews. 2) The importance of telling and listening to each other’s narratives (the good and the painful). This can become a teaching tool that allows different and differing voices to be heard, and decrease the sense of shame and exclusion. 3) The significance of emotional learning as a way to decrease and eliminate prejudice, especially against women’s roles and participation. I suggest ways that such learning can take place at all levels. 4) The importance of paying attention to the intimate connection between the refugees’ experience and shame. I suggest ways to make the refugees’ transition to Canada easier and hence decrease the crippling power shame can have on their adjustment and sense of wellbeing. 5) Recognizing the shaming implicit in grading/evaluation. I discuss how grading is, for the most part, considered to be an evaluation of the self and can impose shame not only on its subject but the whole family.

I end this section acknowledging that there is a lot to discover about the power of shame. My dissertation scratches the surface and stresses that more in-depth research regarding this unique phenomenon is necessary moving forward. I suggest the following regarding future research about shame: 1) Contextual quantitative and comparative
(across cultures) studies about shame and gender roles, sampling groups of people from both genders, 2) Research on the connection between shame and migration, 3) Research analyzing Middle Eastern authors’ literary and academic work on shame, 4) In depth research on the influence of the controlling face of shame on learning and education, and 5) Research on the connection between shame and the Arts (poetry, music, painting, and creativity).
Chapter Two

Emotions and Shame Historical Accounts

Introduction

Historically, emotions were not considered as important human capacities traits or phenomena. In this midst, shame, as an emotion, has been consistently overlooked. This might have contributed to the absence of shame from scholarly work for a period of time. Another reason for shame’s disappearance might be attributed to the negative feelings associated with pain, either viscerally experienced or witnessed. Although feelings brought on by shame are generally considered to be negative and painful, numerous scholars argue for its positive implications. The debate on the positivity/negativity of shame experiences is thoroughly discussed in chapter three. However, many of the debates are rooted in the history of ideas on emotions and shame, the subject of my discussion in this chapter.

The personal narratives shared in chapter one reflect mainstream views on emotions as a female characteristic, a view rooted in the history of ideas on emotions. Accordingly, the overview reveals how reason and emotions are viewed historically, where reason is aligned with objectivity and ultimately with men, and emotions are associated with subjectivity and eventually with women. Although this overview does not set in motion a direct discussion on emotions and gender roles in the history of ideas, the overview on the scholarly discussions leads to a conclusion about the connection between emotions, reason, and gender. In this respect, an overview on shame follows the overview
on emotions showing its impact as a tool of control\textsuperscript{13} at both the individual and social levels. Additionally, the history of ideas on shame highlights the significance of this phenomenon in people’s lives across time and cultures. It also reveals shame’s power of keeping social norms/expectations intact, many of which are related to women’s roles. Lastly, the history of ideas on shame reveals some of the reasons related to its disappearance from scholarly work for a period of time, affirming the importance of researching it as an individual and social phenomenon.

The following overview sheds light on some of the contributing reasons for the lack of scholarly attention to the concept of emotions. It also shows the influence of mainstream epistemology\textsuperscript{14} with regard to reason and emotions, where reason is aligned with objectivity and emotions with subjectivity. This view goes as far back as the Greek era and is mostly highlighted during the post-medieval era. A full account of the historical overview of emotions in general and shame in particular is beyond the scope of this thesis. Hence, I trace the works of few selected thinkers from different disciplines—

\textsuperscript{13} By ‘tool of control’ I neither imply a negative nor positive connotation to shame, as it is a debatable topic. This debate is presented in chapter three, yet it is also evident in the history of ideas on shame in this chapter. However, when it comes to my own thesis on shame as it relates to women’s roles, I refer to it as a negative tool of control.

\textsuperscript{14} When it comes to reason and emotions, I refer to mainstream epistemology as opposed to Feminist and postmodern theories, most of which address the significance of emotions, affective life, and the lived experiences of the marginalized. Sandra Harding’s research in Feminist Standpoint Theory is an example. She asserts that such research is “committed to the production of information women want and need in their struggles to survive and to flourish.” It is a realm that challenges the status quo where the “under-advantaged group steps on the stage of history and says ‘from the standpoint of our lives, what you over-advantaged people think and do looks different ... and wrong and harmful.’” … This judgment challenges the presumed reasonableness and progressiveness of dominant institutional assumptions and practices.” (p.194) For more on Harding’s work refer to her article “Standpoint Theories: Productively Controversial” in Hypatia, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall, 2009), pp. 192-200.
philosophy, psychology, and sociology—in order to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of the phenomenon.

In the first two sections of this chapter on Classical Greek and Medieval periods, I discuss each thinker’s ideas on emotions followed by their ideas on shame. However, in the third section attributed to the scientific revolution era or what I call post-Medieval period, I discuss ideas on emotions chronologically from the same schools of thought. An overview on shame follows the one on emotions.

Section One: Emotions and the Classical Greek Era

I start this section with an overview of the Classical Greek era, choosing the works of Plato and Aristotle15 as they relate to emotions and shame. Scholarly work shows that classic philosophy did not concentrate on the concept of emotions as a separate discipline. Nussbaum (2004) asserts that the traditional view rooted in the preceding ancient Greek conception of emotions considers them to "have little connection with our thoughts, evaluations, and plans" (p. 24).

Plato and Aristotle’s Views on Emotions

Scholarly analysis on the works of Aristotle and Plato, particularly the latter, reiterate the view that emotions have limited connections to our logical side. Lazarus (1999) discusses Plato’s division of the soul to three parts/functions: desire, reason, and passion.

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15 Work on emotions does not start with nor is it limited to Plato and Aristotle in the Greek philosophical thought. Many pre-Socratic poets, writers, and philosophers wrote on emotions and shame (Bernard Williams’s (1993) book, Shame and Necessity, provides examples on the vast range of writing on emotions and shame prior to Plato and Aristotle). My choice is based on the huge impact the two Greek philosophers had on subsequent thinkers from different disciplines, many of whom based their ideas on the grounds paved by these Greek philosophers. Also, most of the readings on emotions and shame do not fail to mention some connection to Plato and Aristotle, which further impacted my decision to put forth their views in this dissertation. Accordingly, this part in the historical overview is by far the largest, especially the one on shame. Specifically, the ideas provided by Aristotle and Plato on shame allow us to make sense of the ideas on shame and emotions since the emergence of the Greek philosophical thought.
Each part of the soul has a different function, guiding our choices in actions and feelings, with reason being superior to desire and passion. Lazarus claims that Plato\textsuperscript{16} assimilated emotions with “destructive animal passion” which needs to be checked and controlled by reason. Reason to Plato is “the moral agency holding destructive animal passions in check” (Lazarus, 1999, p. 4).

While Plato devalued emotions, placing it in the “desire” part of the soul considered dangerous and unruly, Aristotle gave it a higher status (Lyon, 1999). He defined emotions or ‘feelings’ as “things accompanied by pleasure or pain” (Aristotle, 2011, p. 28). He also stated that pleasures and pains accompanying emotions are not the same; they differ according to the belief we hold about an event and/or object (Aristotle, 2011). Aristotle’s example on anger presented in *The Rhetoric* illustrates this point: “let anger be [defined as] desire, accompanied by [mental or physical] distress, for an apparent retaliation because of an apparent slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one” (Aristotle, 2007, p. 116). This quote indicates that, as an emotion, anger is the result (evaluation) of a belief or an event.

Accordingly, for Aristotle emotions are evaluations that “occur at the junctures or our inner concerns with the outer world; they are evaluations of events in terms of their importance for our concerns” (Oatley, 2004, p. 43). Aristotle believed that, although emotions involve very complex beliefs about their objects, when experienced with self-control and examined with reason, they find their proper place. Aristotle (2011) stated: “Pleasure and pain can be experienced too much and too little…. But to have them at the

\textsuperscript{16} Plato’s example of the chariot and steeds shows the primacy of reason (Charioteer) as it controls ‘baser’ passions and desires (steeds). Although Aristotle gave more attention to emotions than Plato, he did continuously emphasize the importance of reason, presented in the cognitive evaluation of emotions.
right time, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the mean and best, and this is the business of virtue” (p. 30).

Although the value of emotions for Aristotle seems higher than it is for Plato, both asserted the primacy of reason (ability to think rationally, objectively, with control over emotions) as the main factor for balancing emotions, a common theme that impacted their predecessor’s scholarly work. (p. 30).

**Greek Philosophical Thought on Shame**

Plato and Aristotle’s positions show that when compared to reason, emotions are less significant. However, assuming that shame, being an emotion, does not hold a unique place in ancient Greek philosophical thought is misleading. Konstan (2003) asserts that shame’s prominence “was a vigorous emotional category for the ancient Greeks” (p.1049). In his book, *Shame and Necessity*, Bernard Williams (1993) uses examples from the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* to highlight the existence and significance of a pre-Socratic shame. Williams uses examples from the epics to illustrate Homer’s belief that avoidance of being seen in an embarrassing light is a strong source of motivation for human behavior (p. 78-79). Particularly, the examples provided by Williams show that courage on the battlefield is equal to honor, and failing to perform courageously casts

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17 Although Stoics and Epicureans gave different interpretations of emotions, they followed in their predecessors’ footsteps regarding the importance of reason in controlling emotions. For a full account of that period’s prominent schools of thought on the topic of emotions, refer to the works of William Lyon, 1980.

18 Homer is known to be one of the most important ancient Greek poets and the writer of the epics The Iliad and the Odyssey.

19 Pages 78 and 79 in Williams’ book focus on and provide examples from some of Homer’s characters struggling with anticipated shame/aidos, or what he calls ‘prospective shame’. He considered ‘prospective’ shame to be a ‘form of fear’, a recurrent theme in both Plato and Aristotle’s works as I illustrate in the following discussions.
shame in the eyes of others.

In this section I present an overview of shame in Plato and Aristotle’s thought. This overview shows the significance of this emotion at both individual and social levels.

Interpretations of Shame in Attic Greek Language

In ancient Greek, the two words *aidos* and *aischune* (sometimes written as *aiskhune*) (Sigalet, 2011) were used in the Attic Greek language to mean shame. Tarnopolsky (2010) illustrates the difference between the two words, explaining how “the two Greek words give us the necessary distinctions between a bad kind of hierarchical shame linked only to dishonor and disgrace (*aischune*) and a good kind of shame linked only to awe, reverence, modesty, and respect (*aidos*)” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 11). Konstan (2003) posits that *aiskhune* was defined by Nemesius (AD. 390), the stoic philosopher, as “fear in the case of a shameful thing that has been done” and *aidos* as the fear of “landing in some kind of disgrace” (p. 1039). Nemisius’ definition demonstrates how the fear of shame becomes a deterrent force against either a prospective action or behavior that might bring about shame (*aidos*) or the recurrence of a shaming experience that already brought about shame (*aischune*).

Fear of Shame and Discovery in Plato

Plato’s writing on the fear of shame further illustrates the powerful effect of this emotion on behaviors. According to Plato:

I speak of the fear of shame, which deters them from that which is disgraceful….I assert that should one who loves to be discovered in any dishonorable action, or tamely enduring insult through cowardice, he would feel

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20 This short summary on the meaning of shame in Greek language further clarifies the interpretations of the concept in both Plato and Aristotle’s works, yet more so for Aristotle.
more anguish and shame if observed by the object of his passion, than if he were observed by his father, or his companions, or any other person. (Plato, 1913, p. 24)

Although Plato’s expresses suspicion about emotions, shame seems to have received a different treatment in his philosophical thought. In addition to Plato’s belief in shame’s deterrent power, the above quote highlights an important aspect related to shame: ‘the point of discovery’ — a recurrent theme in the phenomenon of shame. For Plato, only when someone we deeply care for discovers our inadequacy as a result of a ‘dishonorable action’, the deterrent aspect in the fear of shame becomes significant. In this sense, the fear of shame controls certain behaviors, considered by others to be disgraceful. Although for Plato the fear of shame is conditioned by the presence of an Other, the word ‘deterrent’ shows that the Other in shame can be imaginary as well as corporeal, an important feature in the phenomenon of shame that is discussed in the literature review. Moreover, despite the fact that deterrent shame is most influential when one is discovered by the ‘passion of one’s love’, shame has inhibitory consequences when discovered by family members. In the Republic, Plato (1991) wrote:

It’s not likely that a younger man will attempt to assault or strike an older one…. For these are two sufficient guardians hindering him, fear and shame: shame preventing him from laying hands as on parents, fear that the others will come to the aid of the man who suffers it. (Plato, 1991, p.144)

The above overview on the fear of shame in Plato’s work emphasizes the significance of exposure in front of an Other who discovers me, who sees me, and through whom I envision myself. Whether the Other is a ‘passion of love’, a family
member, or one’s fellow citizen, the exposure is what makes the fear of shame a tool of deterrence and control.

Public exposure/disclosure in Plato’s shame. The above quotes by Plato presents fear and shame as forces controlling behaviors/aggressive tendencies, especially those discovered by and exposed to the public eye. However, in addition to public exposure, Cox (2006) affirms that Plato considered public disclosure to be an effective way of diminishing and altering shame experiences. Taking Socrates as an example, Cox states, “Socrates found that the public admission of an individual’s inferiority to be a courageous alternative to attempting to hide one’s faults and risk experiencing shame” (p. 35). Plato’s Gorgias offers an example of Socrates’ focus on public disclosure as a teaching methodology. Socrates’ shaming elenchus21 of his interlocutors, ones that take place in public, is an example of the ‘public admission’ of ‘inferiority’ (Cox, 2006). In her (2010) book, Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants, Christina Tarnopolsky22 asserts that Plato’s shame "supplies a deeper understanding of the necessary but dangerous role of this emotion in human life" (p. 9). Tarnopolsky’s analysis “focused on Socrates' interactions with his interlocutors, both in terms of the ways in which some of their reactions to Socrates lead to…flattering shame, and the way in which Socrates' shame elenchus …exemplifies … Socratic respectful shame” (p. 114).

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21 This is a technique of argument associated with Socrates, where he used to ask his interlocutors a set of questions leading to the refutation of their own original argument.

22 In this part, I employ a lengthier analysis of Plato’s shame as interpreted by Christina Tarnopolsky on this emotion in classical Greek’s politics. She employs Plato’s Gorgias to highlight aspects of shame in political life, where her analysis reveals the subtle depth and significance of two forms of shame in Plato’s Gorgias, both of which I refer to later on in my analysis.
**Recognition in flattering and respectful shame.** The two forms of Socratic shame, as suggested by Tarnopolsky, include what she calls a “moment of recognition”, a painful moment where one’s inadequacies are exposed in front of an Other. Tarnopolsky asserts that the pain experienced at the ‘moment of recognition’ is what moves citizens (Athenians) and their representatives (political orators) toward ‘flattering shame’. In flattering shame, the shamed/speaker and the audience learn to avoid exposing each other’s inadequacies. Instead, "a false consensus then forms wherein the debate becomes a kind of reciprocal exchange of pleasantries, such that neither party has to endure the pain of having their identity or ideals criticized by the other.” (p. 19). Plato (trans. 1987) maintains that, “evidently oratory is a producer of conviction-persuasion and not of teaching-persuasion concerning what is just and unjust” (p. 13).

While flattering shame permeated the Greeks’ political scene, Socrates’ elenchus aimed at exposing his fellow citizens to another form of shame: respectful shame. Respectful shame was contested by Socrates’ interlocutors because similar to flattering shame, the moment of recognition carries “an unpleasant experience of having one’s identifications punctured by one’s audience” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 19). However, contrary to ‘flattering shame’, Socrates’ shaming elenchus provided reflection and reform embedded through “openness to the perplexity and discomfort that is a characteristic of the moment of recognition” (p. 166). Tarnopolsky claims that for Socrates “a true democratic politics is one that preserves the openness to this kind of discomforting and perplexing experience so central to the experience of being shamed out of one’s

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23 Although Tarnopolsky’s explanation on the implication of shame on contemporary life is revisited later on in the thesis, a short explanation of her interpretation of the two forms of shame in Plato’s *Gorgias* helps understand Plato’s position on shame.
conformity and complacent morality” (p. 167). In the *Gorgias*, Callicles’ shaming refutation along with his plea is an example of the perplexity and discomfort needed for the democratic political reflection espoused by Plato:

> I do not know what in the world you mean, Socrates. Ask someone else…And I could not care less about anything you are saying…How unrelenting you are, Socrates! And if you’ll listen to me, you’ll drop this discussion to carry it through with someone else. Couldn’t you go through the discussion by yourself, either by speaking in your own person or by answering your own question? (Plato, 1987, 505c-e)

Callicles’ plea is an example of one’s reaction to shame at the point of recognition, accusing Socrates of tyranny. Conversely, it is Callicles’ reaction (Plato, 1987) that reveals a tyrannical character, characteristic of one who names “shame simplicity… pushing it with dishonor… [and] moderation cowardliness… spattering it with mud” (Plato, 1991, p. 239).  

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24 Tarnopolsky highlights the shaming (*elenchus*) that takes place between Socrates and Callicles, one of his interlocutors. The argument ends up with Callicles’ refutation of the image Socrates’ elenchus espoused on him, a similarity of Callicles’ way of life (hedonism) to that of the catamite.  

25 For an example on flattering and respectful shame, I refer to my relationship with my sister-in-law who arrived in Canada years after I did. In spite of the fact that I never liked some of the Lebanese cultural habits, one of which has to do with attending and inviting family members to dinners and lunches out of obligation, I found myself repeating the same habits with my sister-in-law. Out of my sense of shame for being not the ‘good’ family member everyone expects, I accepted her invitations. I conformed and exchanged flattering comments about what a great host she is and how well I am fulfilling my obligations by joining the family. We both indulged in flattering shame. Taking the same example, respectful shame can be represented through questioning oneself or maybe my sister-in-law about the point behind such pleasantry exchange of obligations when one of us doesn’t believe in it. Although the questioning can painfully reveal my need for acceptance and/or her need for recognition, it can help us towards a “self-examination” and hence a willingness to recognize the gap between oneself and the idealized images or ourselves.
Shame (aidos/ aischune) in Aristotelian Thought

I now turn to Aristotle’s views on shame. To reiterate, two words mean shame in ancient Greek, aidos and aischune (aiskhune). Many scholars believe that by the time of Plato and Aristotle, both words were used to mean the same thing (Konstan, 2003; Tarnapolsky, 2010; Sigalet, 2011). I start this section revisiting the issue of ‘meaning’ in Aristotle’s work. This makes Aristotle’s quotes on shame comprehensive, since at times he uses the two words interchangeably while at other times he uses them to point out certain distinctions in shame. Konstan (2003) asserts that Aristotle uses the two words, aidos and aischune to mean the same thing: shame. The only difference in the way he uses them is temporal and/or in the timing of the perceived ills. Aristotle illustrates the temporality issue in the following manner: “If shamelessness [anaiskhuntia] is a bad thing and not feeling aidos…at doing shameful things, then it is not anymore honorable for someone who does such things to feel aiskhune [aiskhunesthai]” (as cited in Konstan, p. 1036).

While aidos carries anticipatory and inhibitory dimensions (feeling shame about an act I am thinking of doing in the future), aiskhune carries retrospective dimensions (feeling shame after the act is done). However, Aristotle seems to resolve this distinction. Let shame [aischune] be [defined as] a sort of pain and agitation concerning the class of evils, whether present or past or future, that seem to bring a person into disrespect, and [let] shamelessness [anaischuntia] [be defined as] a belittling about these same things. (Aristotle, 2007, p. 132)

Konstan affirms that Aristotle’s usage of aiskhune as ‘pain’ concerning evils, ‘past, present, or future’ indicates that “he draws no distinction between prospective or
restrictive shame on one hand, and retrospective or remorseful shame on the other” (P. 1040). Thus, for Aristotle shame is a ‘uniform’ emotion. Konstan’s lengthy analysis on the different meanings of shame in Greek and Aristotelian thought shows that a specific temporal explanation of shame is far-fetched. In the phenomenon of shame, the past, future, and present are entangled together.  

**Aristotle and the Nature of Shame**

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (trans. 2007) asserts, “shame is not properly spoken of as virtue, since it is more like a feeling [emotion]²⁷ than a state of character” (p. 79). This relates to his definition of shame “as a kind of fear of disrepute [disgrace]” (Aristotle, trans. 2011, p. 79). To Aristotle, fear is an emotion and shame is a category of it, thus making shame an emotion too. Moreover, shame’s physiological manifestations add to its categorization as an emotion: “people blush when they feel disgrace, and turn pale when they are afraid of death. So both seem to be in someway bodily conditions, and this seems to be more characteristic of a feeling than a state” (p. 79).

When compared to other emotions, Aristotle’s shame is a special kind. He asserts that emotions are involuntary, cannot be praised or blamed and consequently we cannot be responsible for them. However, shame, as an emotion, can be praised or blamed as it is elicited by both voluntary and involuntary actions (Aristotle, trans. 2011)²⁷

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²⁶ For example, imagining that one’s future talk might fall apart in public might possibly bring about (in the present) the same feelings of shame evoked by a similar talk (in the past) that fell apart. Such feelings of personal inadequacy can generally prevent one from attempting to talk in public in the future. More on the complexity of such a phenomenon will be discussed in the chapter on the analysis of shame at an individual and group level.

²⁷ The quotes I use in this section use the two words, feeling and emotion, to mean the same thing. This is due to the fact that different resources and translations of Aristotle’s works do not use one of the words synonymously. When it is my own analysis, I use the word ‘emotion’.
Learning aspects in Aristotelian shame. Attaching shame to ‘voluntary action’ indicates choice and responsibility (assuming that when we make a choice, we are responsible for it), which makes it, according to Aristotle, a learning tool. When it comes to learning in our youth, Aristotle writes, “We think that young people should be properly disposed to feel shame, because they live by feeling and so make many errors, but are restrained by shame. And we praise the young for being properly disposed to feel shame” (Aristotle, trans. 2011, p. 79). Praising the youth for feeling shame signifies its learning component, an aspect that leads to responsibility and good choice. For Aristotle, ‘young people’ are bound to make mistakes that elicit shame at the moment of recognition, constraining them from choosing future acts that induce similar feelings. However, Aristotle’s shame is not advised for mature/older people or the ‘virtuous’ as “no one would praise an older person for having a sense of shame, since we think he should do nothing to feel shame for. A feeling of disgrace is not characteristic of a good person” (p. 79). However, Sigalet (2011) argues that Aristotle did not mean that older people are ‘shameless,’ they have a dispositional ‘sense of shame’—what he calls ‘mature shame.’ Older people are the virtuous good subjects who “would feel shame in relation to actions that are truly shameful... shame that leads them to be turned from what is truly shameful to what is noble and good” (p. 24). Aristotle’s definition of the ‘shameless’ shows how it is “an antithesis of the mature good person... he who is deficient or is ashamed of nothing at all is called shameless” (Aristotle, trans. 2007. p. 33).

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28 Sigalet (2011, p. 22) explains that by ‘youth,’ Aristotle refers to all ‘non-virtuous’ men who have not reached the maturity level of the ‘good people.’

29 In the Rhetoric (trans. 2007), Aristotle offers examples on the acts that bring about disgrace. He shares: “throwing away one’s shield or fleeing in battle; for these come with cowardice…and having sexual relations with those with whom one should not or when one should not; for this comes with licentiousness” (p. 132-133).
While shameful experiences teach the young how to make better choices in the future, with mature shame older people learn to avoid ‘ills’ that bring about disgrace. Konstan asserts that for Aristotle, we feel disgrace in front of “people whom we take seriously...Those whom we admire and who admire us…and older or cultivated people…The opinions of others are clearly relevant to shame, but they must be opinions of those we have reasons to respect” (p. 1046). Konstan concludes his discussions of Aristotle’s views about shame by pointing to three elements involved in eliciting the emotion of shame: “a particular act… the fault of character that is revealed by the act…and the disgrace or loss of esteem before the community at large” (P. 1043).

Conclusion

The above overview on the history of ideas on shame in Plato and Aristotle’s works highlights the following common themes. (1) Shame is a reaction to the exposure of one’s defaults/ills, mostly in public. Both philosophers assert that the exposure can be real or imagined/ ‘perceived’. Imagined exposure of one’s faults/ills can be as painful as the real encounter. Such encounters create fear of shame. (2) Fear of shame has inhibitory and deterrent aspects. (3) Exposure and disclosure of one’s ‘ills’ makes shame a learning tool. One such example is Plato and the public shaming elenchus and Aristotle’s learner’s shame. (4) The temporal aspect in shame becomes blurry. In shame experiences, past, present, and future are merged. 5) The notion of an Other in shame is an integral part of the experience. Whether the Other is a parent, fellow citizens, or loved ones, shame is most painful when faults are exposed in the presence of those we care for.
Section Two: Emotions and the Judo-Christian era

I now return to the overview on the history of emotions after the Greek era. The impact of Plato and Aristotle’s philosophical thought lingered on into subsequent periods, impacting views on emotions. Through Plato and Aristotle’s works, I illustrated that the preference of reason over emotions was predominant during the Classical Greek period.

To reiterate, passions/emotions were considered to be unmanageable and in need of being controlled by the power of reason, a line of thought that continued to influence the Judeo-Christian era. The Judeo-Christian influence marked the beginning of the medieval period where a greater value in faith in God, as revealed by the scriptures, became prominent and the role of reason was suppressed.

Plato and Aristotle’s ideas left their marks on the thinkers of the time. Lyon (1999) explains how when medieval theologians looked back at the Greek philosophy, it was Plato they looked at first followed by Aristotle. Lyon points out that in an attempt to adopt and modify Aristotle’s ideas, medieval theologians ‘Platonized’ him. More specifically, Aristotle’s account on the human nature as form and matter was modified to an account of a body “inhabited by an immaterial soul which housed all ‘higher’ cognitive and evaluative functions of human” (p. 26). Lyon affirms that there was no other way around Platonizing Aristotle since “a Platonic form was a separable immaterial substance, and so rather like the soul in Christian theology” (p. 26). As a result of this new way of looking at the body and soul, emotions lost their significance and could no longer be deemed as psychosomatic, as previously suggested by Aristotle. For that reason, "a medieval philosopher theologian had to choose whether to place emotions in the soul or in the body” (p. 26). From the medieval period, I choose the works of Augustine (354-
430), and Aquinas (1225-1274) as examples of the intellectual/theological views on emotions and shame.

**Augustine on Emotions**

Augustine acknowledged the presence of emotions while he also recognized their complexity. Augustine writes, “Man is a vast deep, whose hairs you, Lord, have numbered, and in you none can be lost. Yet it is easier to count his hairs than the passions and emotions of his heart” (Augustine, 2008, p. 66). In spite of the complexity of emotions, Augustine maintained that it is suitable to experience them “provided they are appropriately directed” (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006, p. 8) In the spectrum of emotional phenomena, Augustine differentiated between passions and affections, placing affections at a higher rank. He stated that while passions express corrupt desires, are not directed by reason and are involuntary, affections are an expression of human will, influenced by reason and “in accord with… truth” (Ireland, 2013, page 10). Ireland (2013) shares, “in the thought of the elder Augustine, virtuous affections are coterminous with reason and intellect, and so there can be no denigration of one and elevation of the other. All affections are of equal status and importance” (p.10), yet need to follow one principle: love.

**Aquinas on Emotions**

Influenced by Aristotle’s work, Aquinas recognized three levels of the soul: intellectual, vegetative, and sensitive, giving primacy to the intellectual level. Similar to Aristotle, he considered the intellectual level as purely human and characterized by
reason where emotional evaluations take place\(^{30}\) (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006). When it came to emotions, Aquinas made a significant distinction between two types: irascible and concupiscible. An object of emotion can be evaluated as beneficial, harmful, easy to obtain or avoid. Hence, concupiscible emotions—such as love and happiness—arise when one can obtain or avoid an object without difficulty; irascible emotions—such as anger and fear—arise when one faces difficulties trying to avoid or obtain an object (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006). Nevertheless, based on the primacy of the intellectual level in the soul, both types of emotions are ruled and controlled by reason.

**Impact of Aquinas’ work on emotions.** Aquinas’ distinction between concupiscible and irascible emotions had a historical significance in the work of later theorists. Averill and Sundararajian (2006) claim,

> Some later theorists (Descartes, but especially following Darwin) have focused primarily on concupiscible emotions, that is, on straight forward impulses to action, whether of biological or psychological origin. Other theorists contend that emotions arise only when impulses are blocked or interrupted; that is, emotions are inherently irascible. Freudian psychoanalysis would also fall within the latter tradition. (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006, p.11)

Similar to Plato and Aristotle’s works on emotions, Augustine and Aquinas’ works show the primacy of reason over emotions in philosophical/theological thought. To recap, Augustine believed intellectual reflection can manage emotions while Aquinas’

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\(^{30}\) The work of both St. Augustine, and St. Aquinas was prominent during this period. Both theologians’ works were impacted by Plato and Aristotle’s work. For more on the influence of Plato and Aristotle refer to William Lyon.
evaluation of emotions involves intellectual processes. I now turn to an analysis of shame as it appears in Augustine and Aquinas’s philosophical/theological thought, where the primacy of reason is evident.

**Shame to Augustine**

Augustine’s personal intellectual reflection in the *Confessions* reveals an existential component. The depth of his deliberation is tightly connected to his own existence and behavior in the world he was a part of. Similar to Plato and Aristotle’s views where the gaze of an Other (real or imagined) triggers shame, Augustine’s realization of God’s gaze triggered shame and fear in him. His awareness of God’s gaze made shame an inescapable phenomenon for Augustine, where “even after all known and imagined sins are accounted for, there is a residual sense of shame that comes from the recognition of God as the ultimate Other” (Spalding A. D., 2006, p. 26).

**A human condition.** Spalding asserts that Augustine’s evaluation of sin and shame in the *Confession* “goes beyond a measurement of behavior against a standard, and considers human nature itself” (p. 38) In Augustine’s philosophical thought, sin was an essential human condition, much like shame. Augustine’s recollection of the experience of stealing pears in the *Confessions* explains how sin and shame are human conditions:

> What fruit had I, wretched boy, in these things which I now blush to recall, above all in that theft in which I loved nothing but the theft itself?... It was nothing, and for that reason I was the more miserable. (Augustine, 2008, p. 33)

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31 The primacy of reason over emotions is a theme that will continue to emerge during the historical overview on emotions and shame, asserting the common view of emotions as a lesser human phenomenon when compared with reason.
**Blush and reflexivity in shame.** Augustine’s recollection of his youthful sin (stealing pears) was accompanied with a blush, a characteristic of shame, which in Augustine’s case is a kind of retrospective shame.\(^\text{32}\) ‘Loving the theft’ for its own sake and feeling retrospective shame as a result shows how sin and shame are human conditions, uncovered during intellectual deliberation and reflection.

Moreover, another characteristic of shame is its reflexivity, making it both inwardly directed and “other-directed”. In the case of Augustine’s reflections, shame is directed inwardly towards his previous individual ‘ills’ and at the same time towards God, the ‘Other’ Augustine’s reflection on shame reminds us of Socrates’ public shaming elenchus imposed on his interlocutors as an act of respect. In Augustine’s case, God represents the public and the dialogue is in the form of self-reflection. Spalding (2006) concludes, “Augustine anticipates the Cartesian model of self-reflection by adopting God’s eye stance and examining himself from that perspective” (P. 41).

**Shame in Aquinas’ Work**

Ryan (2013) states that for Aquinas, shame guards personal interiorized values and is prompted by self-respect and reverence of moral Christian ideals/virtues. Accordingly, the more virtuous we become the closer we get to God, and paradoxically, “the more we are disposed to a sense of shame about our personal failure in moral excellence” (p. 80). By being more sensitive to personal moral excellence, we become more sensitive toward personal infractions of moral ideals. Hence, shame illuminates our moral lacks and mishaps.

\(^{32}\) Once more, retrospective shame is another common theme found in Plato and Aristotle’s work discussed at the beginning of this chapter.
The notion of the ‘Other’ emerged in Aquinas’ treatment of shame. Self-care reflected in moral conduct reveals a tight connection between the self and an ‘Other.’ Since moral conduct is based on values and virtues, most of which are a result of religious values and social norms in one’s society, it is always an ‘Other’ with whom I share and reflect on my values with (God, or fellow people in the society). Ryan (2013) asserts that in placing shame’s sensitivity in the personal and relational, shame for Aquinas is “culturally and socially located” (p. 81).

It is important to recall that thus far shame has been viewed as a reaction to the exposure or recognition of one’s wrongdoing and ills. This is while, Ryan (2013) shares a cultural aspect in Aquinas’ treatment of shame; one that points to a negative feature of cultural shame. Ryan explains:

Aquinas realistically points out that the same virtuous person, in maintaining his position rationally in the face of false reports is not impervious to being swayed by shame…In practice feelings of shame and disgrace can start to envelop other aspects of one’s person through the attitude of others, for instance economic status, birth, job, etc. This is a clear suggestion that the unjust face of shame in which a person’s standing in the eyes of others is based on qualities that are not relevant to the person’s goodness. [Hence], Aquinas is flagging the negative impact of cultural shame”. (Ryan, 2013, p. 82)
Learning component in shame. When it comes to the ordinary person, Aquinas maintains that shame has learning qualities. For Aquinas, shame helps us learn from our mistakes, especially with ‘discretion-shame’ in relation to past ‘evil’ actions. Shame can “help a person to be sensitive through prospective or ‘discretion-shame’ to possible future actions” (Aquinas 1963/1975, as cited in Ryan, 2013, p. 82).

Another significant aspect in the educative component of shame is related to Aquinas’ belief that learning is not an isolated phenomenon. Practicing moral values takes place in a community where all members share the same values. When a member fails “standards of excellence [being] a participant in that community’s life, the members have an interest in that person’s behavior since it impacts on the common good” (Ryan, 2013, p. 82). Aquinas’ view on shame also carries personal and social significance.

Conclusion of Section One and Common Themes

The above summary on shame in Augustine and Aquinas’ works shows intersections with Plato and Aristotle’s common themes. Both Augustine and Aquinas refer to the significance of public exposure and disclosure in shame as a common theme—Augustine’s self-reflection as disclosure and Aquinas’ wrong doing was evidently exposed in a community that one shares values with. Similar to Plato and Aristotle, both theologians emphasized the learning component in shame (retrospective shame in Augustine and ‘shame-disgrace’ in Aquinas) as a deterrent force. The Other emerged as another common theme with Plato and Aristotle (God as an Other within for both theologians and the community as Other in shame for Aquinas). Generally, the

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33 In the previous section of the chapter, I discussed how Plato and Aristotle’s retrospective shame deters us from repeating the same ills in the future. Similarly, Augustine’s confession of his retrospective shame related to his youthful theft reflects similar educational deterrent elements as his Greek predecessors.
‘Other’ continues to emerge as an central concept with regards to shame with the ability to link the individual to the social.

Section Three: Emotions and the Post-Medieval Era

The scientific revolution of the 17th century shifted the focus from the church’s teachings to scientific observation and experimentation. As a result, the church’s long orthodoxy was considered to be ignorant and outdated. In this section, I present an outline on emotions from the works of selected scholars belonging to four post-medieval schools of thought: Cartesian, behavioral, psychoanalytic, and existential phenomenological views.

The Cartesian Overview on Emotions

One of the main changes that took place with regard to emotions in the post-medieval era was attributed to the works of the French mathematician/philosopher Rene’ Descartes (1596 – 1650). In his book Passions of the Soul (1649), Descartes presented a new view on emotions (or passions), what came to be known as the mechanization of emotions (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006). I start this section with a brief summary of Descartes’ work on emotions followed by his contemporaries’ scholarly achievements in the field, many of which were influenced by Descartes’ work.

Mind/Body and Emotions for Descartes

Descartes was a dualist who believed in the division of mind (soul) and body. He claimed that in order to understand human emotions, we need to separate the functions of the body from that of the soul. Descartes argued that passions, actions, and desires are the function of the soul: passions start with a bodily perception that is transmitted to the soul

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34 Descartes new view on emotions, what he called passions, resulted in a new era of scientific experiments on emotions and philosophical debates on the topic, some of which I present in this section.
through the pineal gland (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006; Lyon, 1980). To Descartes, emotion proper is the “soul's conscious perception or feeling of what was occurring in the body” (Lyon, 1999, p. 27). However, based on Descartes’ dualist perspective, one might wonder how the soul perceives what the body is feeling.

**Mechanization of emotions.** To answer this question, one needs to keep in mind Descartes’ view on the nature of mind and body, where the mind is essentially an immaterial immortal soul with consciousness and the body is material and non-conscious. The immaterial soul meets the material body through the pineal gland. Lyon (1999) explains this mechanism:

> It is our body's actions and reactions, resulting from the perceptions of our environment and guided in parts by the soul's cognitive powers of memory, imagination and deliberation, that produced what was distinctive in each emotion. It was the qualitative differences in the patterns of the body's actions and reactions that produced the qualitative differences in the mirror-image feelings, of those patterns in the soul. (Lyon, 1999, p. 28-29)

Accordingly, emotions are mechanical because they are the result of bodily reaction to external/internal perceptions, impressed on the mind and resulting in passions.

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35 Although a detailed description about the mechanism of the transmission of perceptions from body (material) to soul (immaterial) is not significant for this thesis, it is important to summarize some of Descartes’ work as it informed many of his predecessors’ scholarly contributions. Descartes placed emotions at the heart of the immaterial soul and are only expressed through it. To Descartes, this transmission of the body’s perceptions of external events to the soul, takes place through small veins filled with “animal spirit,” which transform the perceptions of the body to the soul through the pineal gland. This connection between bodily perceptions and the soul causes some movement in the soul called passion and is sent back in the same route to the body allowing it for emotional reactions like fear/running, sadness/crying, etc. Sophie Menesse summarizes the movement stating: “the body can affect the soul and the soul can move the body, the first one being a passion, the second one an action of the soul” (p. 7). For more on Descartes’ work refer to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, William Lyon (1999) on *Philosophy of cognition and emotions*, and Sophie Menesse’s article on academia.edu entitled: *Descartes’ conception of man.*
of the soul (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006, p. 13). Once again, through Descartes’ work, mind/reason took primacy over emotions, a view that dominated the fields of psychology and philosophy of mind until recent times.

**The Humanization of Emotions**

Prior to presenting an overview of the theories on emotions following Descartes, I will first refer to one of his contemporaries whose work presented a humanistic perspective on emotions different from that of his. While emotions in much of Western thought were considered to be irrational and lacking in reasonable judgment, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) considered emotions a hallmark of humanity. Spinoza rejected Descartes’ dualist ideas that separated body from mind and reason from emotion, and asserted that emotions help us differentiate humans from “infrahuman”. For Spinoza, human nature constitutes only one substance where the “mental and physical are but two aspects or manifestation” (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006, p. 13)

**Emotions as human bondage.** In his (1962) book *Ethics*, Spinoza argues that emotions are a *human bondage* and the only way to break from that bondage is through understanding and knowledge. We need to understand that we are part of a universe, which is “an expression of the mind of God…[and] each one of us is part of that expression” (Oatley, 2004, p. 51). Thus, if we accept that we are not the prime movers of what happens, “struggling to control things, and getting frustrated and angry when our desires are not met” (p. 51), we can get rid of passive emotions. Accordingly, we will

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36 Spinoza was influenced by the scientific ways of knowing of his time. However, his greatest influence was in the area of humanities where he is considered to be the founding father of hermeneutics, “which involves the interpretation of texts, in an extended sense, the interpretation of behavior conceived in narrative terms”. For more on the interpretation of Spinoza’s work, refer to Averill, J., and Sundararajian, L. (2006) work.

37 For more on Spinoza’s account on emotions, refer to his chapter “on human Bondage” in his book *the ethics* (1961).
have *active emotions*, “based on the love for the world…and on the love of others” (p. 52). Such acceptance and evaluation of our emotions frees us from the bondage in which they hold us. On the evaluative component of emotions, Spinoza (1967) writes, “an emotion which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it” (as cited in Averill & Sundararajan, 2006, p. 16). Hence, in knowing the reasons behind our emotions, these emotions are transformed from a passive to an active state.

**Cognition and Emotion in Spinoza and Descartes**

Although Spinoza’s work took a different turn (humanistic) from that of Descartes (mechanization of emotions), he followed Descartes in emphasizing the primacy of cognition. Spinoza’s invitation to deal with and control negative emotions through evaluating them made his account on emotions a “classical example of a cognitive theory on emotion” (Lyon, 1999, p. 30).

The emphasis on the importance of thinking and rational evaluation in both Descartes and Spinoza’s works is evident. While, according to Descartes, the mind is the basic player when it comes to the evaluation of bodily perceptions taking place in the mind, Spinoza emphasized the importance of re-evaluating our thoughts about the world, a process that requires rational analysis.

**Descartes’ Followers**

Lyon (1999) asserts that the basic problem in Descartes’ treatment of emotions stems from the absence of a clear separation between what is considered to be an emotion and what is not. Some of Descartes’ followers tried to resolve this problem through a scientific treatment of emotions. Accordingly, based on the Cartesian view that emotions are the mirror feeling of physiological changes, 19th century scholars William James
(1842-1910) and Carl Lang (1834–1900) argued that by studying the “physiological
details of each pattern of arousal”, one can differentiate between different emotions, i.e. 
observing different body patterns during an emotional episode (Lyons, 1980). However, 
Lang and James’ scientific experiments failed to explain important aspects in their 
perception of emotions, one of which is related to the lack of evidence in the case of two 
people having the same kind of emotion when facing the same situation.

**Behaviorism and Emotions**

At the same time, reaching a consensus among different schools of human 
psychology became impossible, which in turn paved the way for behaviorism. The impact 
of behaviorism resulted in changing psychology’s definition from the ‘science of the 
mind’ to ‘the science of behavior’, as defined by John Watson, one of the pioneers of 
behaviorism. Watson (1878-1958) and many of his colleagues tried to understand human 
behavior through scientific experiments conducted in controlled environments where 
objective observation and experimentation were administered. Watson, too, tried to 
explain emotions through studying the body’s different physiological states and reactions 
to stimuli. However, at a time when “James had said an emotion is the feeling-record in 
consciousness of a distinguishing pattern of physiological…changes in the body, Watson 
held that the emotion is nothing but the pattern of physiological reactions or changes” 
(Lyon, 1999, p. 32). Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976), one of the mid-twentieth century 
philosophical behaviorists, considered emotions to be behavioral dispositions. Lyon 
(1999) highlighted Ryle’s position that, "to be afraid is not to undergo a private Cartesian 
experience such as a feeling, but it is to be disposed to act and react in a certain way in 
certain circumstances” (p. 35). Hence, when it comes to inner events such as desires,
beliefs, and evaluations, both philosophical and psychological behaviorists agree that emotions are devoid of any cognitive potential. Once again, the value of emotions is diminished through a privileging of reason.

**Freud via Darwin**

Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) work presents a significant shift from behaviorists’ perspective on emotions. But before discussing this shift, it is important to explain the impact of Darwin’s (1808-1882) revolutionary work on Freud. Darwin argued that many of our emotional expressions have no adaptive worth as they are just “remnants of an evolutionary past or even the adventitious products of an overly excited nervous system” (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006, p. 17). Darwin considered ‘basic emotions’ as “just biologically basic”, a view that “in subtle ways… has biased much of the twentieth-century thinking about emotion,” (p.18) and much of the current views on emotions.  

Many post-Darwinian theorists, some of whom are behaviorists, considered emotions to be instinctive reactions bestowed upon us through natural selection. Although Freud’s notion of drive or instinct was derived from Darwin’s notion of basic emotions, it has its differences. Lyon (1980) states that for Freud, “Events in the world cause us to react emotionally only in so far as they first stir up in us some instinctual drive or impulse, and in so far as this drive or impulse is repressed or blocked” (p. 29). Even though Freud’s ideas on basic emotions—what he refers to as instincts or drives—were influenced by

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38 Darwin’s impact on the twentieth century views on emotions is very strong. His notion of emotions as basic still lingers on in our contemporary time. In spite of current research (cognitive psychology, neuroscience) that highlighted the importance of emotions on cognitions, when it comes to gender differences, emotions are still connoted with women as a sign of weakness and irrationality. In the context of the thesis, I show how such view is explicitly and publicly promoted in the context of women’s roles and shame, e.g. Lebanon. It is important to note that my experiences in the Western world reveal similar views about women, although more implicit and subtle. Specifically, in political debates and/or highly competitive institutions, I consistently observe women embodying a certain rationality that masks any ‘emotional unreasonable thinking.’
Darwin’s theories, his understanding of instinct was broader and not based on only evolutionary or biological implications. For instance, Freud believed in the impact of the social realm on the psyche where by conforming to social strictures, libido\textsuperscript{39} can be transformed into an indefinite variety of emotional syndromes, like hysterical reactions. Accordingly, Freud (1917/1963) defines a hysterical reaction as “a freshly constructed individual affect” (p. 396).

**Emotions an inherited history.** Although Freud’s work on emotions is considered limited to emotions of disturbed persons, his assertion that emotional disturbances are part of our past-inherited history further illustrates the connection between the individual and the social. Lyon (1980) claims that to Freud “emotions such as anxiety [are] the reaction to traumatic events… these events were not undergone by the individual but are part of the individual’s inherited, unconscious, repressed memories” (p. 26). Freud (1959) proclaims that individuals (specifically disturbed persons) are not responsible for their emotional reactions because their “affective states have been incorporated in the mind as precipitates of primeval traumatic experiences, and when a similar situation occurs they are revived like mnemic symbols” (p. 93).

**Freud and his predecessors.** Freud’s views present a move away from both the behaviorists’ notion of emotions as a passive reaction to stimuli and from the Darwinian deterministic perspective on emotion as primitive and lacking of reason. Nevertheless, Freud’s focus on negative emotions, fear, and anxiety, as a reaction to repressed drives did not help elevate emotions to a state close to cognition.

\textsuperscript{39} The term, “libido” is used in psychoanalytic theory and based on Sigmund Freud’s work on the human psyche. Freud defines libido as the energy, which is part of the instinct drive, located in what Freud calls the Id, the unconscious part of the human psyche.
**Freud’s contributions.** In spite of this, Freud’s attempts to locate his patients’ emotional disturbances through narrative analysis cannot and should not be overlooked. Given that most of Freud’s patients were predominantly women, his clinical work opened the space for women’s sharing of personal narrative and analysis. At a theoretical level,40 Freud’s clinical interpretations on the causes of the patients’ maladaptive behaviors brought them to the level of consciousness, thereby (hopefully) decreasing the intensity of the emotion and even behavior (Averill & Sundararajan, 2006). When compared to his contemporaries, Freud’s work on emotions offers a unique perspective. However, similar to these contemporaries, his patient’s intellectual conscious understanding of the source of their maladaptive behavior highlights the primacy of reason over emotions.

**Existentialist/Cognitive Views on Emotions.**

In this part, I briefly outline the works of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Magda Arnold (1903-2002) on emotions.

**Sartre: Emotions as Choice**

Sartre believed that we are responsible for who we are and what we do, including our emotions. Contrary to the behaviorists’ views on emotions as instinctual physiological reactions to stimuli, Sartre believed that emotions help us adapt to our world’s difficulties. Sartre contended that emotions are voluntary, based on choice, and are ways that alter our consciousness of events to a more pleasing view of the world. Contrary to the psychoanalytic view on the significance of emotions in the unconscious,

40 On this matter, scholars including social worker Florence Rush have criticized Freud to cover up his female patients’ reported childhood instances of sexual abuse by family members, mostly their fathers. Many scholars claim that Freud referred to such narratives as an illusion choosing not to deal with it. Rush claims that Freud was more at ease with the fantasy rather than reality of sexual abuse; Freud was even more comfortable when he could name the mother rather than the father as the seducer, creating the notion of the “Oedipal complex.”
Sartre believed that the significance of emotions is in an imaginary or ‘magical’ view of the world which “we adopt… when we cannot cope with it as it really is” (Lyon, 1980, p. 28). Sartre writes:

We cannot conceive what an emotion is. It is a transformation of the world. When the paths before us become too difficult, or when we cannot see our way, we can no longer put up with such an exacting and difficult world…nevertheless we must act. So then we try to change the world; that is, to live it as though the relations between things and their potentialities were not governed by deterministic processes but by magic. (Sartre, 1962, p. 39)

**Emotions, a transformation of the world.** For Sartre, emotions consciously transform the world to fit our needs and desires. Sartre maintains, “during emotion, it is the body which, directed by the consciousness, changes its relationship with the world so that the world should change its qualities” (p. 41). The close relationship between emotion and consciousness in Sartre’s analysis implies choice and responsibility. Sartre eloquently expresses: “during an emotion, the consciousness abases itself and abruptly transmutes the determinist world in which we live, into a magical world” (p. 56).

Sartre’s account on emotions provides yet another view on the prominence of reason over emotions. His explanation on how we choose to deal with the world through deliberate decisions to change our emotions is indicative of the fact that we are rational beings capable of controlling our emotions and making rational choices. For him,

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41 One might be wondering how such a transformation of the world takes place in Sartrian perspectives. To explain his point, Sartre refers to the fable about the fox who tries to reach the grapes on the vine but fails to do so. Upon conferring with his failure, the fox makes light of his failure by stating, “They are sour anyway”. But Sartre affirms, “it is not the chemistry of the grapes that has changed”, it is the fox’s way (attitude) in viewing the world. He has come to look at the grapes as sour, to prove he didn't want them anyway. More on the topic in Cheshire Calhoun and Robert C. Solomon: *What is an Emotion? Classical Readings in Philosophical Psychology*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. pp.244-250
emotions are evaluations in the way they help us transform the world to fit our desires.

Cognitive Accounts on Emotions

The reaction against the behaviorist perception of emotion continued to produce new views, some of which reflected the Aristotelian account of emotions as beliefs and desires. As cognitive understandings of emotions increased, “emotions were viewed once again as complexly psychosomatic;… analyzed in terms of physiological changes, feelings, behavioral actions and reactions caused by beliefs, desires, wants and wishes” (Lyon, 1980, p. 37). A contemporary to Sartre, Magda Arnold’s (1903–2002) work on cognition and emotions presents an example of the evaluative cognitive account on emotions. Arnold acknowledged Sartre’s phenomenological work on emotions, yet criticized his persistence on the way emotions change our world. She proposed a different phenomenological analysis on emotions, one that reclaims the Aristotelian belief “that emotions affects our judgment and… that judgments or cognitions …[are] central to emotions” (Lyon, 1980. p. 33). Emotions are “the felt tendency toward anything intuitively appraised as good (beneficial) or away from anything appraised as bad (harmful)” (Arnold, 1960, p. 182).

Cognition vs. emotion to Arnold. The evaluative components involved in the processing of emotions, as suggested by Arnold’s appraisal theory, reiterate the prominence of cognition/ reason over emotions. However, as an advocate of cognitive approach to emotions, Lyon (1980) argues that the cognitive approach raises emotions to the level of cognition, raising it if not to the same level then at the level of its partner. In

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42 By appraisal, Arnold means a sense judgment, that is, an immediate, nonintellectual assessment of the potential benefit or harm, a perceived ‘intentional’ object holds for the person. Her approach to emotions provided the basic principles for contemporary appraisal theory, which addresses the processes that lead from initial perception to full emotional experience. Accordingly, the study of emotions became embedded in cognitive psychology.
Lyon’s (1980) own words:

A cognitive approach to the acclamation of the natural of emotion clearly makes emotions out to be part of the deliberation, thoughtful and rational side of humans rather than, as Plato claimed, the animal like foe of reason.... emotions are probably a better guide to what we really approve and disapprove of than are our words”. (Lyon, 1980, p. 37)

**New Approaches as a Result of the Cognitive View**

The cognitive view on emotions offered new approaches to emotional theory, initiating a move towards biopsychological and neurocognitive approaches. Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991), a psychologist, formulated what came to be known as the “affect theory.” In this theory, Tomkins states, “there is a distinct innate biologically based affect system within each individual that amplifies perceptions so that things matter” (Tomkins, 1987, p. 137 as cited in Pattison, 2000, p. 490). Tomkins identified nine basic innate affects, some positive (joy and enjoyment) and others negative (shame and fear).

According to Tomkins, the factors amplify experience accompanied with particular facial expressions.

Due to the development of increasingly sophisticated technologies (e.g. neuro-imaging) that trace the activity of the brain during an emotional episode, more emphasis has been laid on central neural mechanisms in the last decade. Accordingly, cognitive neuroscience emerged as a new discipline, “where “cognitive” means everything “mental,” emotions included” (Averill & Sundararajian, 2006, p. 24).

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43 Neuroscience and emotions—the interconnectedness of thinking feeling and acting—is a topic that I return to in my chapter on shame. I show how the scientifically fascinating discovery in neuroscience on the ways emotions impact cognition can explain how shame becomes a phenomenon that alters our being.
Conclusion

The above review of the history of ideas on emotions brings to light the interest in scientific observations and experimentations. The scientific era’s focus on objectivity and cognition further diminished the importance of emotions when compared to cognitions, a recurrent theme since the days of the ancient Greek philosophers. According to Pattison (2000), “what moderns call emotions and what ancients would have called passions, desires and appetites, have presented a disruptive force that appears to threaten rational life for individuals and groups” (p. 21-22). The above overview indicates that historically emotions were considered unworthy of intellectual attention and deemed as merely unimportant aspects of human experience and thought. A dualistic attitude was formed where reason was considered as a separate entity from emotions. Pattison (2000) states, “passions and desires …[are] associated with humanity’s embodied lower primitive and animal nature. In the patriarchal social order they have been also closely linked with the embodied, irrational, devalued female part of the human race” (p. 22). Based on this view, especially in patriarchal societies, women were/are still construed to be more emotional than men, hence lacking in objective rational capacities in comparison to men.

From the above overview a dominant theme emerges: emotions are a lower human category than reason. Classically, women and children were considered to be less capable of rational thinking and since emotions are generally considered to be an irrational phenomenon, it is adhered to them. The conception that emotionality is irrational, subjective, illogical, and a women’s characteristic has historically helped shape

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44 Although I used the word “were” above to indicate that current views on women have changed, the view on women as emotional still stands in many disciplines and cultures. Examples on such current views are provided in my next chapters.
perceptions around gender roles. In patriarchal societies, such perceptions work at keeping forms of dominance intact: a common form of this dominance is that of men (the rational and objective) over women (the emotional and subjective).

**Shame in the Post-Medieval Era**

The overview on the history of ideas on emotions confirms how former scholarly ideas linger on impacting current reflections on this phenomenon.\(^{45}\) Likewise, post-medieval thinkers’ ideas on emotions impacted views as well as research on shame. Contemporary scholars\(^{46}\) point out that shame, as an emotion, practically disappeared from scholarly work for a period of time extending from Descartes to Freud. The overview on post medieval views on emotions validates this claim.

Considering the concealing nature of shame and the era’s obsession with scientific experimentations to explain human emotions, shame became a difficult contender for objective observation. For example, the behaviorists’ focus on scientific interpretation of an observed controlled, and measured behavior/emotion generally makes internally felt and concealed emotions like shame difficult to understand. Kaufman (1992) asserts that scientific language has not had a vocabulary that is adequately nuanced to describe different inner states and experiences of emotion (p. 4). Pattison (2000) stresses that, “an emphasis on observing and describing behavior and ‘objective’ situations has militated against interest in the development of a pluriform language of

\(^{45}\)The influence of pre-Socratic ideas on shame was clear in Plato and Aristotle’s work, where shame is linked to honor and losing face in front of an audience. Also, many of Plato and Aristotle’s thoughts on emotions and shame impacted historical intellectual debates on these topics. For instance, Freud’s id/instinct is similar to the unruly emotions Plato refers to in his writings. Aristotle’s work on the emotions as connected to beliefs and evaluations impacted St. Aquinas ideas as well as cognitive psychology. Generally, the label of emotions as uncontrollable and a lower faculty when compared to cognitions lingered on from classical Greeks until modern times.

\(^{46}\) Many of the contemporary scholars’ work on shame, like Kaufman, Scheller, Pattison, Probyn, Naussbaum, etc. are discussed in the following chapter.
subjective perception. This has hindered interest in experiences of emotions like shame” (p. 41-42). Consequently, little research on the phenomenon of shame was observed and after a period of disappearance from scholarly discussions, it began to cautiously emerge in Sigmund Freud’s work.

In the previous section, the post medieval history of ideas on emotions, I presented different thinkers’ ideas chronologically, the old and the new, to show the impact of the former on the latter. In this section, I present an analysis of shame based on the views of the different schools of thoughts discussed earlier.

**Psychoanalytical and Psychological Perspectives on Shame**

I start this section with Sigmund Freud’s work, where writings on shame started to emerge after a considerably long absence. Many scholars agree that Freud’s treatment of shame is minimal as he was more interested in guilt (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Lewis, 1971; Pattison, 2000; Scheff, 2003). Scheff explains that one of the reasons for Freud’s negligence of shame was because he saw “little evidence of shame in himself and his male colleagues and dismissed it as an adult emotion in modern societies”47 (p. 251). Freud only saw shame in his female patients and considered it to be “the emotion of women, children, and savages” (Scheff, 2003).

For Freud, shame is connected with sexuality, a reactionary formation of ‘exhibitionist’48 drive/desires (Lewis, 1971; Tangney and Dearing, 2002; Peter & Singer, 1971; Pattison, 2000). Shame is “part of the psychic mechanism designated the ‘super-

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47 This is a typical example of the period’s male domination where the belief that men have nothing to be ashamed of impacted knowledge on gender roles and became part of a mainstream hegemonic epistemology.

48 Tangney and Dearing refer to exhibitionist desires as those that call for publically calling attention to oneself sexually.
ego’ that inhibits … the drives of the libido specifically with regard to the sexually related instincts of scopophilia [the desire to see others] and exhibitionism [the desire to be looked at by others]” (Freud, 1977). Although minimally addressed in his earlier work, it is only in Freud’s later work that he openly ignores the construct of shame, focusing instead on the cognitive concept of guilt in relation to the superego conflicts (Tangney and Dearing, p. 13). However, Scheff (2003) maintains that even though Freud abandoned his findings on shame in his later works, his “discovery of shame as the agent of repression was not an error” (p. 252).

In the early 20th century, Eric Erikson (1902-1994) sought to successfully overcome Freud’s overlooking of the concept of shame. Erikson rejected Freud’s assumption that guilt is a moral emotion, asserting that shame is the most fundamental human emotion with an important role in child development. Erikson “proposed that all infants pass through an early developmental stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt before advancing to a ‘higher’ stage of initiative versus guilt” (Pattison, 2000, p. 56). Erikson saw shame as ‘essentially rage turned against the self’ (Erikson 1993, p. 252). For Erikson, shame was “the moral elemental, in that it concerned the whole self, not just one’s action” (Scheff, 2003, p. 246).

**Biodynamic Aspects on Shame**

Silvan Tomkins presented a different approach to the analysis of shame; one

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49 Freud’s ideas regarding the connection of guilt and/or shame with ego and superego impacted different scholar’s interpretations of both emotions in various disciplines (psychology, philosophy, and sociology). In the next chapter, the significance of this impact becomes evident, especially in the section comparing shame with guilt.
rooted in genetically determined basic physiological affect responses.\textsuperscript{50} However, Tomkins asserted that some negative emotions, like shame, are modified by experience, interpersonal interaction, and culture. Hence, shame may be activated more in some people than in others. Moreover, shame is considered to be an auxiliary emotion/affect because it follows from the activation of other affects. For example, shame “operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated; it inhibits one, or the other, or both” (Tomkins, 1987, p. 143). Although Tomkins’ views come from a physiological perspective, he investigates their connection and impact on the social realm as well. Scheff (2003) asserts that because of Tomkins’ research on facial expressions, it “weakened the position of shame as an important emotion as there was no consensus on the facial expression of shame hence it was not a genuine emotion” (p. 146).

**Helen Lewis’ Work on Shame**

The work of psychologist/sociologist Helen Lewis (1971) on shame was another milestone in understanding the phenomenon. Contrary to her predecessors who treated shame as a primitive emotion when compared to guilt, Lewis placed them on par with each other. Another contribution to the research on shame offered by Lewis\textsuperscript{51} is related to the separation of shame from other emotions like disgrace, dishonor, and humiliation. In her 1971 book, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, Lewis writes, “the experience of shame is directly about the self, which is the focus of evaluation” (p. 30). Lewis argues that shame is a social emotion and an instinct that signals threat when there is a danger to social bond

\textsuperscript{50} Tomkins’ analysis on shame is based on his affect theory ideas summarized in the previous section. Emotions are biologically determined and can be understood through facial expressions.

\textsuperscript{51} More on Lewis’ work on shame is discussed in the next chapter in the literature review of shame. Her significant research comparing guilt to shame is highlighted as one of the most important scholarly works that called attention to shame as an emotion.
(Scheff, 2003). Later on in the book, Lewis defines shame as “irrational, primitive, wordless reaction experienced in imagery of looking…with little cognitive content” (p. 38). She explains how the experience of shame does not necessarily involve the actual observing audience; it involves an imaginary function of how one’s self can appear to others. In this sense, Lewis points to the phenomenological aspect of shame, where the self is both an agent and object of observation; a theme that was dealt with in Sartre’s existential/phenomenological work on shame.

**Phenomenological/Existential Views on Shame**

Jean-Paul Sartre’s (1956) ideas on shame are presented through his famous imagined scenario where a person is ‘seen/caught’ peeking through a keyhole, watching someone inside another room. Whether the observer is real or imagined, the mere fact of being seen by another subject elicits the experience of shame in the person peeking. Sartre (1956) writes, “By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as an object, for it is an object that I appear to the Other” (p. 302). Through shame, one becomes a conscious being, aware of his/her presence as an object limited in freedom, a “being for an other”. Although the realization is painful, Sartre (1956) asserts, “it is the shame or pride which makes me live, not know, the situation of being looked at” (p. 350).

**Shame as a human condition.** Sartre views shame as a human condition where there is no escape from being seen and objectified. The Other is “always present to me in as much as I am always for others” (Sartre, 1956, p. 374). Spalding (2006) claims that for Sartre, shame is revelatory and creative. Shame “triggers the feeling of ‘being what I am’

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52 More on Sartre and shame is presented later on in my analysis of the thesis. His perspective on shame and the Other presents an important ontological perspective complimentary to my thesis on the topic.
yet for an Other” (Spalding, 2006, p. 19). Shame experiences create a new identity or entity where its “locus is where the Other is situated and not within the self” (p. 19). Hence, through the Other, I learn “that I have an outside that is vulnerable and exposed, a body that exceeds my own conscious experiences” (Guenther, 2011, p. 6). Through shame experiences, I recognize my temporal dimension where “my foundation stands outside myself” (Metcalf, 2000, p. 89). Shame is not a state or feeling but recognition of the vulnerability brought on by my own existence. Metcalf writes:

> Pure shame, is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object; that is, of recognizing myself in this regard, fixed, and dependent being which I am for the other. Shame is the feeling of the original fall…simply that I have fallen into the world in the midst of things and that I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am. (Metcalf, 2000, p. 336-384)

The vulnerability of one’s existence recognized in Sartre’s shame experiences—only through an Other that objectifies me— is a theme that keeps on emerging in the context of this thesis. A thorough discussion on this theme in later chapters shows the impact of this emotion on the individual psyche and its connection to social life and/or the Other.

**Cognitive Components in Sartre and Lewis’ Shame**

In both Lewis’ and Sartre’s works, shame incorporates cognitive dimensions related to its involvement in the evaluation of the self. Although Lewis defines shame as ‘instinctive,’ she acknowledges the mental processes involved through self-evaluation when exposed to an Other. This is also evident in Sartre’s phenomenological explanation
where, by being taken by surprise, the feelings that shame brings out are also related to mental evaluation of one’s positioning in the presence of an Other. The interplay of feelings and cognition in shame shows its significance, where one does not happen without the other and makes shame an emotion in both individual and social dimensions.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how emotions, in particular shame, were viewed in the history of ideas. Clearly, cognition and rationality were considered a higher human faculty than emotions. With some exceptions, the separation between cognitions and emotions seems to be a common theme that lingers on throughout history.

This chapter highlights how shame implicates a different relationship between emotions and cognition, one that alludes to a connection between both. For example, Socrates’ shaming elenchus denote cognitive and logical evaluation on the shamed in regard to their own social and moral position. Also, Aristotle’s views on shame as a voluntary emotion and a learning tool imply cognitive evaluative components needed for learning to take place. Similarly, the evaluative cognitive components of shame are clearly stated in Augustine’s self-reflection on past wrong deeds and in Aquinas’ reflection on one’s vulnerability when getting closer to God.

With the advent of the scientific era, shame lost its significance, barely appearing in Freud’s work. But before long, Lewis’ sociological and psychological work resurrected the discussion on shame. Though at one point Lewis describes the emotion of shame as instinctive and involuntary, she goes on to reassert shame’s cognitive self-evaluative component. Though not directly stated, Sartre highlights the cognitive

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53 The exceptions I refer to were elicited by Aristotle’s ideas on the connection between evaluation and feelings, adopted by Aquinas and expanded on by Magda Arnold. This paved the way for a new trend in psychology; cognitive psychology.
components of shame allowing the shamed to evaluate one’s ontological presence and connection to the Other.

The evaluative cognitive component embedded in shame makes it an important emotion at both an individual and social level, mostly through its connection with an Other. Whether real or imagined, an individual or a group, shame elicits a cognitive evaluation of the self in relation to its positioning in front of that Other.

The following chapter offers a literature review on shame, where contemporary scholarly works from different disciplines are discussed. Reference to some of the theories mentioned in the historical overview are made and interpreted within the context of the new research on shame, showing its significance as an emotion and dynamic of power. Moreover, based on the fact that the focus of this thesis is on the phenomenon of shame as it relates to gender roles, the analysis of shame in this chapter shows how shame as an emotion with its evaluative cognitive components can work as an alienation force against women, either as a self-inflicted alienation or/and a social one. The following chapter addresses scholarly research with an overview of the different and differing interpretations of this emotion as it draws the attention to its significant connection to gender roles, mostly as a tool of control at both individual and social levels.
Chapter Three
Toward a Conceptualization of Shame

Introduction

In this chapter, I present different themes related to shame informed by scholarly contributions. My choice of themes and scholarly works informs the basic question of the thesis: What constitutes the experience of shame as both an emotion and a dynamic of power, with an emphasis on women’s gender roles? The presentation of scholarly literature on shame highlights such a phenomenon and leads to the next chapter’s discussion on the impact of shame as an emotion and power dynamic at both the individual and social levels. Scholarly literature will also help with the smooth integration of personal narratives throughout the dissertation.

I divide this chapter into three sections. In section one, I discuss scholarly debates on the difference between shame and guilt. Discussing the difference between shame and guilt helps one distinguish between the two. In section two, I present a literature review on shame, highlighting common themes discussed in different disciplines: shame as an embodied experience, characteristic reactions of shame experiences, and manifestations of shame experiences. In section three, I highlight the significance of ‘shame and the Other’ as a major theme in the phenomenon of shame. Bringing attention to this theme informs and paves the way for my discussion in Chapter four on the connection between shame, interest, longing to belong, and love.

54 Through discussing this chapter’s themes, I reach a new conceptualization of shame as an emotion and power dynamic at both the individual and social levels. Merging personal narratives with my conceptualization of shame validates lived experience and bridges the gap between academic theory and life issues.
Section One: Guilt and/or Shame?

What I have done points in one direction towards what has happened to others, in another direction to what I am. Guilt looks primarily in the first direction... shame looks to what I am. (Bernard Williams, 1993, p. 92)

Introduction and Reflection on Cultural Interpretations

The Arab culture is full of different perceptions and interpretations about shame as a phenomenon. For example, when someone tells you about an experience that brought about personal shame, you are likely to hear the statement, (Ya Ard Insahiie wiblaeiine) “Oh ground, open up and swallow me”. In some cultures, the statement “shame on you,” is sometimes used as banter between friends indicating the addressee’s boldness and power. Yet, the same statement can be used as a form of reprimand indicating wrongdoing. “You have no shame”, is another statement used when a person expresses no regrets over something not accepted by the society, community, etc. In Lebanon, when a person is reprimanding another individual over a particular wrongdoing, the shamed is expected to lower her gaze and avoid eye contact, otherwise it is a sign of no regret and lack of respect. While the statement, “I can’t believe she can look me in the eye” in English refers to shamelessness, the literal translation in Arabic is (illa ain thot eina biayne) “she has the eye to put hers in mine”. The reference to the physical, particularly the ‘eye’, in the phenomena of shame is significant and bears similar connotation across contexts, cultures, and history. Essentially, shame experiences are related to ‘being seen’ or looked at in the sense of being discovered, judged, and assessed in a diminishing and painful way. It is what Michael Lewis (1995) describes as the ‘eye of the other in me who
beholds my transgression’ (p. 92) and is often accompanied by an internal monologue of self-criticism.

When I first started thinking about shame as a topic for my dissertation, I shared some of my thoughts with friends and colleagues, many of whom believed that the reference to the eye in seeing is also linked to guilt. Female friends – mostly mothers – shared that when they imagine and think of themselves in the presence of a reprimanding ‘Other,’-- society, husbands, and children-- they feel a sense of guilt and not shame. One of my friends noted the fact that I am so invested in the idea of shame; I might be guilty of conflating shame with guilt.

**Scholarly Distinctions between Shame and Guilt**

One cannot discuss shame without discussing guilt. I believe both emotions constitute a continuum of the self, sometimes pulling at opposite ends and at times the same end. In this section, I present scholarly works that expand on the distinction between both. Among many authors who wrote on the topic, I emphasize the works of Phil Hutchinson (2008), Helen Lewis (1971), James Mensch (2005), Martha Nussbaum (2004), Piers and Singer (1971), Tangney and Dearing (2002), Gabriele Taylor (1985), and Bernard Williams (1993). Such combination of scholarly work is aimed at exploring the following connections of cognition, language, empathy, and responsibility toward guilt and shame.

A big part of the scholarly distinction between the two emotions at hand is historically rooted in Freud’s psychoanalytical work on the formation and structures of the human psyche. Thus, it is vital to explain the impact of Freud’s structures of the
“psyche” to understand some of his successors’ work regarding guilt and shame. Freud analyzes the human psyche in terms of three structures: Id, Ego, and Superego. According to this structural model of the psyche, the Id is related to our human instinctual drives, wants, and needs, and it is the only part of the psyche present at birth. The Ego is the part of the psyche that regulates and “ensures that the impulses of the Id are expressed in a way that is acceptable to the real world” (Siegfried, 2014, p. 2). The Superego represents moralizing principles related to norms and rules we learn throughout our upbringing and our environment; our sense of right and wrong. The Superego aims for perfection and includes the ego ideal: An important construct in understanding the phenomenon of shame. The ego ideal is related to what is considered ‘correct good behavior’; behavior that is approved by parental and authority figures and one that leads to the feeling of accomplishment, belonging, acceptance, and pride.

To Piers and Singer (1971), guilt is about the transgression of boundaries, and shame is about not fulfilling what is expected of you. In translating Piers and Singer’s interpretation of guilt and shame in psychoanalytic terms, guilt results from the tension between one’s ego and superego (what one wants to do and what one is allowed to do), and shame results from the tension between ego and ego ideal (what one wants to do and what one believes to be the right thing to do). Oliver (2004) echoes Piers and Singers’ interpretation of guilt as a crossing of social and legal boundaries, and shame as a crossing of ideals embedded in our ‘belief’ system, and hence directly related to self-

55 Some of Freud’s successors who wrote about guilt and shame and are mentioned in this part of the chapter are Helen Lewis (1971), Martha Nussbaum (2004), Piers and Singer (1971), and Gabriel Taylor (1985).

56 The ego ideal is an important concept I return to in my thesis argument when expanding on the connection between shame and love. I discuss this connection in chapter four through the works of Sarah Ahmed and Kelly Oliver.
evaluation. Oliver (2004) asserts, “Guilt is the feeling of wrongdoing...shame is the feeling of inferiority and defect” (p. 89). Accordingly, the distinction between both concepts seems to be directly related to the focus of evaluation: either a judgment of behavior or the self.

**The Focus of Evaluation: My “Self” or My “Behavior”**

To Gabriel Taylor (1985), shame and guilt are self-assessment emotions where both entail some kind of evaluation by the person involved. However, the focus and object of evaluation for each emotion is different. In shame, the focus of evaluation is the self and its deficiencies, that is, the person. In guilt, the focus of evaluation is the behavior/wrongdoing and its impact on others. While the wrongdoing in guilt can be dealt with through some form of punishment or compensation, in the case of shame, the totality of the self is involved, and one cannot make up for ‘what I now see I am’. Hence, withdrawal and hiding are some of the consequences in the shame experience (Lewis, 1971; Nussbaum, 2004; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Taylor, 1985; Williams, 1993). Tangney and Dearing (2002) add to Taylor’s categorization of guilt and shame as self-assessment emotions by considering them moral emotions. They assert that guilt and shame “arise from discrepancies between standards and aspects of our behavior or

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57 The assessment of an event/situation involving either feeling is always focused on either the behavior or the self. For a further clarification of this distinction, I refer to the following two examples: Saint Augustine’s confession regarding stealing the pear and a working mother who does not have enough time to spend with her children. If in both examples one’s assessment of the situation is directed toward the behavior, the result is guilt. In this case, Augustine’s act of stealing is paid off through serving time in prison or paying back for what was taken. Meanwhile, the mother’s lack of attention can be compensated by dedicating more time to the family during weekends or during family vacations. On the other hand, if the object of assessment is directed toward the self (like a lack in the person’s abilities, deficiencies), the result is shame and no compensation is possible. While the act of stealing, in Augustine’s case, will imply a deficiency in his self as an ideal Christian with God as the witness, the lack of attention in the mother’s case, will imply a deficiency in her qualities as an ideal mother where her society, family, and God are witnesses. In both cases, there is no possible compensation.
ourselves” (p. 69). This is while, in her groundbreaking work, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, Helen Lewis (1971) stresses the centrality of the self as the main anchor of reference, regardless of each emotion’s focus of evaluation (deficit in one’s traits and/or wrong behavior). Lewis writes: “The experience of shame is directly about the self, which is the focus of evaluation. …In guilt, the self is negatively evaluated in connection with something and is not itself the focus of experience” (p. 30).

**The Cognitive Processes in Guilt and Shame**

Tangney and Dearing (2002) maintain that when compared to other emotions, guilt and shame are more developmentally advanced because they involve cognitive processes of evaluation. Their emergence depends on two cognitive realizations that involve: “A clear recognition of the self, separate from others, and the development of standards against which the self and/or one's behavior is evaluated” (p. 140). Accordingly, shame and guilt involve a cognitive recognition of one’s attributes and behaviors as they “fail to match up to some internally or externally imposed standards” (p. 140).

Therefore, the cognitive component in guilt and shame can be understood in attributional terms. Tangney and Dearing argue that since the focus in shame is the entire self, the “cognitive process involves internal, stable and global attributions” related to the self. Since the focus in guilt is specific behaviors, the cognitive process “involves internal, specific, and presumably unstable attributions” related to the self (2002, p. 121). To support Tangney and Dearing’s reference to attributions, I refer to Tracy and Robin’s

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58 The cognitive recognition is a result of what social psychologists like Magda Arnold (1960), and Richard Lazarus (1991) refer to as one’s appraisal of a situation: i.e. our evaluation of the events resulting in the emotion we feel. In the case of shame and guilt, our evaluation of the event, behavior, and trait is what causes the feeling.
(2006) study: *Appraisal antecedents of guilt and shame*. In their study, Tracy and Robin refer to ‘ability’ as an ‘internal, stable, and global’ attribute of the self-connected to shame. They also point to ‘effort’ as an ‘internal, specific, and unstable’ attribute of the self-connected to guilt. For instance, when someone blames failure in completing a certain task on lack of ability (e.g. I am stupid), the result is shame. However, if the failure is blamed on an effort (e.g. I did not spend enough hours to study), the result is guilt (Tracy & Robins, 2006, p. 1340). Moreover, the connection between both feelings to attribution is clear when one feels shame as a result of someone else’s behavior, mainly someone who is a “friend or a family member closely associated with the self” (Tangney & Dearing, 2002, p. 140). For example, a father might feel deep sense of shame when his daughter/son is caught stealing or committing a crime. This shame might be linked to a sense of failure and lack of ability (internal, stable, uncontrollable) to raise his child as a good citizen. The above analysis on the connection of shame to stable uncontrollable attributes, and guilt to unstable controllable attributes supports the idea that it is easier to alter and deal with guilt as opposed to shame.

Lewis (1971) affirms the above point by pointing out that the emphasis on attributions, where the focus is either the self or the behavior, provides different phenomenological experiences and expressions for each emotion. Since self-exposure is the main focus in shame, the result is a feeling of shrinking and worthlessness.  

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59 Although Tangney and Dearing share that the shamed needs to be close to the self, through being a friend or a family member, I believe that shame is also affiliated with groups, nations, and context/person we hold dearly. For example, Canada and Lebanon are two contexts I hold dearly. The sectarian aggression that continues to erupt in Lebanon allows shame to creep in and engulf me, even when I am physically away from context. Similarly, Toronto’s late Mayor, Robert Ford’s public exhibition of embarrassing behaviors, especially when teased on comedy shows, equally makes me cringe filled with a sense of shame. In this sense, private shame becomes public shame and vice versa.

60 More on the phenomenological aspects of shame will be explained in the next section.
Considering that behavior is the main focus in guilt, the resultant feelings are less painful as they can be corrected and compensated for. Tangney and Dearing (2002) agree with Lewis on this latter point and assert that although guilt can be painful, it does not affect one's core identity. It involves a "sense of tension, remorse, and regret over the 'bad thing' done.... Guilt presses toward confession, reparation, and apology" (p. 19). To Tangney and Dearing, the self in shame undergoes negative evaluation and the emergent feelings pose a bigger threat to one's self esteem than guilt feelings. A shamed person becomes "hopelessly mired in an agonizing, ego-threatening state of shame with no obvious way out" (Tangney & Dearing, 2002, p. 92).

Martha Nussbaum (2004) presents yet another stance regarding the cognitive processes involved in guilt and shame. In contrast to the discussions on the cognitive processes involved in both emotions, Nussbaum maintains that only guilt involves cognitive evaluations. In her book, *Hiding from Humanity* (2004), Nussbaum refers to what she calls ‘primitive shame’\(^{61}\): an innate feeling that does not involve any cognitive evaluation related to the self or its behavior. Primitive shame\(^{62}\), which happens at the moment a child becomes aware of him/herself is negative in its nature and less mature than guilt. It is a human condition related to the discovery of our weakness and dependence on the other, a dependence we consider to be an abnormality. Nussbaum (2004) argues, “Shame is a permanent possibility in our lives, our daily companion” (p. 173). However, while shame is the discovery of our incompleteness and ‘imperfection’,

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\(^{61}\) Nussbaum locates ‘primitive shame’ in narcissism. In her book, *Hiding from Humanity*, she writes: “the primary narcissism of a typical human infant gives rise to a particular primitive and pervasive type of shame, as the infant encounters inevitable narcissistic defeats" (p. 184). More on the meaning of primitive shame is discussed in this section of the chapter.

\(^{62}\) Nussbaum does not claim that ‘primitive shame’ is the only kind of shame one experiences, but the most primitive, negative, and common form that humans experience at an early age.
guilt is a:

Reaction to the perception that one has done a wrong or harm. … Guilt originates in the child’s perception that her aggressive wishes…have projected harm toward another person who does not deserve to be harmed…In and of itself guilt recognizes the rights of others. In that way, its very aggression is more mature, more potentially creative, than the aggression involved in shaming, which aims at a narcissistic restoration of the world of omnipotence.63 (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 207)

Nussbaum (2004) asserts that shame in its “primitive type is a threat to all possibility of morality and community, and indeed to a creative inner life” (p. 208).

The Linguistic and Sensory Dimensions in guilt and Shame

Bernard Williams’ (1993) work, Shame and Necessity, adds a new dimension to the works of scholars who underline the cognitive phenomenological dimensions of emotions in an effort to distinguish between guilt and shame experiences.

To Williams, while shame is directly connected to “sight” as in “being seen”, guilt is connected to hearing, the sound of one’s conscience or “the voice of judgment.” (Williams, 1993, p. 89). In shame, the reaction to being seen—exposed-- is not only a wish to disappear, hide, or even “sink through the floor, but rather a wish that the space occupied by me should be instantly empty. With guilt…I am more dominated by the thought that even if I disappear, it would come with me” (Williams, 1993, p. 89). For Williams, the connection of guilt to hearing is clear; one hears the internal voice of conscience translated in words of duty, a language that implicates one’s self in the wrongdoing.

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63 The ‘world of omnipotence’ in Nussbaum’s work is related to the complete and sufficient world of the womb, one where the infant’s needs are instantly met and is in contrast to the world she faces after birth.
Mensch’s (2005) work on shame and guilt amounts to assessing how both emotions are expressed in everyday life. Similar to Williams, Mensch (2005) provides another analysis on the connection of guilt to hearing, yet substitutes the word hearing with language. Mensch asserts that the inner voice of conscience, stated in Williams’ analysis of guilt, is an amalgam of authority figures internalized within the self. It is “an amalgam of parents, elders, and other social and cultural authority figures” (Mensch, 2005, p. 104), manifested as the inner voice of conscience. When we violate the stricture of this ‘voice’, the sense of guilt arises. In Mensch’s own words:

The presence of this 'voice' of conscience indicates guilt's dependence on language...shame by contrast, usually requires a face-to-face [the ‘seen’ in Williams]. I am ashamed before the actual other, that is, before his or her concrete presence. I internalize this presence, rather than any generalized other. A primitive, immediate, pre-linguistic type of empathy is at work here, where I regard myself through the other's presently regarding me. This regard is painful...

In the absence of such others, I can escape its censure. As a pre-linguistic phenomenon, there is no inner voice to keep it alive. (Mensch, 2005, p. 104)

Shame, Guilt, and Empathy

Mensch’s discussion on the connection between shame, empathy, and responsibility differs from many of the above-mentioned scholar’s views. To Mensch, the

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64 Many scholars whose work incorporate the phenomenon of shame, for example, Sartre, Hutchinson, Pattison, Mensch, & Taylor assert that the other does not have to be present, but can be imagined.

65 Associating shame with pre-linguistic processes has to do with the impact of the gaze, the look, or the presence of the other on the shame experience. The feeling suddenly occurs at the very moment of exposure without any internal dialogue that precedes it. In guilt, it is the inner language we embody through the social voices and norms that precede and elicit the feeling. However, I am not claiming that language is not associated with shame. On the contrary, there is a lot of linguistic interference and self-dialogue that proceeds the moment of exposure in shame. Hence, its pre-linguistic aspects are related to the initial stages of the experience.
connection between shame and empathy is clear in the “look”, what he refers to as “regard”. Mensch reminds us that not any look elicits shame, but one imposed by someone important to us whose presence is acknowledged by us. In this sense, shame presupposes an acknowledgement of an other and involves an “empathy that is presupposed by this acknowledgement.” (Mensch, 2005, p. 110). Such acknowledgment requires an intimate relation between the self and the ‘Other’, one that is brought into consciousness through that Other’s ‘regard’ which in turn elicits shame. In other words, the ‘regard,’ i.e. the look, is an acknowledgment of a relationship with an Other in which empathy is its basic component. In this respect, Mensch points out:

Empathy in this case involves more than taking up the other's position, more than regarding myself from an external, objectifying standpoint… The experience of the person who makes me ashamed is not that of a person outside of me. It is rather of that person's invading me. I take up the person's standpoint in myself. I am within myself intimately regarded. (Mensch, 2005, p. 111)

While to Mensch shame presupposes acknowledgement and triggers empathy, other scholars hold a different point of view. Tangney and Dearing (2002) believe that shame experiences reduce empathy, while guilt experiences induce it. Considering that the offending behavior is at the centre of guilt, “the person experiencing guilt is relatively free of the egocentric, self-involved process characteristic of shame. In fact this focus on a specific behavior is likely to highlight the consequences of that behavior for a distressed other” (Mensch, 2005, p. 82). In the case of shame, “the tremendous preoccupation with the self draws one's focus away from a distressed other… [The shamed gets consumed with the] negative characteristics of the self”, and becomes “less concerned with the pain
experienced by the ‘harmed’ other” (Mensch, 2005, p. 83). Hence, such self-oriented behavior plays an important role in worsening one’s interpersonal skills reducing positive interactions with others. Nussbaum’s analysis on the nature of ‘primitive shame’ also presupposes a lack of empathy. The primitive shame she discusses is purely narcissistic, stemming from a lack in the individual’s fulfillment of his/her needs, “the consequent inability to tolerate any lack of control and imperfection… closely connected with … infantile omnipotence” (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 192). Therefore, with a lack of cognitive evaluative components and a self-centered narcissistic focus, primitive shame hinders the acknowledgement of an Other as well as empathy and responsibility toward that other.

Shame, Guilt, and Responsibility

According to Taylor (1985), guilt relates to responsibility in ways that shame does not. To her, the ‘voice of conscience’ in guilt, along with the knowledge that one brought the ‘forbidden state of affairs’ on oneself and others brings forth the need for retribution that one assumes responsibility for. However, shame reduces responsibility, as one cannot be responsible for what one does not have control over: deficits, weaknesses, and the way one appears to others (Taylor, 1985, p. 29). Tangney and Dearing (2002) affirm that while guilt is associated with a tendency to accept responsibility, the shamed self-expresses anger and exhibits a tendency to project blame outward, towards others (p. 79).

On the Contrary, Hutchinson (2008) and Williams (1993) aver that shame is the emotion that helps us realize our ethical responsibility towards the self and others. To Hutchinson (2008), only through shame can we become aware of the depth of violence and trauma we, as humans, inflict on one another:

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66 That if we assume there is a ‘harmed’ other in shame. Later discussions on shame will show that the shamed is the one mostly ‘harmed’ and excluded.
We must be alive to the poverty of our own view of our world, if we view that world (from a vantage point of comfort, security, and affluence) without shame. We should not turn from our shame, born of our seeing of our world as it is, for that is to stand while others suffer. (Hutchinson, 2008, p.155)

Hutchinson declares shame an essential element for understanding our responsibility in our world. To him, shame seeps through the depth of the self, forcing us to reflect on our positioning in and responsibility for an incomplete world. Similarly, Williams asserts that the strength of shame is reflected in the way it allows us to realize our ethical identity: one through which we can understand our infractions and their consequences on the self and others. Williams (1993) states: “The structures of shame contain the possibility of controlling and learning from guilt, because they give the conception of one’s ethical identity, in relation to which guilt can make sense. Shame can understand guilt, but guilt cannot understand itself” (p. 93). According to Williams (1993), only through shame, with its connection to ethical identity, can we understand the roots and source of our guilt. William’s interpretation of shame and its connection to guilt reveal a novel twist to the literature that considers them opposites.

I believe that the scholarly distinctions of both emotions do not tell the whole story. Although guilt is about a certain behavior directed outside myself, it still belongs to me--‘my self.’ I am also of the belief that since it is not always easy to understand and venture through the depth of the self where mostly shame resides, we seem to view it as negative, complex, and irrational at times. On guilt and shame Williams (1993) maintains:

Guilt seems a more transparent moral emotion than shame. It may be so, but
only because, as it presents itself, it is more isolated than shame is from other elements of one's self-image... It [guilt] leaves out a lot even of one’s ethical consciousness. It can direct one towards those who have been wronged or damaged, and demand reparation in the name, simply, of what has happened to them. But it cannot by itself help one understand ones relation to those happenings, or to rebuild the self that has done these things and the world in which the self has to live. Only shame can do that, because it embodies conceptions of what one is and how one is related to others. (Williams, 1993, p. 94)

Williams’ discussions on shame and guilt further affirm my reluctance to take a position on which emotion is more important, more positive, and more productive. Although shame and guilt can occur and are felt at different times, and for different reasons, they can also happen simultaneously for the same reason, being part of the self’s continuum. An incident and/or act can bring forth guilt while also eliciting shame. My previous example on the working mother is a case in point. When the mother’s children act in an ‘unacceptable’ way, she might feel guilty because she did not give enough attention and time to them and yet at the same time she might feel shame for not being able to fulfill the role of the ideal mother whose children act and behave well. Williams asserts that we can feel guilt and shame towards the same action, where “in a moment of cowardice, we let someone down; we feel guilty because we let them down, ashamed because we have contemptibly fallen short for what we might have hoped of ourselves” (Williams, 1993, p. 92).
Section one Conclusion

In this section, I presented various scholarly points of views (Tangney and Dearing, Lewis, Mensch, Nussbaum, and Williams) regarding shame and guilt. The discussions reveal that both emotions involve cognitive evaluative components, where the focus in shame is the self and the focus in guilt is the behavior. The connection between both emotions to voice and sight was discussed revealing a connection between voice and language to guilt, and sight to shame. Contrary to guilt, some scholars consider shame to be a self-centered emotion that hinders empathy and responsibility. Others consider it to be a tool for empathetic understanding of the Other and an emotion that elicits strong ethical responsibility towards the world.

While I agree with the fact that guilt can enhance responsibility and empathy, I do not think it is the case across the board. If I feel or am accused of being guilty\(^{67}\) of something, that does not mean I am empathizing with another and/or assuming responsibility, even when I am held accountable for my wrong behavior. To this end, Taylor (1985) claims that, “To feel guilty one needs not only accept that she has done something wrong but needs to accept the authority that forbids it” (p. 85). In the same way, I find some of Taylor and Tangney and Dearing’s claims about the lack of empathy and responsibility in shame troubling. Although I agree that shame’s pain can sometimes be crippling and can manifest itself in in anger and blame, I am hesitant about making it a generalization about this emotion. There are far too many times when shame creates self-inflicted isolation and seclusion, especially when most of the cognitive processes about shame are about the self and its failure to meet certain standards/ideals. In the next

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\(^{67}\) Sometimes the guilt feeling can be about losing face and have little to do with the consequence of my behavior toward others. Also, if I am found guilty under the law, that does not mean I feel it or agree with it.
chapter, I show how shame’s pain can elicit reflective and productive thinking that
enhances responsibility and empathy towards the self and others.

I specifically disagree with Martha Nussbaum’s notion of “primitive shame”. To
reiterate, Nussbaum claims shame is innate, primitive, instinctive, and connected to a
narcissistic longing for the omnipotent world of the womb. Her position on shame
forecloses hope and diminishes any cognitive evaluative components related it. If shame
is related to the incompleteness of the world outside the womb, then we are destined to a
lifetime of shame because our world and its inhabitants are consistently imperfect. Even
though Nussbaum briefly touches upon the presence of a more mature kind of shame or
‘respectful shame’, one that we might experience in adulthood, I wonder how one can
move from this primitive and narcissistic shame she considers a human condition to a
more mature and constructive shame? Moreover, Nussbaum’s shame is one that does not
involve any cognitive processes. Other than the fact that the majority of scholars refer to
shame’s cognitive components, every lived experience connected to shame shows how
we indulge in a cognitive evaluative process that at times enhances shame’s control over
our psyche. Tarnopolsky (2010) confirms my argument regarding Nussbaum’s shame:

If primitive shame really lingered in all of us to the extent that Nussbaum fears, it
would be hard to understand how we could ever have moved toward more
democratic institutions in which we all necessarily share in ruling and being ruled,
shaming and being shamed, in order to survive in an uncertain world.

(Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 193)

What is clear to me is that categorization of emotions is not a simple act,

68 Nussbaum’s shame is very similar to one of Freud’s structures of the psyche, the Id.
especially as all emotions are muddled and interconnected in the depth of the human psyche. Hence, categorizing these two emotions as different and/or opposite is equivalent to making claims about the human psyche solely for the sake of managing emotions -- what is appropriate to express and what is not-- and controlling the self/individuals in a way that serves the status quo. For example, when we categorize ourselves and those who feel shame as weaker, less confident, aggressive and lacking in empathy and responsibility, we are excluding and foreclosing hope for the shamed and for shame as a productive emotion. If we do so, we chose the normative understanding of what emotions are and we remove the critical lens needed to move beyond what is inherited from ‘the experts’ who are subservient to the status quo.

Section Two: Re-focusing on Shame

In this section, I present an interdisciplinary scholarly review of shame. The literature on shame shows the complexity of this emotion and the wide spectrum of academic interpretations, analysis, and definitions that make it intriguing.

Pattison (2000) explores the complexity of this phenomenon, stating that shame is like an onion “made up of enfolded and overlapping, but also discrete, meanings and understandings; there is no essential onion or essential shame at the center of meaning or experience” (p. 39). While Lewis’ (1971) asserts that shame experiences involve “autonomic reactions and an [exaggerated] awareness of the body” (p. 85), Pattison (2000) affirms that bodily external reactions do not “have to be present for shame to be experienced inwardly” (P. 75). What I found to be strikingly common in people’s narratives about their shame experiences is the reference they make to ache and pain. Although the ache is not always physical, shame brings about a very deep emotional and
psychological pain, some of which is physiologically expressed in the body of its beholder. Although shame is strongly felt by ‘its beholder’ and at times sensed by the observer, many of the shame experiences are suffered in silence and/or expressed in a different form/emotion.

In this section, I investigate shame as an embodied experience, including a discussion on what goes on in the body (at the physical, emotional, and cognitive levels), which ought to illustrate the strong impact of shame on the whole self. Although I discuss how shame is felt on the body, my discussion is only an attempt as emotional experiences vary from one individual to another. Also, through presenting different and differing scholarly interpretations and conceptions of this emotion, I highlight the difficulty one can face in trying to categorize shame in either/or terms -- moral/social, or negative/positive.

Through this chapter’s scholarly discussions and interpretations about shame, common themes surface many of which will constitute the basis for my conceptualization of shame as an emotion and power structure.

**Scholarly Conceptions of Shame**

Although a vast amount of information on shame was divulged in the previous section through its comparison with guilt, this part provides-in depth definitions and interpretations of the phenomenon.

Helen Lewis' (1971) views shame as “inherently a social emotion and an instinct that signals threat… threat to the social bond” (as cited in Scheff, 2003, p. 247). Shame

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69 In the previous chapter, I discussed how the behaviorists’ attempt to measure and define emotions had failed. It became clear that it is not possible to explain emotional phenomenon through observing different people feeling the same emotion, as every person expresses the same emotion differently.
protects the boundaries of the self, especially when exposure of individual weakness, deficits, and/or vulnerabilities threaten their social bond. According to Tomkins (1987), the need for social bond is expressed in our interest in an Other. Tomkins (1987) contends that such an interest is associated with shame. He writes: “Shame operates after interest or enjoyment has been activated; it inhibits one, or the other, or both…the innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest and joy” (p. 143). Tomkins explains how at a superficial level shame is related to our own unfulfilled wishes to be looked at and connect to another, either because that person is a stranger, or because one’s act itself is considered to be strange. Accordingly, Tomkins defines shame as “a painful affect resulting from any interruption of pleasure and expectation" (as cited in Nussbaum, 2004, p. 184). Since one’s interests and pleasures reveal the self’s hidden longings, Nathanson (1987) interprets shame as a “fear of being exposed, and judged negatively by others” (p. 6), an intrusion into what is hidden. Pattison’s (2000) conception of shame reveals the intensity of such intrusion. To him, shame is “an entrance to the self. It is the affect of indignity, of defeat, of inferiority, and of alienation… Shame is a wound felt from the inside, driving us away both from ourselves and from one another” (p. 1). Pattison’s views are echoed by Zahavi (2011), who asserts that shame is an emotion which “in an accentuated manner targets and involves the self in

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70 By social I refer to the ‘Other’, one and many, in one’s immediate society. I believe that boundaries between the self and ‘Other’ differ depending on the circumstances and nature of the relationship. For example, most painful experiences of shame take place in love relationships. When in love, boundaries between the self and the loved one become permeable, allowing for the exposure of one’s vulnerabilities, hence making one more susceptible to shame.

71 Tomkins writes about those instances when we show interest in someone, yet the person does not reciprocate the feeling as an example of shame due to incomplete inhibition of joy and interest.

72 Tomkins’ examples on shame are not limited to the ones I share in this paragraph. His work refers to different types of shame, some of which are related to our existence and presence in the world. For further reading, refer to the book, The Many Faces of Shame, edited by Donald Nathanson.
its totality” (p. 211). Pattison’s and Zahavi’s points of view strengthen the claim regarding shame’s ability to engulf and involve the whole self. Such entrance to the self uncovers its otherwise hidden weaknesses, fears, and longings; an exposure forced on the body. Nussbaum (2004) asserts the above point in her conception of shame: "Sometimes our abnormal weaknesses are uncovered anyway, then we blush, we cover ourselves, we turn away our eyes. Shame is the painful emotion that responds to that uncovering" (p. 173).

While Nussbaum’s interpretation of shame points out its strong impact on the individual self, Pattison (2000) emphasizes shame’s impact on both the individual and collective—those judged as unworthy to be part of the system and hence alienated from it. Pattison explains, “Shame is a condition of alienation that has social and therefore political dimensions revolving around the use of power and social control” (2000, p. 155).

Wurmser’s (1987) definition of shame brings forth a different perspective, one that is similar to those of the Greek Philosophers discussed earlier. Wurmser’s definition is comprised of three components:

Shame is first the fear of disgrace, it is the anxiety about the danger that we might be looked at with scorn. Second, it is the affect of contempt directed against the self-by other or by one’s own. …Third… it is an overall character trait preventing such disgraceful exposure, an attitude of respect toward the others and towards oneself, a stance of reverence…reverence for oneself. (Wurmser, 1987, p. 67)

73 More on Nussbaum’s analysis of shame, what she mainly calls ‘primitive shame,’ is unpacked in this section. Also Pattison’s work on shame as a connection between the individual and the social will also be discussed thoroughly.
Wurmser’s definition presents a preventive component to shame, one that protects the self from the painful exposure that causes self-denigration and alienation. In this sense, Wurmser’s shame is reflective, respectful to the self, and positive.

These scholarly conceptions of shame indicate that there exists a tight and intimate connection between shame and the self, a connection that is impressed on the body (individually and socially). Shame can occur either in private, when no one is observing, or in public in the presence of others. It enforces a sense of exposure and uncovering that demands re-covering, mostly related to feelings of inferiority and weakness. Shame either results in alienation and isolation or imposes a fear of being disgraced and refused. It reveals and simultaneously disrupts the self’s interest and enjoyment threatening the social bond. The above discussions highlight themes and common shame characteristic reactions\(^74\) that I present in the next section.

**Characteristic Reactions of Shame Experiences**

‘What does it feel like?’ he asked- and his mother, seeing his bewilderment, essayed explanations. ‘Your face gets hot,’ said Bunny the youngest, ‘but your heart starts shivering.’ ‘It makes women feel like to cry and die.’ Said Chhunni ma, ‘but men, it makes them go wild.’ (Rushdie, 1983, p. 33)

Salman Rushdi’s quote is an excellent depiction of shame’s embodied experience, and is the mother’s answer to her son’s question about the meaning of shame. Most importantly, the quote highlights different shame reactions across genders — or perhaps different social constructs about how men and women react to a shame experience.

\(^74\) Some of the shame characteristic reactions I next present also emerged in the comparison between shame and guilt.
The body in shame. Rushdi’s quote highlights what I believe to be one of shame’s most significant characteristic reactions: the way it is felt on the body. The intensity of shame’s physiological manifestations and the sense of paralysis it brings contribute to its categorization as one of the most negative emotions. Tarnopolsky (2010) argues that “some of the opposition to shame comes from the fact that it is a discomforting and unpleasant emotion and experience” (p.10). To reiterate, shame is commonly felt due to what is believed to be a bad or immoral act committed by the shamed; a feeling that stems from a sense of failure mostly experienced before an Other (real and/or imagined). To Ahmed (2004), “shame can be described as an intense and painful sensation that is bound up with how the self feels about itself, a self-feeling that is felt by and on the body” (p. 103). Likewise, Jean Paul Sartre (1956) believes shame to be an immediate shudder that runs through the whole body, powerful enough to be felt as an “internal hemorrhage” (p. 261). Moreover, Lewis (1995) asserts that shame experiences result in “an implosion of momentary destruction of the self.” (p. 95). The body in shame expresses such ‘implosion’ through its own gestures: the head bows, heart rate increases, eyes are closed and/or gaze is averted, back is hunched and curved, and the face blushes (Ahmed, 2004; Kaufman, 1992; Lewis, 1971; Nathanson, 1987; Probyn, 2005).

The self in shame. Shame’s bodily gestures do not work in isolation; they are accompanied by specific thoughts about the self, reinforcing its ‘implosion’. Hence, whether it is the exposure of one’s actions, transgressions, or innermost longings and interests (many of which are considered to be deficits or ills by societal norms), the self is blamed, exposed, and vulnerable. Ahmed (2004) explains how in shame, a feeling is impressed on the body where the subject, paradoxically, becomes a “being against itself”,
negating one’s self (p. 103). These experiences reflect what Lewis considers to be a split in the functioning of the self where the self is the observer and at the same time the object of observation and disapproval. Such a process, according to Mensch (2005), is reinforced by the Other’s ‘regard’; a ‘regard’ that “invades my person and …becomes me. I take up the [other’s]…standpoint in myself. I am within myself intimately regarded” (Mensch, 2005, p. 111).

Self-negation in shame involves thoughts of exaggerated self-blame, deficiency, and/or unworthiness that turn this self away from others, hence resulting in what Nathanson (1987) refers to as “characteristic actions”: a need to hide, avoid being seen, flee, or sink in the ground. Feelings and thoughts related to shame experiences are intertwined and trigger one another; one ends where the other begins, like a circle. Kaufman (1992) explains this process in the following manner, “the precipitating event is living internally over and over, causing the sense of shame to deepen… until finally the self is engulfed. In this way, shame becomes paralyzing” (p. 67).

**Manifestations of Shame Experiences**

One can argue that some of the above shame expressions are also characteristic of other emotions like fear, rage, embarrassment, and humiliation. Accordingly, this poses a couple of questions: What differentiates shame from the above-mentioned emotions and are they related to shame? To answer both questions, I focus on three emotions that keep surfacing in most scholarly discussions on shame: humiliation, embarrassment, and rage.

Once again, scholarly views on the relationship between these three emotions and shame differ. While to some, humiliation, embarrassment, and rage are not in the same category as shame, to others they are a lighter manifestation of shame and belong to the
Humiliation, embarrassment, and shame. Both Scheff (2003) and Pattison (2000) consider shame to be a complex emotion. To Scheff, shame is a “large family of emotions that includes many cognates and variables, most notably, embarrassment, guilt, humiliation, and shyness that originate in threats of the social bond” (2003, p. 225). Similarly, Kaufman (1992) asserts that any emotion that initiates feelings of self-exposure is a form of shame or at least belongs to the same family.

However, there are a number of scholars who disagree with such claims that humiliation, embarrassment, and shame belonging to the same family of emotions. Nussbaum (2004) asserts that although humiliation can indicate that the person in question is considered to be lower, “not on a par with others in terms of human dignity,” (p. 204), it does not always lead to shame. Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni’s (2012) position echoes that of Nussbaum. To Deonna et al. (2012), humiliation is not the same as shame and can only take place through public exposure where we blame others for the feeling. Shame can take place without public exposure; it can occur through the mere imagining of the other where the self is blamed for the feeling (Deonna et al., 2012, p. 157). When it comes to embarrassment, scholars agree that it is a lighter matter that does not carry intense feelings like humiliation. To both Nussbaum (2004) and Taylor (1985), embarrassment is a feeling that is experienced momentarily, temporary, and contextually while also involving perceptions that something or someone is out of place. However, when the situation is over, the feeling subsides.

Tarnopolsky (2010) offers an explanation regarding what distinguishes shame from other emotions, one that might settle some of the scholarly debates on the matter.
Tarnopolsky stresses that the cognitive processes involved in an emotional state, i.e. the 'cognitive antecedent' and the 'intentional object', are what differentiate emotions from each other. She argues that contrary to all other emotions, shame's intentional object is the self and not the other. In shame, "the evaluation involved in the emotion refers back to the self. The cognitive antecedent of shame, which involves some kind of gaze by an other, and the intentional object of shame, [the self] …involve the judgment of a perceived inadequacy in the self printed by the gaze of this other" (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 102). Gilbert and Andrews (1998) speaks to Tarnopolsky’s ideas asserting that what is significant in shame is the “belief that we cannot create positive images in the eyes of others; we will not be chosen, will be found lacking in talent, ability, and appearance; we will be passed over, ignored or actively rejected” (p. 17).

The premise explored by Tarnopolsky regarding ‘intentional object,’ and ‘cognitive antecedents’ makes sense when comparing shame to some other emotions. However, when it comes to the distinction between humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, I do not find Tarnopolsky’s premise to hold true. Although the ‘intentional object’ in humiliation and embarrassment is not the self, the cognitive processes involved at the moment of exposure can turn the focus onto the self-changing the feeling into shame. In such cases, the shame we feel when we are humiliated is not caused by a belief in inadequacies of the self, “but because we know that we have created a negative unattractive image of the self in the eyes of the others” (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998, p. 11). Although I agree with Gilbert and Andrews’ reference to the connection between shame and the inability to fulfill a self-image others long for in their relationship to us, I disagree with relating shame to our knowledge ‘that we have created’ an unattractive
image. Although shouldering some degree of responsibility for creating a negative self-image can be acceptable in some circumstances, it is not always the case. Some of the shame we are exposed to in our relationships with others is related to our need to be accepted, belong to, and be loved by Others and failing to be what Others want and long for (their ideals). More on this connection will be explicitly discussed in the next chapter. In addition, public or private repetitive embarrassment and humiliation weakens personal confidence and allow shame and feelings of inadequacy to creep in. In support of the above claim, I share a narrative:

_In humiliation and embarrassment: my neighbor’s shame._ In many Middle Eastern countries, it is not uncommon to witness husbands scrutinizing their wives in front of others. This is rooted in a cultural attitude about women told in the form of jokes in social gatherings: “most women don’t know what they are talking about.” In the Arabic language the same statement is expressed in “niswain binos aael,” literally meaning ‘women are with half brains’. For many years, I witnessed my neighbor’s humiliation and embarrassment inflicted by her husband in front of others. When attempting to participate in conversations on any topic other than the ones related to family matters--i.e. kids’ life, cooking, cleaning etc.--my neighbor was consistently belittled, demeaned, and ridiculed by her husband. The humiliation and sarcastic comments always took place in front of us, the neighbors. I witnessed the transformation of my neighbor from an outgoing self-assured woman to an isolated being. Throughout the years, her physical demeanor became an embodiment of shame, a hunchback posture, lowered gaze, and a person who avoided social encounters.
My neighbor’s narrative shows the complexity of the human psyche and the mixture of emotions and cognitive processes it involves. If we simply consider Tarnopolsky’s point on the connection between the ‘intentional object’ and ‘antecedents’, my neighbor’s sense of self should not be impacted when humiliated, diminished, or told off publically by her husband because it (self) is not the ‘intentional object’. However, I believe that Tarnopolsky’s distinction between shame and other emotions, i.e. humiliation/embarrassment in relation to the ‘intentional object’ and ‘antecedents’ might work only at the initial stages of exposure. It is evident that recurrent humiliation, especially when conducted by people we care for and love, leads to shame. Such recurrent situations create a sense of an ‘unattractive image’ in front of others, consequently leading to a new set of negative cognitive processes that directly involve the self. Hence, the intentional object in embarrassment and humiliation is not the self, the cognitive processes involved after the initial stage of exposure-in front of others-change. The self in the eyes of its beholder becomes the ‘intentional object’ eliciting the feelings of shame. This can happen in cases of rage-shame, the subject of the following discussion.

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75 My understanding of the human self, emotions, and shame particularly, will stay peripheral, as such phenomenon are so private and complex. My work is an attempt to point out the impact of shame on the human and social psyche.

76 Claiming that in such cases the self is not the ‘intentional object’ might be surprising to some. But as I previously shared, when it comes to emotions and human psyche there isn’t a set rule. For example, in many cases especially those occurring in patriarchal societies, many women are aware of and accept the power play—one of which is putting women off- men exhibit in front of others as an assertion of sense of a manhood and control.
**Fear, rage/anger, and shame.** Many scholars assert that the pain elicited at shame’s initial stages can result in emotional manifestations like fear and rage. Such emotional manifestations help the self cope with shame’s intensity. Kaufman (1992) asserts:

> Feeling exposed is often followed by fear of further exposure and further occurrences of shame. The feelings of distress more commonly referred to as hurt frequently accompanies shame. And the instant flash of rage, whether expressed or merely held inside, vitally protects the self from further exposure. (Kaufman, 1992, p.11)

To reiterate, Tangney and Dearing (2002) believe that since shame is directly related to the worthlessness of the self, the shamed feels stuck in an ‘ego threatening state’ with no way out. This ego-threatening state results in anger and hostility towards the self. Yet, by trying to protect the self from such intense destructive feelings, one either withdraws emotionally or blames others and lashes out at them; a shift of focus that reduces self-awareness. Tangney and Dearing affirm that the shamed is stuck in an imagery of a blaming other, a characteristic of the “phenomenology of shame as it involves a heightened awareness of others’ presumed evaluation” (p. 94). “Shame-based blame” and anger can either lead to withdrawal (my neighbor’s story) or to escalating hostility, blame, and counter-blame. In both cases, “the end result is likely to be a rift in the interpersonal relationship" (p. 95)

**Narrative: My brother and I.** During our childhood, my brother and I imagined our future, where he will buy a motorcycle and will take me to see the world. He promised he would always take care of me and protect me against the harshness of life.

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77 This shift of focus from the self to others is what makes shame, according to Tangney and Dearing, incapable of empathy.
But life’s harshness touched him first. In the name of love, he became the scapegoat of anger and shame inflicted on him by my parents. His actions, what would be considered natural teenage acts (interest in sexuality and women, refusal to go to school, running away from home when reprimanded) were constantly shamed, admonished, and harshly punished by our parents. My brother left school, travelled abroad, faced multiple failures, and became an angry adult blaming the whole world for his actions and misfortunes. To this date, he finds himself stuck in a cycle of anger, blame, self-loathing, and passes through stages that ranges between love and anger: Extreme anger directed at my parents at times, extreme dedication and love to them at other times, and lots of hostility and anger at himself. What is clear to me is that my brother became an embodiment of pain and shame hidden under the facade of rage and anger.

Rage’s ontological depth. Nathanson’s (1987) analysis on ‘shame-rage,’ reveals yet another ontological depth to shame. He echoes Tangney and Dearing’s claim that ‘shame rage’ is a consequence of one’s hostility towards the self, which is mainly experienced because of the other’s judgment and/or betrayal. However, he affirms that as long as shame is “to the fore in consciousness, it is the other who is experienced as the source of hostility. Hostility towards the rejecting or betraying other is almost simultaneously evoked” (Nathanson, 1987, p. 111). The exchange of hostility and ‘shame-rage’ involves cognitive processes that make the shamed feel guilt and helplessness for carrying hostile and angry feelings toward a loved one-- feelings that are evaluated by Nathanson as inappropriate and unjust. Nathanson (1987) further explains how “to be furious and enraged by someone because one is unloved by her/him renders one simultaneously guilty” (p. 111) and causes the evoked anger to be redirected back on the self with further
shame and guilt. Nathanson explains how, eventually, when “the other continues to be loved or valued, the awareness of one’s humiliated fury is muted, and it is ‘turned back upon the self’ and transformed into depression” (1987, p. 111). Meanwhile, Gilbert and Andrews (1998) underline that in this process, rage and anger are not always conscious feelings. Although rage and anger are subsequent reactions to shame, they can happen so “rapidly that a person may lack conscious awareness of feelings of shame” (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998, p. 7). They call this form of shame “bypassed shame”.

The discussions above make me wonder and reflect upon the narratives shared about my neighbor and my brother. Was it the ‘unattractive image’ my neighbor’s spouse succeeded to instill in her that transformed her humiliation into shame? Was it the ‘unattractive image’ my parents succeeded to instill in my brother that transformed his shame into shame rage and despair? Was my neighbor's humiliation a rift in interpersonal relationships or was it anger and blame at a loved one that got directed towards the self and led to her isolation? Was my brother’s shame a rift in interpersonal relationships, where he chose to emotionally separate from us, his siblings, under the pretense that he is not good enough? It seems there are not definitive answers to such questions considering the many subtle, hidden, and complex factors related to this intriguing phenomenon. I end this section with yet another narrative that further exemplifies the complexity of shame and its accompanying emotions.

The angry masculine and the subdued feminine. For the majority of families in

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78 More on ‘bypassed shame’ is presented in the next section on this kinds of shame.

79 When thinking about interpersonal relationships in connection to shame and gender roles, another question comes to mind: What is the implication of the above discussions re rage/anger and blame as secondary reactions to shame when we think about gender roles in patriarchal contexts? Rushdi’s quote at the beginning of this section hints at gender-based reactions to shame. My upbringing in a patriarchal world, where most of the girls ought to keep a low profile, low voice, lower their gaze, and suppress their anger, support Rushdi’s quote. Shame, for Rushdi, makes women cry and men angry.
Lebanon, girls are raised quite differently from boys. As a young girl, I was always instructed to keep my voice low: ‘Good girls never raise their voices’. I eventually learnt my society’s rules. I learnt to keep my voice low, to ‘act’ shy in the presence of elders—lower my gaze and speak only when I am addressed. Even today and in spite of the emergence of modernization in Lebanon, the same rules still apply in many families. Many women still ‘play’ the role of the subdued in order to manage their lives without being harassed and shamed, and many of the men ‘play’ the role of the patriarch, for whom masculinity is expressed in overt anger. Men are allowed to speak loudly, get angry at each other, their families, and surroundings; anger becomes a sign of courage and power. Men and women seem to embody such roles, even if they do not believe in them. Such roles act as a coping mechanism within existing hegemonic structures.

**Reflections on the Master of all emotions**

In the section above, I presented scholarly interpretations of different forms of shame. The discussions showed that although embarrassment and humiliation can lead to shame, they do not seem to always touch the self in its totality. However, in the context of shaming experiences, rage seems to be an expression of lashing out at the self and/or a defense mechanism against the pain caused by the self’s inadequacies. Reflecting on gender behavior in the Middle East, anger seems to be an expression of masculinity, and lashing out is an accepted and expected emotional expression and characteristic of power amongst men. In contrast to anger, shyness, and humility are characteristics of women, and withdrawal through shame seems to be the appropriate female form of behavior. Once again, the examples/narratives above illuminate the complexity of this phenomenon and its power over other emotions.
In light of these points, Scheff’s (2003) declaration of shame as the master of all emotions makes sense. It highlights shame’s central role in regulating the expression and awareness of all other emotions. Scheff (2003) asserts: “We are not likely to express anger, fear, grief, and love, for example, outwardly to the degree that we will be ashamed of them. One can be so ashamed of one’s emotions that they can be repressed completely” (p. 254). I agree with Scheff on the impact of shame and its capability to control and hold all other emotions in check, making it “the master of all emotions”—a perfect tool of control. I wonder if my brother’s emotional fluctuation between rage, love, self-loathing, anger, and despair, is related to an additional personal shame about what he is feeling from within—what he might think he is not supposed to feel. Scheff’s position highlights the complexity and difficulty imbedded in categorizing and defining such an emotion, shame! Nevertheless, when it comes to scholarly work, shame is not only categorized but also given prescribed types. In the next section, I present yet more scholarly categorization of this emotion: Types of shame.

Types of Shame

In the preceding section on the connection between shame and other emotions, I discussed different types of shame: shame-rage and shame-blame. In this part, I present scholarly categorization of shame experiences in different forms. Even though I have referred to different types of shame in earlier discussions, they were discussed in connection to other themes. In this section, I reiterate, explain, and discuss some of the different types of shame as discussed in the literature.

To reiterate, Nussbaum (2004) maintains that although we experience many kinds of shame within the course of our lives, primitive shame is the most basic,
dominant, and innate kind of shame experienced. Nussbaum (2004) asserts that shame is related to "the primary narcissism of a typical human infant [which] gives rise to a particular primitive and pervasive type of shame, as the infant encounters inevitable narcissistic defeats" (p. 184). According to Nussbaum (2004), primitive shame is "the demand for perfection and the consequent inability to tolerate any lack of control and imperfection- is a type of shame, closely connected with narcissism, or infantile omnipotence" (p. 192). Simply stated, primitive shame is our frustration with our omnipotence and limitation. It starts when infants’ needs are not met in a similar fashion as during its time in the womb. Family is the first source of primitive shame, followed by society. It manifests itself in many forms; shaming others is one example (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 192). Contrary to Nussbaum’s position on shame as primitive and innate, Lewis (1995) asserts that shame is a self-conscious emotion and can only occur when individuals/children develop an objective self-consciousness that helps them evaluate themselves. Lewis (1995) rejects the notion of shame as either a primary innate affect present from birth or an automatic response to stimulus that occurs after birth. To Lewis (1995), shame “is a complex secondary emotional response. So, where there is no objective self-awareness and no evaluation, there can be no shame” (p. 50). Similarly, Tarnopolsky (2010) argues against Nussbaum’s reference to shame as primitive and innate. Tarnopolsky’s argument is related to her objection of the mainstream categorization of emotions as either/or: positive /negative, rational/irrational, moral/amoral. Such categorizations “are remnant of the early modern dualism between mind and body, and reason and passion, which have plagued the study of emotions and rationality for centuries” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p.176). Tarnopolsky also argues for the
interconnectedness of emotions and provides examples on how shame and guilt can be felt at the same time.\textsuperscript{80}

She writes:

\begin{quote}
Is it not the case that these emotions are much more interconnected in our lives? Shame and guilt often work together to motivate us to change ourselves in response to actions that we deem unworthy for our ideals or exemplars for action that are encapsulated in our various other. (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p.173)
\end{quote}

Tarnopolsky proposes two types of shame: Flattering and respectful shame both of which are a function of a mature and objective recognition of the self. Although I discussed both types of shame in chapter 2, I reiterate some of their basic characteristics as discussed in Tarnoplosky’s work. Flattering shame takes place at the moment of recognition where one is being seen by others “not to be what one thought one was, and alternately, what one considers ‘good’ is to be recognized by oneself and others as simply what one already takes oneself to be” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 19). In this sense, flattering shame is non-transformative because rather than avoiding the action that is judged to be worthy of criticism, one avoids the situation and criticism that causes pain and discomfort. Both the shamed and the observer, adapt to each other’s views in a way where they do not reveal any inadequacies, and “engage in the pleasure of reciprocal recognition as such” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p.106). However, contrary to flattering shame, respectful shame offers respect to the other by staying open to criticism at the moment of recognition. In this vein, Tarnopolsky writes:

\begin{quote}
The mortality grounded in this kind of respectful shame consists, not in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{80} For more reading on this the muddling of shame and guilt, refer to chapter six in Tarnopolskoy’s book, \textit{Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants}.
assimilating to a standard or norm, but rather in remaining open to the ongoing possibility that who you are cannot be captured by any particular norm of self-image you currently possess. (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p.19)

Although this type of shame involves a realization of a distinction between the self and the ‘Other’ (initially creating discomfort and perplexity), it is, however, “necessary for self-consciousness, self-reflection, self-criticism, and moral political deliberation” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 159). Therefore, “flattering shame includes the problematic desire that we fix this boundary once and for all by coming to see ourselves as the omnipotent and invulnerable beings” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 22), while respectful shame “keeps open the possibility that both the self and the other might be transformed” (Tarnopolsky, 2010, p. 25).

Similarly, Scheff (2003) asserts that there are mainly two types of shame: shame-disgrace—related to when one is in the midst of the shaming event and everyday shame. Nathanson (1987) argues that the confusion over shame’s definition is related to how “many commentators deal only with shame-as- disgrace, [which] is inadequate” (p. 198). Nathanson (1987) argues that everyday shame--a sense of shame--is important, carries no offense, and is necessary for proper behaviors (p. 240). Williams (1993) also refers to the ‘sense of shame’--what he calls ‘prospective shame’--as a regulator of behavior. According to Williams (1993), prospective shame stems from instilling a sense of fear in a person. For Williams, abiding by social standards and norms is an example of ‘prospective shame’ being at work.

While many scholars argue for and against different types of shame, Pattison (2000) presents an eclectic interpretation of the phenomenon. He expands on the notion
of overt shame--one that is recognizable by the shamed and the observer--internal hidden shame--one that is felt only by its beholder--and bypassed shame--the kind proposed by Michael Lewis. Bypassed shame involves the lacking awareness of one’s shame and can only be realized through one’s doubt about the self’s image from the other’s point of view (p.197). Taking into account the belief that as humans we are not perfect, Pattison pays attention to another type of ontological inherent shame, what he refers to as universal shame. Universal shame is the kind of shame “that surrounds simply being a mortal embodied human being and having to cope with the limits of that conditions” (Kundera, 1984 & Hans 1991, as cited in Pattison, 2000, p. 86). Since we are limited and mortal, ontological shame “is an inevitable part of human being and destiny” (Pattison, 2000, p.181).

Similarly, Hutchinson (2008) discusses an ontological/existential form of shame, called recalcitrant shame. This is a kind of shame “felt despite beliefs being held that tell one that one has nothing of which to be ashamed” (Hutchinson, 2008, p. 112). Thus, regardless of the judgment related to the shaming incident/crime, recalcitrant shame is an emotion that is not dependent on a set of evaluative beliefs. It is a “feel-quality, an affect.” (Hutchinson, 2008, p. 113). In arguing for the presence of recalcitrance shame, Hutchinson writes on crime and its magnitude:

It is part of the magnitude of the crime that one finds it so difficult to make sense of the human consequences of that crime, ...of meaning. [This is] rather to acknowledge how desperately and utterly difficult it can be, after the event, while the shame is forcing itself upon one, to make sense of that shame. Shame is both the residue of the crime and the continuation of the crime. (Hutchinson, 2008, p.
Hutchinson’s example speaks to the strong sense of shame I feel when I hear about the factional wars that break out in Lebanon from time to time. In this sense, although recalcitrance shame is related to the ‘feel-quality’ of the incident and does not require a judgmental quality, it is nevertheless dependent on the values we hold towards humanity, our existence, and atrocities.

Section two: Conclusion and Reflection

An examination of the different types of shame highlights the complexity of interpretation when it comes to the experience of shame. I end this section with a quote from Silvan Tomkins (1987):

Shame is in no way limited to the self, to the other, or to society. …But, as is characteristic of shame, one may also bow one’s head in awe and shame at the unexpected grandeur and beauty of a sudden view of an ocean. … shame may be felt at the vicissitude of fate, particularly in the face of death, when the self acknowledges the fragility of cherished relationships. …Shame is experienced as shyness when one wishes to be intimate with the other but also feels the impediments to immediate intimacy. … Shame is experienced as inferiority when discouragement is located in the self as an inability of the self to do what the self wishes to do. (Tomkins, 1987, p.153-154)

This section focuses on the complexity of shame. It explains the difficulty embedded in giving this phenomenon a specific definition and or interpretation. Shame is
interpreted differently by each person’s experience and context. Shame is a deep experience that reveals one’s fragility in the face of what Tomkins’ refer to in the quote above. However, one thing is certain about shame: The presence of an ‘Other’ as a significant element in the experience. Whether it is primitive shame, respectful and flattering shame, shame-disgrace, shame-anger, recalcitrant ontological shame, and bypassed shame, they all require an Other. Such Other can be real or imagined, singular or plural, embedded in a norm/belief, or a representative of a norm (parent, patriarch, and/or religious leader). The other is clearly invested in the experience of shame even when the emotion is felt viscerally, individually, and discreetly.

The next section in this chapter looks at the significance of the other in the shame experience.

Section Three: The Ontology of Shame

Although Jean Paul Sartre’s (1956) work on shame is not considered to be part of the contemporary literature on the topic, it used as a reference by a large number of modern-day writers. In light of the fact that Sartre’s ideas on shame relate to important parts of my thesis, I focus his work in this section. Sartre’s work on shame, along with its contemporary scholarly interpretations, highlights the significant connection between the self and Other, a main focus of the next chapter. For a better understanding of Sartre’s analysis on shame and its connection to the Other, I outline his basic philosophical ideas on phenomenology and ontology, many of which underlie his ideas on shame.

The intersubjective dimension of a conscious experience is a basic premise in Sartre’s phenomenological/existential thought. In this vein, Sartre ascertains that there are

81 It is clear to me that different scholars’ interpretations and definitions of shame stem from their own experiences and contexts, i.e. scholarly interests, disciplines, lived experiences, contexts – the part of the world they belong to, and normative structures they live in.
certain types of self-consciousness only possible when one’s self-awareness is forced upon the individual by the mere look/gaze of an Other, i.e. intersubjectively mediated (Zahavi, 2011). In a conscious intersubjective experience, one that presupposes the existence of an Other, the self is realized through two main aspects: reflective (when one becomes very aware of oneself) and pre reflective\(^\text{82}\) (when one’s body reacts to an experience before thinking-blushing). Hence, shame for Sartre is not only a phenomenon of reflection even though I reflect on my shame; I feel it prior to reflection (pre-reflective aspect).\(^\text{83}\) More on the pre-reflective aspect of shame is discussed later in the chapter. Both aspects are equally important in understanding this phenomenon (Zahavi, 2011).

**Shame, an Ontological Intersubjective Experience**

In “Being and Nothingness”, Sartre (1956) presents an excellent example depicting an experience that causes shame. In his example, someone is crouched down at a door peeping through a keyhole, only to realize that another person is watching him. Such realization keeps the subject “struck into one’s consciousness” (Woodward, 2000, p. 213) where “suddenly I realize the vulgarity of my gesture, and I am ashamed” (Sartre, 1956, p. 221). For a better understanding of how one becomes ‘struck into one’s own consciousness’, it is important to explain the positioning of the self prior to exposure, what Metcalf (2000) refers to as *Conscious awareness*.

Prior to ‘exposure’ or being seen by an Other, the subject\(^\text{84}\) is free, yet not conscious of oneself as s/he appears to others. The subject (I) is at the center of the

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\(^{82}\) More on the pre-reflective aspect of shame is discussed in the summary of this section.

\(^{83}\) The pre-reflective shame experience is what I discussed early on re the body in shame.

\(^{84}\) I am using the word ‘subject’ to refer to the exposed self, an ontological phenomenological concept that Sartre refers to in the first person, “I,” to highlight the individual conscious experience.
universe, and “the appearance of the other in the world corresponds, therefore, to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting” (Sartre, 1956, p. 225). The centralization and the decentralization of the world significantly represents an intersubjective triangulated relationship between the subject and the Other. Next, I further explain this process in Sartre’s work.

**Centralization/de-centralization, the process.** Prior to exposure, the subject sees oneself at the center of the universe, and her/his gaze objectifies others-- the peeping action. When the subject realizes that she/he is seen, the look, a shift of perspective occurs: a de-centralization. This shift does not imply that one is no longer aware of oneself as a person. It corresponds to a conversion from an “objectifying stance toward the world to being made into an object by another” (Spalding, 2006, p. 17) which creates the experience, “I am ashamed of my self as I appear to the other” (Sartre, 1956, p. 222). This shame consciousness is a recognition of oneself as the other sees me, or as a ‘being-for-an-Other’ (Sartre, 1956, p. 260/268). As the subject of shame, my world is de-centralized and I am no longer at the center of the universe, which is a “radical conversion. … a halting of my power to objectify and a flowing away of this power outside myself” (Metcalf, 2000, p. 88), a process Sartre describes as an ‘internal hemorrhage’. In Sartre’s own words:

Shame is the recognition of the fact that I am indeed that object which the other is looking at and judging. I can be ashamed only as my freedom escapes me in order to become a given object…[T]he world flows out of the world and I flow outside of myself. The other’s look makes me beyond my being in this world
and puts me in the midst of the world which is at once this world and beyond this world. (Sartre, 1956, p. 261)

A Triangulated Relationship in Shame/ a Human Intersubjectivity

Sartre describes the fundamental vulnerability exposed in shame as a ‘profound unity of consciousness,’ and a discovery of my foundation outside myself (Metcalf, 2000). The discovery results in a flow of recognition and power between the self and the Other, an intersubjective fluid experience. Sartre (1956) explains:

I am fixing the people whom I see into objects; I am in relation to them as the Other is in relation to me. In looking at them, I measure my power. But if the Other sees them and sees me, then my look loses its power; it cannot transform those people into objects for the Other since they are already the objects of his look. (Sartre, 1956, p. 266)

The gaze along with the exchange of power taking place between the subject and object represent a triangulated relationship between me, my self, and the Other. Guenther (2011) maintains, “The gaze of the Other… alters my being, triangulating the structure of my existence into a relation between me, my self and the Other. …This self is conferred upon me by the Other’s gaze” (Guenther, 2011, p. 5). Guenther’s interpretation is a further confirmation of Sartre’s proclamation regarding the state of the being; ‘a being-for-others.’ Such a relationship, Guenther concludes, is an excellent illustration of Sartre’s phenomenological and “ontological account of shame because it speaks to the structure of intersubjective being” (Guenther, 2011, p. 2-3).

The above analysis depicts shame in Sartre’s work as a “form of … consciousness about something that happens to be, myself”(Zahavi, 2011, p. 4), a process involving a
strong intersubjective element where “the Other is the mediator between me and my self” (Zahavi, 2013, p. 5). This intersubjective element in the experience of shame reveals our relationality, ‘our being-for-an-Other’, a significant dimension in the shame experience. However, the process described above does not intend to imply that shame only takes place after reflection about what I have done or what I am. One can feel shame prior to any engagement in reflection, making shame a pre-reflective phenomenon, “an immediate shudder which runs through me from head to foot without any discursive preparation” (Sartre, 1956, p. 222). The above components: shame and self-consciousness, intersubjectivity, exchange and fluidity of power, reflective and pre-reflective shame, are what highlight the process of the experience along with its ontological dimension: the connection of the self and the Other. Before moving on to discussing what the Other in the shame experience looks like, I refer to a narrative from Frantz Fanon’s (1952) work, Black Skin White Mask as a lived experience of the ontological, intersubjective experience of shame.

In this work, Fanon carries an existential/phenomenological investigation of the black body, where the self is forced into its own consciousness through the shaming look of the white subject. Johnson (2013) avers that Fanon explores shame indirectly through his analysis of the “ways people are made to feel ‘inferior’ and ‘superior’ on the basis of their ability to shame or their subjection to shaming” (Johnson, 2013, p. 90). The excerpt I chose shows how Fanon’s depiction of the white man’s look carries an ontological account similar to Sartre’s and his contemporaries on shame. In addition, Fanon’s excerpt is an example of the triangulated intersubjective aspects previously explored.
Fanon’s Narrative: Where Should I Hide

I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous
to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.
Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating
gaze, gliding over my body suddenly smoothed of rough edges, would give me
back the lightness of being I thought I had lost, and taking me out of the world put
me back in the world. But just as I get to the other slope I stumble, and the other
fixes me with his gaze, his gestures and attitude. … I lose my temper, demand an
explanation….Nothing doing. I explode. Here are the fragments put together by
another me. (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 89)

Similar to the perplexity the “look” in Sartre’s shame causes, the Other’s look in
Fanon’s world leaves the black subject “delirious” and “fragmented”. Fanon’s
consciousness of the blackness of his body becomes “a merely negating activity” (p.110)
distancing him from his familiar world and forcing him to give oneself up as an object for
the Other, ‘a being-for-an-Other’ according to Sartre. Another excerpt from Fanon’s
work further explains the triangulated intersubjective experience shame imposes.

“Look, a negro! Maman, a negro!”

“Ssh! You’ll make him angry. Don’t pay attention to him, monsieur, he doesn’t
realize you’re just as civilized as we are.”

My body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in
mourning on this white winter’s day. (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 93)

The white subject’s look objectifies Fanon and makes him aware of the blackness
of his body as “both hyper visible and invisible at the same time” (Fanon, 1952/2008, p.
The mother’s reply ‘you’ll make him angry’ and ‘you’re just as civilized as we are’ further objectifies and shames the Other—the black body Fanon inhabits. The ‘look’ of the white subject/Other forces Fanon to face the self as an object—a black object—and ‘alters’ his existence into a triangulated relationship between him, the other, and himself.

**The Other in Mind**

In shame, the subject will have others in mind


According to Sartre (1956), shame occurs when there is a relationship between the self and Other, where the self cares about the other’s evaluation. To Sartre, the nature of the Other’s evaluation, negative or positive, is not what matters. The mere look of the Other is objectifying and consequently shame-inducing. Sartre states:

Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general of being an object; that is, of recognizing myself in this degraded, fixed and dependent being which I am for the Other. Shame is the feeling of an original fall, not because of the fact that I may have committed this or that particular fault but simply that I have ‘fallen’ into the world in the midst of things and that I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am. (Sartre, 1956, p. 312)

Shame for Sartre can be felt without the physical presence of the Other. The Other as subject can be present in spite of her absence as an object. Accordingly, “if I tremble at the slightest noise, if each creek announces to me a look, this is because I am already in the state of being-looked-at” (Sartre, 1956, p. 324). In this respect, the Other is present even in its absence. The shamed subject learns to internalize and take on a “mental assumption of the position of the Other who is contemplating us” (Woodward, 2000, p.
The discussions thus far reveal a scholarly consensus that the Other in the shame experience is essential, yet more so when one cares for the Other’s evaluation. In the following section, I present another narrative related to our connection with the Other. This narrative is also an excellent illustration of Sartre’s previous quote on falling into the world, in the midst of prescribed norms and roles, mediated by an Other.

**Falling into the Midst of Patriarchy: My Mother, my Siblings, and I.** Growing up with two older boys in a small neighborhood, I was oblivious to the gender differences between my siblings and I. I spent my childhood in their company where I was allowed to play with them and their friends. They were my comrades and companions until I hit puberty. As my body began to change, I was asked to refrain from playing with the boys in the neighborhood. The more I resisted the more I was accused by my mother that “I have no shame”. She did not understand that I was simply comfortable in the company of boys. The more I rebelled, the more shaming remarks I received for not behaving the way I was “supposed” to. I was locked away in the Other’s ‘presupposed gaze’ my adolescence body inflicted on me. I became an object and suddenly fell into the world of norms, through the mediation of my mother, one that located me as an object amongst others.

The above narrative on the self and Other, as in being a subject or object for an Other, makes me wonder about the nature of the boundaries between the self and Others. More importantly for this thesis, Sartre’s discussion on the intensity of one’s initial exposure makes me wonder whether such acute experience can simply be captured through one’s reflection as she ‘is thrown back upon itself,’ or whether shame’s acute
experience is always captured before somebody or an Other—be it society, parents, family, lover, etc.

**Shame: Reflective or Ontological / Intrapersonal or Interpersonal**

In trying to answer the above questions, I once again turn to Sartre’s work on shame. Sartre writes:

> Although certain complex forms derived from shame can appear on the reflective plane, shame is not originally a phenomenon of reflection. In fact, no matter what results one can obtain in solitude by the religious practices of shame, it is in its primary structure shame before somebody. (Sartre 1956, p. 254)

Although most scholarly discussions thus far assume an Other as an essential component of the experience, one can argue that sometimes the Other is not essential in the shame experience. Zahavi (2013) presents instances where one can feel shame regardless of an imagined or real Other. For example, one feels shame when failing to do something one is capable of, and also when one compares what one is now to what one used to be. Although in the above examples there is neither a real nor imagined Other, Zahavi argues that the shame we feel is the result of our internalization of Other’s perspectives where we judge ourselves accordingly; we always have ‘Others in mind!’

**Reflective and intrapersonal.** Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni’s (2012) work on shame presents an objection to Sartre and Zahavi’s assertion on the positioning of the Other in shame. Hence, shame is “the subject’s awareness that the way he is or acts is so much at odds with the values he cares to exemplify… that is he perceives himself as unable to exemplify it even at a minimal level” (Deonna et al., 2012, p. 46). Deonna et al., (2012) assert that shame awareness has no social value as it does not involve an Other
Shame involves the awareness of the discrepancy between a value we are committed to and a “(dis)value exemplified by what one is ashamed of” (p. 206). They also refuse categorizing and defining shame as it is impossible to find a definition that covers all shame cases (social, psychological, moral etc.).

**Shame is ontological and interpersonal.** In response, Zahavi insists on the prominence of the social aspect of shame in line with Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni’s (2012) proclamation that shame “runs the risk of presenting us with a too undifferentiated picture of the emotion” (p. 10). Zahavi affirms: “An attempt to provide a non-social definition of shame is consequently bound to miss something quite significant” (p. 11). In order to make his point, Zahavi presents two different forms of shame: Reflective—intrapersonal, and Ontological – interpersonal. According to Zahavi (2013), reflective shame is characterized by a heightened judgment of the self, accompanied with feelings of self-disappointment, self-misery, and self-loathing. On the other hand, ontological shame is accompanied by a sharp feeling of exposure and vulnerability, and places individuals in the spotlight whether they want to be or not. Nietzsche’s quote is a case in point of Ontological shame:

> The feelings ‘I am in the mid point of the world!’ arises very strongly is suddenly overcome with shame; one then stands there as if confused in the midst of a surging sea and feels dazzled as though by a great eye which gazes upon us through us from all sides. (Nietzsche, 1997, p. 166).

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85 It is a form similar to what Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni suggest.

86 Both forms, reflective and ontological/existential shame have been discussed throughout the chapters written thus far. For example: Augustine’s self-dialogue, Socratic Respectful shame, scholarly reflections on the world, and Fanon’s agonizing self and Other realization.
Zahavi declares shame to be a multifaceted phenomenon, rejecting the position that “one can capture the acute experience of shame simply by focusing on the fact that the shamed subject is thrown back upon itself”, i.e. just reflecting (Zahavi, 2011, p. 220). Zahavi adopts Sartre’s view on shame as a form of existential alienation as it amounts to a change of perspective on self. He asserts that even when the feeling of shame comes as a consequence of self-evaluation, there is a “form of exposure [imposed by the look of an other] and self-alienation, a kind of self-preservation and self-distancing” (Zahavi, 2013, p. 19).

I end this section on shame and Other, reflective-intrapersonal, and ontological/existential-intrapersonal with a set of questions posed by Zahavi:

I find it more plausible to claim that intrapersonal shame is conditioned by interpersonal shame. Is it not by first being attentive to and sensitive to the attention and evaluation – that is, the perspective of the other--that we gain the ability to internalize that perspective? Is it not by adopting the perspective of the other that we gain sufficient self-distance to permit a critical self-evaluation?

(Zahavi, 2013, p. 20)

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I adopted a multidisciplinary approach to provide a comprehensive summary of the basic debates and common topics regarding shame. Most importantly, I chose topics that lead to some of the basic premises and discussions related to the dissertation’s central question: what constitutes the experience of shame as an emotion and power dynamic? The chapter’s discussions on shame establish how emotion can neither be simply described from a purely theoretical perspective nor afforded prescribed
The discussions illuminated how shame is an embodied experience, felt at emotional, mental, and physical levels. Moreover, the comparison between guilt and shame showed that attempts to make a distinction between both are not straightforward and easy. One emotion could start where the other ends and both emotions have the potential to get muddled and intertwined in the human psyche. I presented different perspectives and interpretations on shame, more so to assert and conclude that the definition and categorization of this phenomenon is neither a simple task nor necessary. Throughout the discussions, a common theme continued to emerge: The irrevocable presence of the Other in the shame experience. This common theme ascertains that as a phenomenon, shame is both ontological and intersubjective. Ontological, as it is based on the discovery of an important part of the self, and intersubjective, as one does not arrive to this discovery prior to the encounter with the Other; rather, it is imposed upon by the Other’s gaze.

Although the connection between the self and Other is very important in the analysis of this phenomenon, I believe that contrary to current trends, shame should not be generalized as a social phenomenon. The self has boundaries and such boundaries distinguish its experiences from those of Others. However, only when those boundaries are crossed does shame occur. On this, Nathanson (1987) explains:

The boundaries are often routinely and safely crossed when one has vicarious experience with someone emotionally close. … shame is the vicarious experience of the other’s negative evaluation. …Fascination with the other and sensitivity to the other’s treatment of the self renders the self more vulnerable to shame. Shame is actually close to the feeling of awe. (Nathanson, 1987, p. 108)
Probyn (2005) agrees that shame should not be analyzed only from a social perspective, otherwise “it's genesis in the body is denied.... Shame is the body's way of registering interest, even when you didn't know you were interested or were unaware of the depth of your desire for connection”\(^{87}\) (p. 28).

This review leads me to a conceptualization of shame, one that discloses a strong ontological ‘being-in-the-world’ experience. Such experience bears a tight reference to the physical, relational, and social aspects of an individual’s world. Scholarly reviews in the past two chapters affirm to me that the individual and social are intertwined and entangled beyond one’s choice. Such connection is present in the mere existence of an Other we encounter through love, care and interest; factors that allow shame to crawl through the individual and social psyche. In the next chapter, this entanglement is thoroughly analyzed and discussed, showing how it could impose certain dynamics related to social gender roles.

\(^{87}\) More on shame, interest, care, and love is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Four

Shame: Controlling, Productive and Inevitable Human Phenomenon

In chapters one and two I presented a background on shame through different disciplines: philosophy, psychology and sociology. This led to the conceptualization of shame as a rich and complex phenomenon. The discussions presented a clear consensus: shame is not only a psychic phenomenon but one impressed on the body, viscerally, and physiologically experienced before it is comprehended. Most important is the realization that shame does not happen without the existence of an ‘Other.’ Discussions in chapter three showed that the ‘Other’ can be present or absent, an individual, or a group, represented in the norms we embody, the religions we practice, and sometimes recognized through people we love and groups we belong to.

As I was writing this chapter, I wrote a poem that encapsulates some of my deepest feelings and thoughts on shame and how it plays among the layers of everyday life becoming a companion; one that lingers on even in our memory. The poem reveals the power of shame as a lived experience informing my understanding as a researcher and adding to the pool of theoretical perspectives on this emotion.

Shame - A Conundrum

*Bishaa, Mhastraan, mistahitra*

One wonders which is more sane than the other

I am left no choice

But to pick one or the other

If I am Bishaa

إذا أنا يشعة
No wonder my mirror denies me
Can't look me in the eye

If I am mhasitra, إذا أنا مهسورة

No wonder my mind keeps falling
Into the abyss of never ending longing

If I am Mistahitra, إذا أنا مستهرة

No wonder myself
Persistently denies itself

Put them together
Bishaa, Mhatraa, mistahitra, بشعة، مهسورة، مستهرة

Denies me from belonging
Opens the passage to moulding
To melting with what negates me, what breaks me

What feasts on me
I lose me

I gain the right of passage

Hilwe, Aaele, miseoule, حلوة، عاقلة، مسؤولة

The “I” can't look itself in the eye

The main Arabic words in the poem: Bishaa, mhasitra, mistahitra can be respectively translated into English in the following manner: ugly, hysterical, irresponsible. They are shaming words most of which I have heard throughout my life.

The first word “Bish3aa” (ugly) was used by one of my parents as a response to my disobedience. The second word “Mhastra” (hysterical) was used by my partner when I
become emotional: i.e. upset, sad, or angry in the relationship. The third word “Mistathitra” (irresponsible) was used by both my parents and my partner when I generally refused to abide by their rules- most of which are sociocultural. Those three words still circulate in the Lebanese culture and are mostly addressed to women. My poem is a witness to the shaming impact certain words can have on someone’s psyche. It portrays how certain shaming words can be used to control someone’s behavior, especially when uttered by important people in our lives such as those we live with, love, and care for.

The Two Faces of Shame

I believe there exists a special connection between shame, interest, the “Other,” and the need to belong. By discussing these, the myth surrounding shame as merely a painful emotion to be avoided, eliminated, or not discussed is dismantled. It is not my intention to find a solution for what shame does or does not do, but to acknowledge it as socially controlling as well as productive. Therefore, in this chapter I discuss the two faces of shame explaining the conundrum that ensues. The conundrum around shame is how it negates and excludes while also motivating the productive powers for self-reflection. Self-reflection can reveal what is important to us, and how shame can help create alternative ways of thinking along with communities that empower and include us.

The two faces of shame are explored through the chapter’s two basic premises: (1) There is an inseparable connection between the individual and the social; and (2) Though deeply, viscerally felt by individuals, shame experiences are a declaration of interest, care, need to belong, and love.
Scholarly Work Discussed

My views are inspired by Judith Butler’s (2005) work *Giving an Account of Oneself*, followed by a discussion from Kelly Oliver’s (2004) *Colonization of Psychic Space*, along with discussions from Sarah Ahmed (2004) and Elspeth Probyn (2005) on interest, love, and shame. Butler’s work constitutes the backbone of my first premise on how the individual and social are intertwined, interrelated, and inseparable. Butler’s discussions also help disclose one of shame’s faces, its power to control and hegemonize. Oliver’s writings further highlight this intertwined relationship. Oliver shows how the impact of shame on the individual’s psyche helps create the center and the margins, reinforcing power structures at both the individual and collective levels. She also underlines the individual need to belong to a collective, community, place, and space; factors that empower shame, as a tool of control and marginalization. However, Oliver’s discussions elicit a possibility for shame as a means for awareness and change. Her hopeful view on shame along with Probyn and Ahmed’s works link the first premise to the second: Shame is a declaration of interest, care, need to belong, and love. Merging the above mentioned scholarly works with my personal synthesis is directly related to the dissertation’s central question: What constitutes the experience of shame as both an emotion and a dynamic of power, with a specific emphasis on women’s gender roles?

I divide this chapter into three sections. I start each section with a brief synopsis on the discussions it includes and how they are significant to what I want to articulate about shame as a phenomenon. The three sections provide a built-up progression leading to my personal take on shame.
Section One: Narration and the Intimacy of Research

This section is about the intimate connection between the research and the researcher and the importance of lived experiences in enriching theoretical perspective. It also highlights the importance of self-inauguration within social structure, one that takes place through narration. This section as well as the rest of the chapter, includes personal narratives on shame lived and witnessed by me, the researcher. My personal narratives along with the scholarly perspectives I utilize show how we are constituted by forces beyond our making, revealing the limits of our intelligibility, and hence eliciting a sense of shame in front of an Other.

Combining scholarly work on the inauguration of the self with personal narratives helps make the discussions on shame realistic, richer, and valid. The discussions on the research and researcher validate and call for the importance of lived experiences in research. Moreover, the discussions on self-inauguration, narration, and lack of intelligibility within social structures further highlight my first premise on the inseparable connection between the individual and the social. The discussions provide further explanations on how and why we are connected to one another and how the limits of our understanding leads to a sense of shame. The discussions on self-inauguration, realization of our limited intelligibility, and our positioning within social structures, etc. pave the way to the next section’s discussions on how shame as a tool of control can create centers and margins.
On Lived experiences, the Research and the Researcher

Let yourself go! … You will come out metamorphosed, filled with questions…and more human

(Tobie Nathan in Elspeth Probyn, 2005)

I start this section with literally and metaphorically “letting myself go”, acknowledging the “metamorphosis” that writing on shame creates in me. This was not a choice; there has not been a moment in writing about shame where memories and narratives about others and myself did not surface. Whether it is my lived experiences or reflections on my positioning in the larger scope of things, shame became my companion. It became clearer to me that my personal investment in the concept is part of the research process, enriching it, making it comprehensive, authentic, and real. George Devereux’s (1967) views on research and humanity resonate with mine. Devereux states, “A realistic science of mankind can only be created by men most aware of their own humanity precisely when they implement it most completely in their own scientific work” (Devereux, 1967, p. XX).

My experience as researcher writing on shame showed me that there is an inevitable impact of the information/data collected on both the researcher and the researched. The ways bodies are affected provide “crucial insight into the research process and the object of study. Including them in the written presentation of the research seems to be a sensible idea” (Probyn, 2005, p.135). Being on both sides of the same coin, the researcher and the researched, helped me transcend the academic written intellectual arguments and debates. Researching shame highlighted significant insights into its power as a topic of study, especially as it elicits narratives, emotions, and critical thinking.
processes. My personal process enriched by insights from a pool of scholarly work
signified the importance of lived experiences -- personal testimonies-- in research. Hence,
my urgency to share personal narratives/testimonies demonstrates how the research
impacts the researcher and the other way around. It is now clear to me that there is a
continuous intimate relationship between both, and knowledge construction is not partial,
indifferent, and objective. Lang (2011) troubles the notion of an objective, impartial, and
static relationship between the researcher and the ‘objects of knowing’. Lang asserts that

Knowledges are … embodied and situated socially, culturally, racially, sexually,
linguistically, and politically; when knowledge claims spring from contexts that
include the affective and subjective along with personal testimony, the
epistemologies that espouse these forms of knowledge-making and these kinds of
knowers necessarily extend the moral reach claimed by mainstream epistemology
(Lang, 2011, p. 95).

In my dissertation, personal testimonies in the form of narratives augment my
conclusions about shame and bring contextual authenticity to researching this emotion.
Probyn (2005) confirms this point by stating that, “With something as sensitive as shame,
it is foolhardy to weigh in with ready-made theories or pronouncements” (p. XV).

The discussions in the previous chapters revealed the power of shame as an
emotion, especially when connected to a significant Other’s view of us. I further explore
this connection especially as the individual is inaugurated -- as one comes into being (self
awareness)-- within the social structures one lives in. For this exploration I utilize Judith
Butler’s work, Giving an Account of Oneself.
Coming into Being/ What Narration Discloses

Butler (2005) writes that when one is asked to give an account of herself, and/or in interested in making oneself recognizable and understandable, one tells a narrative of her life. Through narration, the “I” is ‘called into being’ and inaugurated into existence. Telling one’s story does not only take place in the presence of an Other, one also gives an account of oneself to an imagined addressee. Our mere presence in the world imposes certain structured interaction/relation with the other, present or imagined. The “I” finds itself through such proximity, a process superbly expressed by Butler:

I exist in an important sense for you, and by virtue of you. If I have lost the conditions of address, if I have no “you” to address, then I have lost “myself”. One can tell an autobiography only to an “Other”, and one can reference an “I only in relation to a “you”: without the “you”, my own story becomes impossible. (Butler, 2005, p. 32)

The incompleteness of the telling. Although telling a story is essential in making oneself recognizable, the telling is never complete. The process of telling is always interrupted by the loss of certain words, incidents, and events making it complex and confusing. One can never give a full account of oneself. I summarize Butler’s suggestions on the reasons behind this inability, followed by an explicit explanation in the next section: Intelligibility, the singular body and social structures.

First, Butler refers to “the opacity of the self” as one of the main reasons behind the inability of full narration. This opacity is due to the fact that our formative history and primary relations are not always accessible to conscious knowledge. In Butler’s own

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88 Many are the times when we talk to others in our own heads. We imagine what we want to tell them and we recite our narrative in the way we want it to be communicated to this particular audience. We feel it, live, and repeat it, only to realize that each time it is repeated, it is not the same.
words, “Moments of unknowingness about oneself tend to emerge... and call upon primary forms of relationality that are not always available to explicit and reflective thematization” (Butler, 2005, p. 20). Second, Butler affirms that although I tell a story about myself, the telling is “disoriented by what is not mine, or not mine alone” (Butler, 2005, p. 37) that is conditions beyond my own making. In this sense, the “I” cannot tell a full story of its own emergence “without bearing witness to a state of affairs to which one could not have been present” (Butler, 2005, p. 37). For example, when I tell some of my childhood stories about the war in Lebanon, I stumble and find myself unable to tell the full story. While a part of my story is connected to formative years that I cannot remember, another part is connected to a history that exists before my presence. In this sense, the more the “I” narrates, the less accountable it proves to be and eventually the “I ruins its own story, contrary to its best intentions” (Butler, 2005, p. 66).

**Intelligibility, the Singular Body and the Social**

The impossibility of full narration brings awareness to how we are connected to and constituted by social, historical, and cultural forces that precede us and are not accessible to us. The singularity of my story/account, the part that seeks intelligibility to “myself” and “others” is actually based on terms that are not of my “own making”. This is exactly what makes my story incomplete, non-linear, and intertwined with forces beyond my individual existence. Accordingly, my connection to the Other takes place under conditions “social in character, and they establish social norms, a domain of un-freedom...within which our singular stories are told” (Butler, 2005, p. 21). When giving an account of itself, the ‘I’ finds that “the self is already implicated in social temporality
that exceeds its own capacity for narration… the ‘I’ has no story of its own that is not also a set of relations to a set of norms” (Butler, 2005, p. 8)

This discussion highlights an important aspect about our humanity: the limits of our intelligibility as individuals. What we know about ourselves is highly impacted by what Butler calls the “regime of truth”, or what I refer to as norms (cultural, religious, social, and eventually ethical) under which we are constituted as individuals. Paradoxically, in spite of the existing regime/norms that limit our intelligibility, we still find ourselves wanting to tell and hear stories of oneself and Others.

My story is not only about myself; it is also about ancestral/cultural norms, history, and relationships through which we are all constituted. The “I” or the ‘subject’ “forms itself in relation to a set of codes, prescriptions and norms.” There is no self-making outside the norms that orchestrate the possible forms. The very terms through which we make ourselves intelligible to others and ourselves are social in character (Butler, 2005, p. 21).

Since our connection to the Other is inevitable and necessary for our constitution, we will continue to give an account of ourselves. Considering that the Other and I are constituted by and connected to social forces that are not comprehensive and limit our intelligibility, our telling will always be incomplete. The “I” will always be bound by this relationality without which it does not exist.

89 By choosing this quote from Butler, I do not intend to claim that the individual ‘I’ forms oneself solely in relation to cultural codes and norms. Keeping my conclusion in mind, there is an inevitable relationship between the individual and the social. I discuss that starting at infancy the person forms oneself via her connections to significant ‘Others’: parents, siblings, and later people in one’s community and the larger world. However, the formation of personhood is highly impacted by one’s contact, peoples’ cultural codes, and norms. Later in the chapter, this connection between the self and the ‘Other’ becomes clear especially as I discuss the connection between shame and love.
Rethinking Subject Positioning

The above discussion opens up a space to rethink our positioning within the social structures that inaugurate us. Such tight connection urges me to evaluate my relation to an Other (including cultural norms, family positioning, etc.), whom we take for granted. In reality we are given over to social structures that limit our intelligibility. This realization elicits shame and attracts our attention to our need of that Other as a means for our self inauguration and re-positioning, albeit with limits.

Therefore, it seems that as long as we are connected to a social realm, our individual need to give an account of ourselves is not a choice. Whether we choose it or not, we are part of a group, a culture, a religion, etc. in constant connection to an Other. Even when I am not satisfied with my current connection to a social group and at times seek to replace it with another Other of my choice, I am still making new connections.

The discussions thus far affirm the first premise this chapter is based on: There is an inseparable connection between the individual and the social. This premise invites two important questions: 1) What is this urge that keeps us pushing and shoving and aiming to be understood? and 2) What is the significance of all of the above points to my discussion on shame?

The narrative that started it all. In response to these questions, I return to my original narrative that led to my interest to write about shame. I return to my attempt to give an account of myself through telling a story on pain in one of my graduate courses.

It is important to point out that while the story I chose to disclose in front of the Other

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90 My life story and that of many women I know resonate with the claim I made above on the replacement of an other. Some women who cannot live within existent social/ethical norms and rules that govern their existence or limit it choose to leave and search for other places to belong. However, the need to make new connections never subsides and narratives of a new inauguration of the self, take place all over again.
(my classmates) was from a context I chose to move away from (Lebanon, my home country), the context of the telling (the university) was a place of choice. The telling elicited pain and tears that prevented me from completing my story. I came face to face with both my classmates (the “Others” listening to my story) and my inability to articulate clearly. This experience resulted in a deep sense of shame that lingered on for about two weeks. My image of myself as a collected, logical, articulate woman was shattered by the ambiguity the telling exposed, along with my vulnerability in front of Others. The “I” was inaugurated in its full sense.

Section One Conclusion: Synthesis Through the Original Narrative

The inauguration of my “I” in that graduate course prompted this work and elicited the need for further research. My first attempt to narrate my story seemed difficult. Yet, the more I tell, the more I realize that my narration is never a linear process. It is always interrupted, it goes back and forth between past, present, and future and changes according to real or imagined audience. Whichever way I try to tell the story, a chunk of it stays opaque and unclear. However, the writing on shame makes me realize that the telling is an intentional attempt for a new inauguration of myself in front of a specific audience of my choice. I chose my classmates and my teacher, a space and group where I felt safe to tell my story. I chose the hope to belong, to be understood, and inaugurated into what Butler calls a “scene of address”, a destination of choice not imposed on me by mere existence. Such hope for an accepting scene of address is what

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91 By “full sense”, I again refer to Butler’s discussions about one’s realization of her incapability of full narration, and the vulnerability this brings to oneself as she realizes her positioning in the world of Others. Butler discusses how when we try to fully articulate and we continuously fail, we then try to think of a conceptual thread, a lost link for chronology. The “I” becomes conceptually awake and determined, yet “at this point, when I near the prospect of intellectual self-sufficiency in the presence of an other, nearly excluding her from my horizon”, the “I” that narrates discovers that “it cannot direct its own narration.” For more on this point refer to Butler’s book Giving an account of oneself, pp. 68-69.
‘keep[s] us pushing and shoving to be understood’. However, even in such a new staged scene of address where the “I” is “recruiting the other into the scene of its own opacity,” the “I” breaks down “by virtue of the Other’s face, voice, or silent presence… It does not know itself; perhaps it will never be” (Butler, 2005, p. 69)

I wonder if the sense of shame and pain I felt that day is a result of my own failure to realize the limits of my intelligibility where my “I” did not know itself. But I am not certain this is the only reason for the sense of shame I felt; other factors must have contributed to it and I discuss some of them in section two of the chapter. Some of the factors are related to the ideal self we embody, the impact of social norms/culture on such ideals, the need to belong as a subject, the sense of individual interest, care, and love which bring individual vulnerability to the fore.

In my next two sections, I revisit my first premise on the inevitable connection between the individual and the social, exploring how shame plays a dynamic role in it. I also show how the first premise is linked to the second one highlighting the connections between shame, interest, and the need to belong. Linking both premises will reveal the two faces of shame I previously discussed: Shame as a tool of control over the individual and group psyche, and shame as a productive tool that enhances introspection and encourages us to rethink our position in the social realm. To further support my discussion in this section, I utilize the works of Kelly Oliver, Elspeth Probyn, and Sarah Ahmed.
Section Two: Meaning Making and Shame

“Vainly I ask ‘who are you?’ and then, more soberly, ‘what have I become here?’”

(Butler, 2005, p. 55)

Butler’s point regarding the inauguration of the self and its opacity draws attention to my first premise on the inseparability of the individual and the social and the other way around. The discussions reiterate our connection to sociocultural and historical forces that constitute us beyond our comprehension and control. Kelly Oliver’s (2004) work *The Colonization of Psychic Space* affirms this connection and her ideas on sublimation are significant for this work as they move the discussions forward. Oliver’s views and discussions on sublimation explore in details how the connection between the individual and the social lead to shame in its two faces: the controlling and the productive. In response to my dissertation's basic question, ‘what constitutes the experience of shame understood as both an emotion and a dynamic of power, with a emphasis on women gender roles?’, Oliver’s thoughts certainly add to the conversation.

In the first two chapters, I discussed how in spite of the fact that the individual experience of shame is painfully visceral; it is deeply connected to an Other, the social. Therefore, the discussions on the first premise are valuable insofar as they illuminate shame’s powerful dynamic: as both a tool of control and production. For this reason, I utilize Oliver’s work extensively in this section. Oliver’s writings delve into how the connection between the social and individual leads to my second premise on the two faces of shame. Oliver uses the language of psychoanalysis, terms such as sublimation and idealization, to reveal how shame works as a power dynamic at both the individual and social levels, creating margins and centers.


Relationality and Response

Through Butler’s work, I highlighted the importance of relationality - the need to tell a narrative to an Other- to subjectivity - self-inauguration. Although the above discussion showed how self inauguration takes place through narration, self inauguration takes place through many other forms: art work, poetry, music, intellectual pursuits, language, etc. Whichever form the self is inaugurated through, relationality, and responsiveness\(^{92}\) are major factors in making the subject. Oliver (2004) asserts, “we do not respond because we are subjects, rather, it is responsiveness and relationality that make subjectivity and psychic life possible” (p. XVIII). Oliver’s statement makes me wonder about how we respond and connect in ways that enhance and/or diminish relationality, and what kinds of relationality enhance and/or diminish responsiveness.

To help analyze my inquiry, I discuss Oliver’s work on sublimation as it clarifies how and why relationality and responsiveness encourage or diminish subjectivity and belonging. More importantly, I discuss the way shame is conceived through such connections: sublimation, responsiveness, relationality, and subjectivity.

Sublimation, and Idealization

Sublimation is a psychoanalytic term identified with “artistic and intellectual activities into which sexual drives are diverted from their sexual aim into a nonsexual aim” (Oliver, 2004, p. 89). Oliver (2004) expands on Freud’s views by asserting that not only sexual drives but “all drives make their way into signification-artistic, intellectual,

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\(^{92}\) Although response is important for human interaction, the word “responsiveness” carries deeper meaning that helps in making the subject. The following definition of the word highlights its significance. Responsiveness is a “characteristic that shows how much someone cares.” It is also defined as “the quality of being responsive; ... it involves responding with emotion to people and events.” [https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/responsiveness](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/responsiveness)
linguistic-through sublimation” (p. 89). She argues, “Sublimation is a socialization of drives directed into socially acceptable forms of expression such as arts and intellectual pursuits...” (Oliver, 2004, p. 126). Individual sublimation is important for a healthy psyche; a way to communicate individual needs, affects, and desires with others.

For instance, during the process of writing my dissertation, many personal shaming memories started to surface, crippling my writing. However, even though the inclusion of some of them as narratives seemed crucial to my dissertation, I struggled with the idea of exposing my personal stories. Fortunately, I found myself writing poetry, something I had not done before but an experience that continues to take me by surprise as I find myself writing spontaneously and unintentionally. In light of the limits of my ability to express my fear, anger, and deep shame, the poetry appears as a form of expression; what Oliver refers to as the social sublimation of drives. Hence, the sublimation of my drives, fears, and desires happens through poetry as I start to make meaning through the academic structural form of writing. This form of sublimation surprises me and allows me to return back to the academic writing on shame with ease.

Narration is another form of sublimation expressed in my telling of personal narratives to Others (friends and colleagues), the audience of my dissertation. Through the experience of telling, I build a form of relationality through which I inaugurate myself. It is important to note that whichever way I sublimate, I do it with an ideal in mind, an ideal of how things ought to be, most of which are influenced by social structures we live in (like family, society, culture, etc.). For example, two ideals come to mind as I use poetry and narratives in this dissertation. In poetry, the ideal in my mind is that of the emotionally expressive poet who is free and not afraid of expressing
vulnerability and thus humanity. In telling narratives, the ideal in my mind is that of the progressive scholar who uses the Arts to inform one's research, one that shows what theory looks like in everyday life. Both of the above ideals are influenced by 1) my journey in academia, and 2) my love for poetry and poetry circles I consistently attend.

Although we idealize what we learn from our social contexts, we also idealize images and roles we create for ourselves, some of which are different from and clash with the social realms we live in. No matter what ideals we embody, idealization is essential for subjectivity and without idealization -having an ideal in mind- sublimation does not take place. Oliver (2004) asserts: “without idealization, we cannot imagine our situation otherwise, that is, without idealization, we cannot resist domination” (p. XX).

Accordingly, it is essential to find spaces within existing social structures for sublimating one's needs, desires, and affects. Such opportunities “allow us to connect and communicate with others by making our bodies and experience meaningful. … Sublimation is necessary for both individuality and community or sociality”, (p. XX) and meaning making.

Sublimation and Existing Social Structures

Although sublimation is significant for meaningful communication and subjectivity, it is not an easy task because not all forms of expressions are accepted in the social realm. What seems to be the acceptable form of expression is what is deemed correct in one’s culture. One question comes to mind here: Does the above statement propose that anyone who expresses feelings, affects, acts and behaviors in ways acceptable by the culture is necessarily accepted in that particular realm? This is not the case because, it is “subject positioning” within existing social structures that opens up or
diminishes the possibility of sublimation. Accordingly, it is important to shed light on what and who can sublimate, and question what “counts as socially acceptable [forms of expressions] and for whom” (p.125). Most importantly, it is essential to explore how the above theme is related to shame.

In discussing the ‘who’ and ‘what’ in sublimation along with its connection to shame, it is important to revisit my first premise on the connection between the individual and the social. If there is no “Other” for the “I” to have a relationship and communicate with, and consequently be inaugurated through, there is no need to sublimate. Thus, considering that every context comes with its own norms before we come into it, sublimation, subjectivity, and relationality all take place under these conditions. We have all experienced living in groups/cultures where some people are accepted and others are not. Acceptance and rejection are based on many factors, many of which are related to the socio-cultural norms one lives by. What seems to be a sad reality is that a large number of the marginalized are also those whose behaviors, sexual orientation, gender, social status, skin color, and ethnicity, etc. do not “fit” within the norms and views of the culture they live in. Accordingly, in some cultures, where some groups are abjected and excluded, sublimation becomes the privilege of the dominant groups, and idealization becomes a cruel, judging superego foreclosing the possibility for meaning making for those others (Oliver, 2004, p. XX).

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93 As mentioned in the previous chapters, idealization is important for ego and identity formation. However, most idealization comes from social images we learn about through our lives. The first place for idealization is the family, where we learn what an ideal daughter, mother, and father is. More on that will be discussed in section three of this chapter through Sarah Ahmed’s work. As I discussed above, idealization is important for sublimation. However, when idealization becomes a judging superego, it blocks channels for sublimation and identity formation.
Women in Lebanon. Lebanon, my home country, incorporates many excluded groups that do not “fit” within the patriarchal structure, historically embedded in the country’s social and cultural realms. Some of these marginalized groups include: women (because of their gender), religious sects (because of their religious affiliation), and domestic workers (because of their skin color and social status). In the context of this dissertation, I choose to focus on the exclusion of women as a group along with how this exclusion is connected to shame.

Oliver (2004) argues, “We are all born into the world where meaning already exists” (p. 141) and established through prescribed ways of expression that do not always align with the desires and drives of some of the Others within the same culture. When it comes to gender roles and rights in Lebanon, rules for meaning making and expression are designed by patriarchal religious communities.94 The family unit, including married women’s legal rights, fall under the Personal Status Law, a law enforced and controlled by existing religious communities. Gender roles, political participation, and legal rights are all established and set by the patriarchs of the country, all of whom are male (religious and political leaders). Women are not allowed to participate in important political and legal matters or difficult decisions that might impact the family as a whole. In such contexts, women do not get the chance to create their own symbols and meaning, they only negotiate the language and social symbols that already exist. There is no space for women to express affects, desires, and needs beyond what already exists and is agreed upon by the patriarchs; meaning making is already fully established. In such

94 Lebanon is a patriarchal multi-religious and multi-sectarian society where each sect members refer to their own religious community for legal advice.
circumstance, I wonder how women and/or excluded groups express themselves and make/remake meaning of who they are within their own social structures?

**Sublimation and the Loving Third**

To reiterate, sublimation, i.e. expressing individual needs, desires, and affects, is mainly social and is essential for a healthy psyche and relationality. Social support and acceptance provide symbols and language where “individuals find and create the meaning of their own experiences” (Oliver, 2004, p. 141). Hence, for sublimation to take place within existing social forces, an accepting Other (society, group, parents, another person etc.), a ‘responsive’ ‘Loving third’ as defined by Julia Kristeva is needed. In this lieu, a loving third not only provides the support needed for individual’s desires/needs to make their way into language, but enhances the “ability of society to discharge them” (p. 142).

Yet, we know this is not the case for all the different kinds of affects and desires. Depending on the social codes of each culture, some desires and affects are accepted and encouraged more than others, and some groups’/individual’s experiences are considered as more acceptable than others. This brings me back to my question about the ability of some groups (women, members of denigrated nations- people of color) to express their experiences, feelings, and desires in meaningful signification, when the only meaningful symbols permitted are those provided by their social and cultural norms, the ones that also deny them. I also wonder what happens to the above-mentioned groups/individuals

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95 By ‘loving third,’ Kristeva, referenced in Oliver’s work, refers to the image of the father that adds a third dimension to the relationship between the child and mother. Oliver refers to it in the context of sublimation as an ‘accepting third,’ a social support necessary for psychic development, love, and creativity. Without this accepting third, sublimation is not possible as there will be “no bridge between desires and language” (p.128). If there is no bridge there is no movement or development of individual’s psychic space. One will be stuck in her own’ body as the abjected and excluded. For more on this idea, refer to Oliver’s work *Colonization of Psychic Space* (p. 128).
when they are not supported by the social, the accepting third, or within their communities. I wonder how they express their ‘longing’ and belonging to a beloved culture, one in which they are excluded from meaning making in any real way. For my inquiry, I further discuss Oliver’s work on meaning making, belonging, and exclusion within the social context.

**Meaning Making, Alienation, and Shame**

While Butler highlights how existent cultural forces contribute to our opacity and limited intelligibility, Oliver’s discussions show how such forces exclude us from participating in meaning making in our own societies. Such lack of meaning making possibilities sets centers and margins. The ones on the margins are ‘Othered’ within their own communities and excluded from meaning making, a process that oppresses one’s psyche. To explain how this process of oppression works, I once again refer to patriarchal societies where female stereotypes (emotional, weak, housewives, etc.) threaten women’s autonomy and ability to participate in meaning making within their own societies. However, what is more troubling than women's lack of opportunities for meaning making/participation in the society is the creation of a belief system around such stereotypes. Sadly, such belief systems circulate amongst all communities, the privileged and the oppressed. In such places, women “come to believe that they lack the capacity to be autonomous whatever their position, [are] taught they are deficient in those capacities that distinguish persons from non persons, but at the same time are assured that they are persons” (Bartky, 1990, p.30)

Although alienated and discounted from meaning making as fully human, women are assured they are persons in their societies, a confusing double bind that keeps them
controlled and loyal to a system that oppresses them. In such a form of oppression, women come to believe they are defective, and hence their struggles get turned inward and not “outward upon the social forces responsible for their predicament” (p. 31). Women in this case, are not only alienated from meaning making in their societies, but they are alienated from themselves- selves they consider to be deficient and not good enough, a form of double alienation. This double alienation “operates first as a form of social abjection and exclusion and second as a form of silencing” (Oliver, 2004, p. 88), both of which are direct routes to shame.

Psychic oppression of women in Lebanon. The above discussion resonates with my own predicament about the lack of action against the limited participation of Lebanese women in public life (political, social, legal), especially when the percentage of educated girls and women surpasses that of boys and men. A number of research and NGO reports affirm, “in many Arab countries, such as Lebanon … women make up the majority of university students but constitute a minority of the labor force” (Chamie, 2014). However, the reality of double oppression and alienation is clear in the statements I hear from many women and men in Lebanon asserting their belief that men are better than them in public matters and participation. Many of the men and women in the country, especially the ones raised on traditional values, believe that women are naturally a weaker gender because they are more emotional and are created in such a way that makes

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96 This is a reality in most Arab countries. Although the percentage varies from one country to another, the percentage of educated women has been consistent among most countries. The Following sites show related data:
http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/women-more-educated-men-still-paid-less,
https://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Lebanon-Gender-Eqaulity-Profile-2011.pdf,
http://www.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/MDG/Publications/MDG_en.pdf
them ideal for raising children and caring for the family. As women, the belief in our deficiencies is not only directed towards the self but towards,

Similar selves in whom we may see our deficiencies mirrored ... Not only our drama of fragmentation gets played out on an inner psychic stage, but we are forced to find our own way about in a world which presents itself to us in masked and deceptive fashion”. (Bartky,1990, p. 31.)

As women in patriarchal societies, we are not only denied full participation in social institutions, but are also deprived of social spaces to articulate the resulting affects of such alienation (bitterness, anger, sadness, defiance). It is a compounded alienation that creates shame, depression, and social melancholia. Oliver (2004) confirms this point, asserting that “women are not only excluded from positions of power and not accepted as fully rational autonomous subjects, but also their experiences of exclusion are rarely allowed articulation or significance within mainstream culture” (p. 88). Those who attempt full expression of their experiences are demeaned as hysterical, ungrateful, and delusional. Their affects/experiences are discounted and pathologized in an effort to reinforce a dynamic of oppression that “effectively prevents politicizing of experiences of humiliation and pain that result from discrimination” (Oliver, 2004, p. 88).

The direct route into shame. Pathologizing, repressing, excluding, and discounting the experiences of those Othered within their own communities is a direct route to shame. This is especially true as the excluded believe in and blame themselves for the deficiencies created and instilled in their psyche by the dominant culture. This is a
process of domination that leads to shame, one which Kelly Oliver refers to as the ‘colonization of psychic space’.  

‘Colonization of Psychic Space’

The colonization of psychic space works through silencing the effects (marginalization, exclusion, and lack of participation in meaning making) and affects (depression, shame, melancholy, bitterness, and anger) of oppression. Although Oliver names three affects characteristic of oppression: depression, melancholy and shame, I believe more can be added to this list. In my view, affects of oppressions can be any emotion the oppressed feels as a result of being marginalized: anger, sadness, helplessness, and bitterness. However, I believe shame to be the greatest emotion elicited by oppression, but it can be easily muddled and hidden behind the facade of other emotions like anger, bitterness, and fear. What is certain to me is that shame is the most controlling of its inhabitants, especially considering that it is directed towards the self and not externally toward others. This is what makes it a great tool of control over one’s psyche and presence in the world. Those ‘Othered’ within mainstream culture are excluded from meaning making except as inferior and less than; a shaming process involving thoughts and feelings that controls their psyche (Oliver, 2004, p. 92). Through

97 This is a reminder that this phrase is the title of Oliver’s book, one that she consistently repeats in her arguments.

98 Other than the above reason for my consideration of shame as the most controlling emotion, my discussions in the previous chapter show that other emotions like fear, anger, and resentment are an expression of shame expressed outwards and sometimes inward.

99 The cognitive processes caused by shaming experiences were thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter. However, it is important to reiterate that the process of shame brings about cognitive evaluations about the self that elicit a combination of feelings some of which are helplessness, defeat, and the need to hide. Such processes propel the shamed to isolate oneself.
shame, (being less than, defective, inherently weaker, and not good enough) their exclusion is silenced and reinforced, making it a perfect tool of control.

To go back to my example on women in patriarchal societies, the double oppression of women’s psychic space exits at the onset of patriarchy. Before being born into the world, women have already been defined as inherently inferior, deficient, and incapable of defining themselves and making meaning for their own bodies and affects. In such places, women are already located at the margins, and are oppressed.

**Meaning Making Under Existing Structures**

According to Oliver (2004), in order to assert one’s subjectivity within one’s community, one needs to reject and ‘revolt’ against one’s cultural norms. However, I want to emphasize that this revolt ought to be accompanied by assurances that one will be forgiven by the same community or by an accepting/loving third. Yet, those at the margins are already defined as inferior and incapable, and are thus rejected before they even exist (people of color, women, gay people, etc.) Accordingly, only those who are already part of the meaning making processes (white people, men, heterosexuals for example) can revolt and then be forgiven back into society.

To refer back to my example on patriarchies, men’s revolt against existing cultural norms is forgiven because they are originally part of the meaning making process- they are the centre. Women’s “mistakes”/revolts are never forgiven because they are already on the margins. Being present yet not allowed to join is what creates that centre and makes it strong and intact. Those who do not fit within the boundaries of meaning-making set by the same culture they ‘long’ to belong to become the ‘abjected’

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100 In many other texts and articles, Oliver analyzes Julia Kristeva’s notion of the “loving third”. Although in this section I use the concept ‘accepting third’ to refer to the community, sub community, the center, etc. Kristeva adds a philosophical dimension directly connected to meaning and language.
and the ‘oppressed’, and are continuously shamed for not meeting the expectations of their cultural norms and ideals.

**Static boundaries enhancing shame.** Oppression not only works through allocating centers and margins where people are positioned and forgiven, but ensures that those who occupy such spaces stay there. As such, movement between the center and the margin is not possible as it is immobilizing and static. Both sides, the center and the margin, are protected with rigid boundaries. In Lebanon, the boundaries are set and protected by a patriarchal religious non-negotiable system. Due to the general belief in the system’s divine nature, women learn to believe in their own deficiencies and incorporate “denigrated self-images widely circulated in the mainstream culture”, leading to self abnegation and shame. Through the power of shame, women are not only alienated from their society, but from themselves too. They are shamed and they mourn a lost self, one that is prevented from meaning making. Unfortunately, as women “we blame ourselves for the lack of meaning, and shame leads to depression, which in turn can make us ashamed. This is the vicious circle of the colonization of psychic space” (Oliver, 2004, p. 91). Oliver points out that both depression and social melancholia produce and are products of shame. When one believes she is not good enough and defective, the inability to sublimate her affects is inevitable and results in isolation. Self-isolation creates social melancholia—mourning over a lost ideal self—and depression, which increases feelings of shame and isolation. Shame is the common denominator in this vicious circle.
Section Two Conclusion

In conclusion, the inability to define oneself within cultural boundaries and expectations-- expectations reflected through set ideals that serve the dominant hegemony-- imposes shame on the psyche. The shaming targets any expression of subjectivity outside the boundaries of those ideals and is considered a trespass against the social. Self and social shame become a consequence of this trespass, bringing about more isolation and exclusion, foreclosing the possibility for relationality, subjectivity, and a sense of belonging to a community. I reiterate that to belong to the social, forgiveness from the social is also required. However, in patriarchal cultures, only the beneficiaries of the values of the culture are forgiven; “but those excluded or disowned by dominant values are not forgiven; they are shamed, ridiculed, abjected for their difference (Oliver, 2004, p. 92).

Paradoxically, though ‘shamed, ridiculed, and abjected’ they --the “othered” and marginalized-- seek love and recognition from the very culture that rejects them as inferior. The “dominant values in which they are raised cannot but affect them. They cannot but internalize those values as valuable” (Oliver, 2004, p. 94) and keep on longing for what they cannot belong to. Such is the power of shame: not only controlling subjects’ positioning within external existing social structures but also controlling its subjects’ emotional psychic space. Such power is indicative of the first face of shame, the controlling one.

Section Three: The Productivity of Shame

I can only recognize myself recognized by the other to the extent that this recognition by the other alerts me: it is desire; it is what trembles in desire.
(Jean-Luc Nancy: the restlessness of the negative as cited in Butler 2005, p. 26)

The first two sections require further inquiry into the phenomenon of shame. It makes me wonder about my urge to tell the stories that brought about shame. It also highlights my personal interest in the very structures that shame us. It underlines my need to ‘recognize myself’, and understand the Other that shames me, that Other who brings me to ‘tremble in desire’ to be recognized and known. In the last two sections and through the discussions on the deep connection between the individual and the social, the first face of shame as a tool of control was discussed. Some of the concepts elaborated on included: The necessity of self inauguration in becoming a subject; the realization of our limited intelligibility; the importance of a subject’s sublimation and meaning making for belonging; the recognition of the power embedded in the social; the important connection between social positioning and social participation; and the awareness of the power of shame on meaningful participation and belonging.

In this section, I continue to deconstruct the two faces of shame; the controlling and productive, with a special emphasis on the latter. Shame’s productivity is revealed through discussions related to the second premise of this chapter, i.e. shame experiences are a declaration of interest, love, and a need to belong. Here, I show how the awareness of shame’s controlling powers can become a catalyst for self-reflection regarding what interests us, what moves us, what and how we love, and where we long to belong. I discuss how responsiveness, or its lack thereof, enhances/diminishes subjectivity and feelings of belonging. Additionally, I establish that whatever form our belonging takes, the longing to belong and to be recognized is directly connected to the love we have for
others and to ego ideals that are mainly a product of what the social realm requires and accepts.

The Paradox: Knowing, Longing, Leaving, and/or Staying

Before starting my discussion on interest, longing, and love as they relate to the productive face of shame, it is important to clarify some of my positions regarding the power of shame as a tool of control. Although my discussions in section two show that some of the marginalized (because of their sex, skin color, gender, ethnicity, etc.) believe in their deficits and/or helplessness, this is not a generalization. Many are aware of and well informed about the reasons and conditions of their marginalization and oppression. For example, I always wondered why women in Lebanon, most of whom are educated, do not combine their efforts, move into action, and work on changing the status quo. Realistically, breaking through the mold of established structures, norms, and cultural expectations comes at a high price, especially for married women whose legal rights are under the Lebanese Personal Status Law\textsuperscript{101}. If married women choose to defy existing structures, especially when the implication of the ‘defiance’ includes leaving one’s community and/or marriage institution, they will, (1) lose the custody of their children, (2) be seen as a cheap available commodity due to divorce, and (3) have no paternal base to rely on. Accordingly, many resort to staying put, enduring, and maneuvering within the same system that marginalizes them. There exists a second group of women who are also aware of social marginalization, who have the means, the courage, and the choice to leave but choose not to. This group chooses to stay in their own communities in spite of

\textsuperscript{101} In the previous section, I explained what the “personal Status Law” is in Lebanon.
the system that marginalizes them.\textsuperscript{102} There is yet a third group that chooses to leave their place of origin and I am one of those women.

**A personal reflection on migration and longing.** When I was still living in Lebanon, it was essential to play according to my patriarchal society’s rules. Contrary to many women in my country, I had the chance to live to Canada in pursuit of safety, education, and another nationality. I have been in migration for ten years now. To my surprise, my longing for my Lebanese community, with all its faults, never subsided but increased. Through the years, the longing to belong has increased especially as I continue to find myself searching for communities that can hold me and compensate for the emptiness and longing I continue to have for the community that held me in shame and pain. Paradoxically, my presence in the Western world where women “might” feel less intimidated than they would in my own culture did not quench the thirst and longing I have for my Middle Eastern community. I am one of the many people I know who continue to long to belong even when they are aware of the existing methods of oppressions and injustices in the places they long for.

**Longing Embedded in Exclusion**

In spite of the systems that marginalize us along with the pain such marginalization carries, we keep longing for that Other in our community. Whether or not we understand the causes of our marginalization/exclusion, the feelings of shame are present and persistent. However, I believe that such presence reveals the second face of shame, its productivity. Shame’s productivity stems from its capacity to motivate self-reflection on a lot of things, among which are the structures we take for granted, our

\textsuperscript{102} Many of my female friends in Lebanon are of this second category. However, their choice is based on their need to stay connected to their families, loved ones, to cultural features valued to them, over the fear of the unknown, and the difficulty of starting all over again in unfamiliar and faraway places.
complicity within such structures and the validity of the norms/social codes we live by.
Shame evokes a need to understand oneself, especially if the pain shame elicits, attracts our attention to what we are interested in and what we care for, much of which might be hidden from our psyche. The previous examples of women in Lebanon show that whether we migrate physically (leaving places of oppression) or migrate (staying within the geographical boundaries of places that oppress them), we are all huddled together within the boundaries of interest in the other, care, love and a longing to belong.

**Interest and the Other**

I start this section by reminding myself that the main reason for writing a dissertation on shame is based on my interest in this topic. However, this interest is embedded is my longing to connect with Others, some of whom resemble the place I come from and long for, and some of whom resemble the place I am in and hope to be a part of. I also remind myself that the hope to belong to a new place, the context where I live in now, was instrumental to the telling of my personal story in my graduate course, where part of myself was inaugurated. Most importantly were the feelings of shame I struggled with after telling my story, which made me aware of a deep longing and interest in the “Other”. My personal disclosure regarding interest, shame, and the Other highlights some important questions: How does the interest in the Other along with the need to belong and get recognized intersect with feelings of shame? How can the struggle with feelings of shame brought about through conditions we live under and not of our own making alert us to that interest?

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103 I keep referring to the original story that brought forth my interest in shame as a topic for my dissertation, the one I wrote about in my introduction of the dissertation. Later in the chapter, I repeat parts of it to expand on my central discussion.
In response to these questions, I discuss Elspeth Probyn and Sarah Ahmed’s work on interest, love, and idealization. While Probyn’s work clarifies the connection between interest, care, and shame, Ahmed highlights the connection between shame, love, and idealization. Moreover, Ahmed’s work highlights how the love for an “Other”, more so the love for the ideal of that “Other”, initiates our own idealization, a process that allows for the fluidity of shame between the individual and the social. My discussions point to how such fluidity elicits critical reflection and hence leads to shame’s productivity.

The interconnectedness between the individual and the social reveals that regardless of how we connect to one other, it is a reality we long for, stay within, step away from, and agonize through; a complicated connection that does not diminish easily. It seems to me that struggles we encounter in social contexts, i.e. efforts to belong, to be cared for and care for others, love and be loved, and exclusion, stem from not fully surrendering or accepting the social norms we encounter. I discussed how in giving up and declining from participation, from trying to make meaning, from rethinking hegemonic and disabling social norms, we get submerged in depression, apathy, despair, and/or migration from our own selves. As a result, we lose interest, care, and love for others and ourselves.

Accordingly, I believe that being aware of our struggles with cultural norms makes us fortunate, especially when accompanied by feelings of shame. Contrary to feeling desperate and/or indifferent where nothing matters, when shame accompanies struggles, it indicates that hope and interest still exist. It is such a conundrum in which “I would not be in … if it were not for a desire to offer recognition to you [an Other]” (Butler, 2005 p. 26) as well as a desire to get recognized by you. Such desires indicate
interest in the other and result in a thought provoking productive form of shame. For a better understanding of how shame can be productive, it is important to analyze this paradoxical connection between shame and interest.

**Interest, communication, and shame.** Probyn (2005) discusses how our interest in the other stems from our desire for connection, a “longing for communication, touch, lines of entanglement, and reciprocity” (Probyn, 2005, p. X). Probyn’s statement echoes those made by Butler and Oliver on the interest in the other, a process where the self is inaugurated through responsiveness - a key aspect for subjectivity. Oliver asserts: “The loss of interest has significant implications for subjectivity. ... As interest in the world withdraws, the structure of subjectivity itself is undermined. The directionality of consciousness as consciousness of something always directed at the world and others withdraws into catatonia” (Oliver, 2004, p. 114)

But where and how does shame emerge and/or reside within the process of interest and responsiveness? In his work on emotions, Tomkins (1995) asserts that shame and interest are intimately connected and at a basic level shame "operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated" (p. IX). I further discuss how this connection between shame and interest takes place. I also discuss how the realization of such connection elevates shame from an emotion deemed to be negative and a tool of control over people’s psyche, to a catalyst of reflection and change at both the personal and collective level.
Shame: A Productive Interruption

Taking Tomkins’ work on emotions as a framework for her work on shame, Probyn (2005) discusses how shame is neither directly connected to the feelings of interest and enjoyments nor is a result of them. Shame only appears after interest and enjoyment have been felt and then “ripped from you. At that moment, the sheer disappointment of loss translates into shame that attacks your sense of self” (Probyn, 2005, p. XII). To elaborate on the above point, I discuss Probyn’s analysis of interest. Probyn asserts that interest is what establishes lines of connection between people and ideas: “It describes a kind of affective investment we have in others. When, for different reasons, that investment is questioned and interest is interrupted, we feel deprived. Crucially this is when we feel shame. Shame marks the break of this connection” (Probyn, 2005, p. 13). Hence, shame is elicited when interest and enjoyment are interrupted, interfered with, and threatened to be cancelled out.

My personal story on how shame as a topic for my dissertation came about serves as a good example here. My interest in the Other, my classmates and my teacher, as well as my longing to belong to a place that interests me, was interrupted by the tears that came out while telling my personal story. My interest was also interrupted by my inability to continue the telling in an unemotional, comprehensive, and objective manner. The above interruptions provoked a deep sense of shame that included feeling weak, vulnerable, and not objective enough-- traits not highly recognized in the academic world. My thoughts on how I ought to behave in the academic realm are directly related to archaic stereotypes on how the ideal scholar should behave. These are important concepts I return to in the next section on Idealization, Shame, and Interest. My example
shows how shame can come into being via an interruption of what we care for, are interested in, and long to be part of.

Although shame “interrupts lines of interest and connection, the reason we feel it is that we want that interest to continue” (Probyn, 2005, p. 66). The productivity of shame stems from its ability to declare that our interest is still alive, important, and urgent. Yet shame is only productive when it demands our acknowledgement, when it urges an “immediate and involuntary reassessment of ourselves” (Probyn, 2005, p. 65). It demands attention and rethinking, and hence producing “effects-small and large, individual and collective. … Denying shame is a waste of important resource in thinking about what it means to be human” (Probyn, 2005, p. 65).

The Two Faces of Shame, Fluidity

Based on the above description, one might wonder how credible the productivity of shame is. In the midst of visceral feelings and self-judgment, most of which are elicited by this emotion, how easy and reasonable is it to acknowledge, reassess, and rethink what we are interested in and what we care for?

To answer the above questions, I return to the first two sections of this chapter. I revisit the discussion on how marginalization impacts one’s view of the self as shameful and defective and how “sustained experiences of shame can lead to depression” (Tomkins 1995, p. 401). It is essential to remember that we can only be shamed if we care about and are interested in something/someone; people, places, positions, etc. My personal narrative and those of others made it clear to me that no one can shame me if I do not care about them, what they say about me, and the place I am in. However, I cannot deny that in spite of the fact that shame is an indication of interest, care, and longing to belong,
it is painful and induces self-judgment. Yet, only when shame’s visceral feelings demand 
acknowledgement, i.e. make my interest ‘urgent’ and demand ‘involuntary’ need for self-
assessment, does it become productive.

For example, my original story on the interruption of interest in the academic group I was a part of brought about shame. With the prompting encouragement of my teacher at the time, my shame demanded acknowledgment and self-assessment. If my shame did not demand acknowledgment, it would have created a need to hide and dwell in what I would have believed to be a self-deficit. I would have been controlled by the same social structures I am resisting, i.e. women are emotional, academics do not cry, etc. In this sense, shame becomes productive, not because it becomes a positive feeling but because it attracts my attention to the importance and urgency of my interest. For a better understanding of how paying attention to the intensity of my interest can make shame productive, I share Probyn’s explanation on interest and shame:

I am not making the claim that shame is ‘good’ because it is tied to a positive, as in ‘good’ feeling. Rather interest is positive in its sense of being opposed to a negative or substantive state [expressing feelings in academia]: it adds rather than takes away. ...In this sense, shame produces affects--more shame, more interest--which may be felt at a physiological, social, or cultural level. When we feel shame it is because our interest has been interfered with but not cancelled out.

(Probyn, 2005, p. 87)

Although the shame I felt in my graduate class was painful and certainly not a ‘good’ feeling, it led to a personal realization on how deeply I am interested in academia. Most importantly, it made me realize that I am not convinced that the ideal academic
scholar is supposed to be objective, devoid of any feelings, and/or personal connection to
the subject of research.

**The Backsliding into Shame.** It seems the deeper I delve into the meaning of
shame, its intersection with other emotions, the ways it forces us to be in the world, its
particularity and universality, the more I am in awe of this feeling. Probyn’s questions on
the majestic complexities this emotion brings closely resonate mine. She asks, “Is shame
one feeling or many? Is it felt the same way the world over, or does it have very
particular cultural meanings?” (Probyn, 2005, p. 16). As I move between the space of
shame’s particularity and universality, Probyn reminds me that I do not need to
‘backslide’ to one side or another since the universal/theoretical stems from the
particular. She reminds me that one face of shame (being a tool of control) reveals itself
through the other face (its productive push for self-reflection and assessment) and vice
versa.

For instance, I only start to reassess and reflect as I witness shame’s capacity to
control my psyche (thinking, feeling, representation of who I am) and that of others.
However, reflection and assessment would not have emerged if it had not been for my
own struggles with this emotion, evident in the personal narrative I share. The more I
reassess, the more I realize how shame wraps me in the totality of my life. To further
elucidate this point, I next explain how shame can be both productive and controlling,
and how through idealization/the way we believe we and others ought to be in the world,
we tend to backslide into believing in its controlling side.

Sarah Ahmed’s work on the connection between love, idealization, and shame
also enriches my discussion on the connection between shame and interest by adding an
altogether new dimension to it – love. Based on Ahmed’s writings, I show how the two faces of shame can intertwine.

**Love, Idealization, and Shame**

Thus far, I have shown how shame is always provoked because of the presence of an Other that we care for. Ahmed asserts that in shame, “a prior love or desire for the other exists... shame is not a purely negative relation to another, shame is ambivalent” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 105). Ahmed’s discussions on the connection between shame and the Other bolster Probyn and Tomkins’ discussions on shame and interest while adding love to the equation. This addition shows fluidity\(^\text{104}\) between shame’s hegemonic power and its productivity.

**Love for Other’s ideals.** Ahmed asserts that our interest in and love for an Other is rooted in the love we have for the Other’s ideals. Because of the love we carry for others (be it a parent, lover, friend, country, institution), most of their ideals become our own. We take on their images as our own and construct what is referred to in psychoanalysis as the ‘ego ideal,’ an ideal image of ‘the self’ that a self would like to resemble. Here, my interest in and/or love for an Other changes into love and interest in their ideals, some of which is transformed into the way I view myself.

For example, as a child who loves and is cared for by my parents, I learnt from an early age to love some of their ideals (a daughter with a Ph.D., a married daughter, a loving and obedient woman, etc.). Throughout my adulthood, I surprisingly found myself pursuing things that are not mine but theirs. Ahmed asserts, “shame requires an

\(^{104}\) By fluidity, I mean the movement between shame’s two faces. When shame’s pain elicits reflective thinking about the same structures, norms, and ideals that shame us, we are not stuck and immobilized with painful self-judgment. Shame’s controlling power is revealed in its productivity and vice versa. By being able to reflect and realize the productivity of shame, we can also see its power to marginalize and oppress.
identification with the other who, as witness, returns the subject to itself,” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 106). Therefore, when the love for that other is interrupted, or not fulfilling/measuring up to that other’s ideal image, shame appears.

**The Ideal Daughter.** At this point, I return to the example of myself as a daughter and how my love for my father along with his vision of an ideal daughter -- someone who would pursue a Ph.D.-- are major influences in my academic pursuit and current life direction. I learnt to love the ideal of my loved subject (my father) and idealize it as my own. Although I am aware of this connection, any interruption in pursuing this ego ideal (a daughter with a Ph.D.) elicits feelings of shame within me. I am continents away from my father, yet his ideal daughter lives in me and is clear in the sense of shame I feel when in doubt about my current journey. At times of doubt, the shame I feel is accompanied by a sense of failure before him, even in his absence, a “failure of myself to myself” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 107) To quit pursuing my Doctoral degree work would be failing to have lived up to the image of the ideal daughter I have taken from him, where “I am the object as well as the subject of the feeling” (p. 106).

**Love’s Stickiness**

At this point, Ahmed’s discussion on love and idealization becomes significant to my dissertation. While shame provoked by the interruption of interest is productive as it points to what I am interested in and care for, shame provoked by the interruption of love critically attracts my attention to what I love and at the same time locks me within the same structures that limit my individuality, sticking me to Others.\(^{105}\) It is this love for the Others’ ideals that sticks subjects together, “[ideals] that bind me to another who might

\(^{105}\) Groups of women, people of the same sect, etc.
be assumed to be ‘with me’ as well as like me” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 106). Ahmed also points out that what underlies the idealization of the other’s ideals is a need to be acknowledged, to belong, and to be recognized by others. In this sense, shame indicates a failure to live up/meet their ideals, it threatens and implies the loss of love and recognition from the significant others in our lives. In Ahmed’s (2004) own words, “we feel shame because we have failed to approximate ‘an ideal’ that has been given to us through the practices of love...What’s exposed in shame is our failure of love” (p. 107). In not living up to our loved ones’ ideals/expectations, which become ours, we have failed to love ourselves. Such a view of the self as failing and defective brings shame. However, for Ahmed not all forms of expectations elicit shame; only those reinforced by the power of love we feel for others.

Although Ahmed’s discussions on the intense connection between love expectations and shame seem to limit possibilities for subjectivity and individuality, they, in fact, do not. I believe Ahmed’s views reiterate that through love (idealization of the loved subject’s ideal), there can exist a ‘double bind’ of shame, where one can get marginalized and controlled, yet at the same time gain the ability to critically reflect on one's life. But similar to shame in interest, shame as a consequence of the interruption of love is only productive when acknowledged, i.e. involuntarily recognized and critically reflected on. I am also of the view that ‘shame in love’ is stronger than ‘shame in interest’ because it reveals to us how we are strongly bound to the love of others and how we have failed this love. Considering that “what’s exposed in shame is the failure of love ... [it] is a failure that in turn exposes or shows our love” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 106). Accordingly,
acknowledging such shame provides us with the opportunity to recognize and reflect on the kinds of ideals we love and embody, along with their significance, value, or absence.

**Weaving through Subjectivity, Idealization, Interest, Love, and Shame**

Ahmed’s ideas on love and idealization are significant to my work on shame. Her ideas weave a connection between all work of Butler, Oliver, and Probyn. According to Butler, we inaugurate ourselves as subjects through the telling of our stories, and we continually fail at giving a full account of ourselves; this is a moment of realization regarding our limited intelligibility. Oliver adds to this dialogue by arguing that self-inauguration through the telling is a proclamation of our subjectivity, a proclamation which would not have taken place prior to idealization. In this respect, the telling is not spontaneous and the inauguration of the self carries with it prior ego ideals. Those ego ideals are ideas about how I ought to be in front of the Other with whom I am sharing my story. Although the presentation of myself differs depending on whom I choose to share it with, the urgency of the telling intensifies when I am interested in another and is enhanced if I carry love for that other. In this sense, idealization is contingent and “is dependent on the values given to [us] through encounters with others… and despite the negation of shame experiences, my shame confirms my love, and my commitment to such ideals/ values in the first place” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 106).

Hence, the productivity of shame in Ahmed’s work does not only stem from its ability to make us realize what and who we love. In essence, it makes us think about what love is contingent upon, the conditions of love received and given,106 along with its connection to shame.

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106 It is important to discuss the conditionality of love as a receiver and giver, as we cannot be one or the other, we are both. I believe we learn how to give love in the same manner we receive it. For me, shame is
Love’s Conditionality and Shame

The conditionality of love further highlights the intimacy between love and shame. The more shame I feel, the clearer the conditionality of love becomes. Ahmed (2008) shares an example from the structure of families as we know them. She states: “family life [love] may be conditional on how one lives one’s life in relation to social ideals. … Shame secures the form of the family by assigning to those who have failed its form the origin of bad feeling” (Ahmad, 2008, p. 107). Since, no one wants to be the origin of bad feelings in a family, most family members embody the “normative”. Therefore, when some inhabit the non-normative, non-ideal, they “take on identities that are already read as the origin of our shame… the difficulty of moving beyond shame is the sign of the power of the normative, and the role of loving others in enforcing social ideals” (p. 107).

In the following section, I share an example of how identities and ‘gender’ roles look like in the family context and how they are all governed by the conditionality of love and shame. Although my previous narratives were about women’s roles, I do not aim to disregard the impact of shame on men’s roles and expectations. In many societies both genders play their roles according to the social rules and expectations. Sometimes, men’s shame is as equal if not more excruciating than that of women, especially in patriarchal societies where there is a specific ideal of manhood. Even though the next narrative on the conditionality of love and shame is about a man I know, this narrative is applicable to many men in my culture as well.

much more productive when we ask ourselves what are we enforcing on others through our practices of love.
A Narrative: shame and men in patriarchy. One of my male friends in Lebanon became a source of shame to his parents. As a man in the Arab world, he has failed to live up to his family’s (parents’) normative ideal of the successful, financially independent man they expect of their son. Because he is non-normative, i.e. seeking their help to financially sustain himself and his family, his parents do not hesitate to remind him of how he has failed them. What is very sad is that his shame to live up to their ideals left him angry, bitter, and most importantly lacking in self-love and empathy.

Coming Closer to Loved Ideals/Declaring Shame

In spite of the fact that the intimacy between love and shame is powerful, it can be productive. To reiterate, many of us, shamed by our communities, stay connected to them either because we have no other alternative or because of a deep love for the very same community and people that have shamed us. As a result of the interruption of the love we carry for the social/family ideals, shame creeps in. Realizing, accepting, and declaring our shame takes us back into the community. In this vein, Ahmed (2008) maintains, “In showing my shame in my failure to live up to a social ideal, I come closer to that which I have been exposed as failing” (p. 107).

I return to the story about my male friend from Lebanon: My friend shared that he continuously professed to his parents that he has failed to live up to their expectations and needed their help and forgiveness. This declaration opens the doors for being accepted in his community again. In a strange sense, especially when he has no other choice but to live in the same community whose ideals he has failed, shame has a productive aspect. Although I am cautious about declaring my friend’s shame as a productive, I am also hesitant about dismissing it as a form of control. Although the form of shaming my friend
has experienced is controlling, especially as it enforces boundaries between the center and margin, in his case it is productive. The very act of declaring his shame opens the path to forgiveness and back into his community; one he cannot live without. I also believe his feelings and declaration of shame provide him the opportunity to reflect on a patriarchal community he is a participant in. He has continuously shared with me how unfair his southern community has been especially as he is expected to be the sole provider for his family.

The Neither Nor: The dilemma of Shame and Love

My lived experiences of shame keep showing me the complexity of this emotion. Each story on shame I have heard, witnessed, or lived through is unique. Each story merges both faces of this phenomenon, the controlling and yet thought provoking resistance that emerges out of its productive face. Each story involves different time frames, contexts, ideologies, social, as well as personal character traits that are intertwined in ways that can neither allow us to understand the full picture nor describe or prescribe the emotion as only negative or positive. What I know is that whatever shame results in, and in any form it appears, its ripple effects are real and powerful. Even when we resist, refuse, and look for other others/communities to belong to, one thing is for certain: we are beings who need to love, be loved, and belong to another. Accordingly, we will always encounter experiences that include both faces of shame.

For example, many of us immigrants leave our ‘troubled’ place of love because we refuse to embody the ‘normative.’ But the love we carry for that place of origin is

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107 My friend lives in the southern part of Lebanon where men and women’s roles are more rigid than they are in the city. Generally, women are not supposed to provide, only men are. Although not recommended in many families, if women choose to work, it is for their own pleasure and pocket money.
deep and the longing for it never subsides. When we were in our home country, our love was continuously interrupted by unfair and unreasonable norms, lack of participation and expectations not aligned with our passions, which resulted in shame. In my case, the subsequent shame brought on an evaluative and critical lens over what love declares, what it points to, and what it demands; a realization that contributed to my decision regarding emigration. Paradoxically, although migration is a choice, it ends up being another interruption of love, resulting in another form of shame, an existential one. This form of shame keeps me longing for a place¹⁰⁸ I love, where the very same love that controlled me can accept me again. This form of shame seeps into my new migrant home, presenting itself in the angst of my need to belong, to fit in, to be loved and cared for, and to be at home when home is so far away. Sandra Bartky (1990) eloquently explains this conundrum:

> The body's sense of being out of place, is a form of shame related to the desire to fit in, an interest in being part of a place. The interest propels you toward exposure: A slip of a tongue as you mangle the colloquialism, the moment when you don’t get a joke. …it's a little shaming from within, fed by the desire to be unnoticed, to be at home-or to be at ease in someone else's home. (Bartky, 1990, p. 38)

> Whether one is home or not, we all live in structures that impose certain ways of being on us, many of which result in shame. While some of us rebel, others retreat into themselves. Whichever way we deal with shame, both faces present themselves in different manners.

¹⁰⁸ Place here is metaphorical. It can mean a specific geographical space, but it also refers to a group, family, individuals, land, etc.
In the next section, I discuss a short Lebanese movie, called *Caramel* where both faces of shame are evident. I chose the movie because the stories are about women in Lebanon, my home country. My interpretation of the stories touches on the two faces of shame along with the connections between shame, interest, care, love, and the need to belong. The characters’ stories indicate how the faces of shame are intertwined and are a natural concomitant of the two premises this chapter is based upon. In highlighting both faces of shame, I hope to demystify the general judgment of this emotion as purely negative; one that needs to be gotten rid of, rejected, and hidden from, pretending it does not exist. My discussion of the movie highlights the presence, intersectionality, and fluidity of both faces of shame, all in the name of love, care, and interest.

**Caramel, Shame and Women in my Culture**

The movie *Caramel* is about the lives of five women (Layal, Nisrine, Rima, Jamal, Rose) who live in the Lebanese patriarchal society. Layal works in a beauty salon in Beirut, the capital, along with three other women. Each one has a problem: Layal is in a relationship with a married man, Nisrine is no longer a virgin and will soon be married to a man who thinks she is preserving her virginity for their wedding night, Rima is a lesbian, and Jamal is worried about getting old. Rose, a tailor whose shop is next to the salon, is an older lady who has found her first love after devoting a lifetime to taking care of her sister.

The issues reflected in the movie are about patriarchal powers and the stories of these five women which are considered taboo. All five of them are shamed when they try to sublimate their bodily desires, experiences, and affects to gain meaningful signification. In falling in love with a married man, Layal feels ashamed as she is not
fulfilling the ideal daughter’s role. By turning down marriage proposals, she feels she is letting down her parents. As a woman in Lebanon, her relationship with a married man will never be forgiven if made public. By trying to book a room in a hotel to celebrate her lover’s birthday, she is humiliated by the men/receptionists who ask her for proof of marital status. Her shame and pain are heightened when her lover rejects her, stands her up on multiple occasions, and decides to stay with his family: “Rejection strips us of self-worth; our vulnerability exposes us to shame” (Anzaldua, 1987/2007, p. 110). When sharing her feelings with her girlfriends, Layal confesses that her shame overwhelms and exhausts her. She hates herself and the thought of her actions makes it even harder to look her parents in the eye every time she goes back home.

Nisreen’s problem stems from the idealization of the perfect bride, one who is supposed to be a virgin at the night of her marriage. Her fiancé is not a virgin either, but he is forgiven because he is a man. But the fact that Nisreen is not a virgin and that she has to lie to her fiancé about it causes shame and makes her believe she is a bad lover, bride, and daughter. Only when “a woman remains a virgin until she marries, she is a good woman” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 17). Nisreen shame is accentuated when, with the help of her girlfriends, she heads to a clinic for a virginity reconstruction operation.

Rima’s shame stems from her desires and feelings for other women. Not being able to fulfill the social heteronormative ideal, her shame excludes her from the community and isolates her. The very fact that she never dares talk about her feelings and desires to her girlfriends highlights the shaming linked to being a lesbian in a patriarchal heteronormative society.
Jamal’s shame is caused by the fact that her husband left her for a younger woman. She is going through menopause and is aging. In trying to embody the ideal of an active productive young woman, she tries competing with women half her age. Jamal’s inability to get the dream jobs she loves and aspires to, because of her age, makes her sense of shame stronger and more painful.

Rose lives with the dilemma of the ideal sister in a culture where family members devote their lives to each other sacrificing their own. Rose devoted her life to taking care of her older sister who is mentally challenged and lives with her. When Rose finds love with Charles and attempts to date him, her sister’s plea to stay with her shames Rose; the plea represents the cultural norms.

**Shame, An Interruption of Structural Ideal Love**

The shame felt by the women in the movie *Caramel* is directly related to their love for the significant people in their lives made them idealize their ideals, making them their own. For example, Layal’s love to her parents makes her idealize the object of their love, the ideal daughter. Rose’s love for her family member makes her idealize the object of her sister’s love, the ideal sister.

**Deviance, a community condemnation of failure.** Regardless of the ideals the women in the movie embody as their own, when they stumbled due to unexpected opportunities/events that brought forth deep desires, wishes, and hopes that do not align with their ego ideals, their structural family love was interrupted, the result of which was shame. Since in patriarchal cultures, “much of what the culture condemns focuses on kinship relationships, the welfare of the family, the community, and the tribe is more
important than the welfare of the individual… Deviance is whatever is condemned by the community” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 18). Hence, the ‘non normative’ behaviors the characters in the movie embarked on threatened cultural norms and traditions. Anzaldua confirms: “Most of us believe that if we reveal this unacceptable aspect of the self our mother/culture/race will totally reject us. To avoid rejection…we push the unacceptable parts to the shadow” (1987, p. 20).

Love for a culture, for one’s mother, and for a community is what makes many women conform to values in their culture they are not convinced of. The shame the characters felt for failing their ego ideals is a reminder of their failure for what they love, among which is themselves. This was evident in statements the characters continuously made throughout their dialogues and monologues; “What is wrong with me?” “How can I do this?’, and “I can’t look my parents in the eye”. The statements represent the deep sense of shame along with the pain it carries. Most significantly, these assertions represent an image of a failed self in front of a loved Other, a controlling characteristic of shame.

**Shame’s revelations and reflections on community structures.** Regardless of the self-demeaning characteristics embedded in the controlling face of shame, the dialogues/monologues in the movie beautifully depict the complexity of this emotion and allow us to peek into its productive powers. Hence, in the midst of their agony and struggles with what desires and expectations, the characters repeatedly questioned the ideals enforced on them through loved parents, loved others, and loved society. The involuntarily critical questioning surged in spite of (or maybe because of) shame’s pain; self-disappointment and at times growing interest in a new Other. The stories fluidly
moved between one face to the other where the viewer was unable to distinguish where one face ends and the other begins.

For instance, Nisreen’s shame about not being the perfect bride, i.e. virgin, evokes the intense pain she shares with her girlfriends. However, the pain does not stop her from questioning the same norms and traditions that shame her. In one of the scenes where she and her fiancé are heading to her in-laws’ house for dinner, he asks her in a shaming tone to remove her makeup, take off her big earrings, tie her ‘curly wild’ hair, and button up her shirt in order to fit the ideal innocent bride expected of her. Although Nisreen did what she was asked, she angrily and bitterly argues with him about the hypocrisy embedded in both the norms and her fiancé’s thoughts for wanting her to look differently in front of his parents. Although his tone of voice was shaming, her love for him and desire to belong to his family as well as her own made her abide by their rules. However, the interest and love also caused immediate and involuntarily critical thinking about the same norms that control her.

Similarly, Rima’s shame is accentuated through the feelings of disgust and refusal when her friends try hooking her up with the deliveryman. Her sexual preference was always controlled through the shame a heteronormative society inflicted on her, the consequences of which were aloofness and isolation. However, the same shame that isolated her also surged due to the interruption of her interest in a woman on the bus. The looks of disgust she received from the woman interrupted but did not eliminate her interest and resulted in deep feelings of shame. Most importantly, these feelings of shame led her to critically question the same norms that isolated her and ultimately encouraged her to come out to her girlfriends and to start a new journey into self-acceptance.
Through their shame, pain, and critical dialogues about their lives and what is expected of them, the women in Caramel showed the fluidity of the two faces of shame, the controlling and the productive one.

Chapter Conclusion

For I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the “we” except by finding the way in which I am tied to “you!”

(Judith Butler, 2005, p. 49)

I start the conclusion with Butler’s quote as a reminder of the two central premises of this chapter: 1) the individual and the social are intertwined and 2) shame is a declaration of interest, love, and need to belong. By stating ‘you are already of me’ and ‘I am nowhere without you’, Butler affirms a deep connection between the individual and the social. By voicing that ‘I cannot muster the we except by finding the way in which I am tied to you’, she also affirms our need to declare, search, and pay attention to what informs this connection. I add to Butler’s points by stating that the need to do so is most significant when coated in shame, without which we cannot fully realize our interest in and love for that Other.

This chapter focused on the following concepts: Self-inauguration and the Other, subjectivity, relationality, meaning making, interest, idealization, and love. Shame, as a phenomenon, was the basic thread that connected the above concepts and merged the chapter’s central premises. Inspired by ideas from the scholarly works of Judith Butler, Kelly Oliver, Elspeth Probyn, and Sarah Ahmed, the discussions around the two premises slowly and gradually revealed the two faces of shame: the controlling and the productive.
While Butler’s work brought forth the necessity of narration for self-inauguration, Oliver advocated the importance of sublimation; i.e. expressing one's desires, wishes, and affects meaningfully, as essential factors for subjectivity and for belonging to the social. These authors attracted our attention to the impossibility of full expression, especially as we are closely connected to an Other and to forces beyond our own making. The inability to fully narrate, sublimate, and make meaning is what brings about feelings of shame, especially when our desires, ideas, wishes, and hopes are not aligned with the norms we live under. By being different from the social, we are perceived as defective and hence pushed to the margin as such. In this sense, shame becomes controlling especially as those on the margins accept/believe their deficit and shy away from creating different spaces for themselves.

Although the fate of shame and the shamed might appear grim at this point, the discussions did advance to show the productive face of shame: its ability to elicit critical thinking regarding the same structures that use it as a tool of control. In introducing the works of Elspeth Probyn and Sarah Ahmad on love and interest, the critical productive face of shame started to emerge. Probyn’s discussions unveiled an intimate connection between shame and interest, where shame appears when our interest in an Other, an idea, a social group, belonging, etc. is interrupted and incomplete. The feelings of shame bring to attention the intensity and urgency of our interest, which in turn open up spaces for critical evaluative reflection on what is really important to us and what we care for.

Similarly, Ahmed’s discussions on love brought forth another fascinating side to shame. The discussions show that a lot of our interest and longings are also connected to what and who we love. From an early age, we learn to love our loved ones’ ideals. We
embody and idealize their ideals making them our own, most of which constitute a large part of the interests that lead our lives. Failing those ideals is an interruption of the love we hold for others and ourselves. Shame appears during such interruptions and similar to interest it does not indicate the end of love but its urgency and continuation despite the interruption. In this sense, shame is productive as it adds and not subtracts. Shame’s addition lies in its power to elicit immediate and involuntarily questioning, allowing for continuous movement between its two faces.

The personal narratives and examples I shared throughout this chapter show the fluidity between these shame’s two faces; the way they flow into and out of each other. Whether it is my story, my male friend, or stories of women from my culture, each show some form of fluidity between both faces. Writing a whole dissertation on shame is an example of its power, where in the midst of feelings of entrapment, shame haunted me to involuntarily question, to look at my world from a critical lens, and investigate it. Going back and forth between the controlling power shame had over my psyche and the critical lens it elicited is a first-hand experience regarding the fluidity between its faces.

Although shame seems like a trap that begs for either submission and/or abjection, I believe it does not entrap us. I believe it opens up possibilities for ethical reflection on how we and others are implicated in and by it. Probyn (2005) asserts my thoughts above. She declares:

> It's crucial that different stories be told and in different ways. It's not that the effects of shame can be harnessed by stories; it's that shame demands that we tell other stories. … It is undeniable that shame can be channeled into a politics that seeks to wield power over others. … Even when it's
effects are negative or destructive[shame] still allows for another way of thinking ethics and politics. (Probyn, 2005, p. 73)

I end this chapter with a poem inspired by all the concepts I discussed in this chapter on shame, love, interest, and idealization.

_Afteration_

_I worked through you and for you_

_You continued to reject me_

_I followed your rules_

_You continued to expel me_

_From meaning making exercised by you_

_I flew in the swarms of your bees_

_Tried on their bright yellow transparent outfit_

_But I am destined to be a spider_

_One that anchors your world as the center_

_And mine as the border_

_My imaginary bright yellow clothes got torn_

_I was forced into a long black dress_

_Covering me from head to toe_

_And I could not see_

_I screamed for you, longed for you_

_Asked for forgiveness for what I am not responsible for_

_Asked for forgiveness for what I though I am complicit in_

_I asked for forgiveness for what I imagined to be_
A self not good enough for you.

I've tried to unlock myself out of your jail,

To find I am just living in one of my own

I screamed for you, reached for you

As you reached further away for your obedient yellow bright bees

I untie the knots of my spider long black dress,

I unscramble me, you, and all the

living and the non-living inside my web…

I am done with trying to make beehives

Where all is sweet, bright, and good enough

I am webbing, tailoring, making alterations

I am making myself,

The Spider I am.
Chapter Five

Shame: Conclusion Significance, Implications for Education, and Future

Recommendations

Back to the Start

This dissertation seeks to explore and understand one of the most controversial emotions: Shame. Debates on this emotion range from viewing it as a necessary tool used for behavioral change/control to seeing it as a negative emotion used to oppress and manipulate others for the sake of creating centers and margins. Researching shame is not an easy task. Firstly, there is paucity of research on the topic and secondly it is often emotionally charged to a point that many prefer to stay silent about it. My focus in this dissertation is mainly related to understanding what constitutes the experience of shame as an emotion at both the individual and social levels. More specifically, my work highlights how shame creates a power dynamic that empowers some and marginalizes others by imposing certain roles, one of which is gender roles.

Academic research on emotions has always been an interest of mine. The reason I chose to work on shame specifically was the result of a personal experience I shared in the introductory chapter. Throughout my writing I chose to weave personal narratives into theories of shame in order to highlight the importance of lived experiences as an essential source of knowledge. The narratives I shared were mostly related to my lived experiences in the Middle East and Canada, where I live now. In both worlds, I embody multiple roles: the scholar, mother, daughter, migrant, all of which made me curious about shame and gender roles. This curiosity was based on the assumption that shame is an emotion used as a tool of control over women. However, my discussions revealed the
complexity of shame with its many facets and layers. It showed me that shame is not only used as a tool of control over women’s roles only but over people’s roles generally. Moreover, my discussions highlighted how shame critically reveals our deep interests and longings, which are the consequence of our inevitable connection to others. The dissertation showed the intriguing complexity of two faces that belong to shame: the controlling and the productive.

As I was writing this dissertation, I met a woman at a conference who asked me about my topic. Upon hearing that shame is the topic, she burst into laughter and asked me why would anyone waste time researching such a dark and negative topic! This was not the first time I’ve heard such reactions, which made me more curious about the intensity of shame, the academic historical background on emotions generally, and shame specifically. So chapter two became an overview of the history of ideas on emotions and shame. In this overview, I explored views on emotions from different disciplines and eras. I discussed how emotions were stigmatized as weak and inappropriate, and used to stereotype women as the weaker sex because of their emotionality. Emotions became a woman’s characteristic in opposition to rationality, a man’s characteristic. My discussions also established that although some Greek and Medieval philosophers considered certain emotions to be of value, cognition and rationality were consistently ranked higher. As for shame, it was considered by some of the Greek and Medieval Christian Philosophers including Plato, Aristotle and St. Aquinas to involve cognitive reflective processes that elevate it from other emotions.

However, the categorization of emotions as weak reached its zenith throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, a period where religious orthodoxy was being challenged by
the advent of scientific inquiry. The separation of cognition and emotions became the norm, with reason and scientific method being the dominant force. With the surge of psychoanalysis at the beginning of the 20th century, emotions started to get more attention. This was clear in Freud’s belief that emotional repression is the main cause of mental health problems. However, Freud believed women were more prone to mental health problems than men. Other than the fact that most of his clients were women, Freud associated hysteria and shame with that sex. In spite of the fact that more attention was given to emotions, ascribing emotions to women and reason to men was still a dominant intellectual paradigm.

Towards the middle of the 20th century, shame found its way back into academic research and discussions, and its cognitive self-evaluative components were appreciated once again. For example, Jean Paul Sartre’s analysis of shame shows how it provokes reflective processes regarding our relationship with others, without which we are oblivious to our positioning in the world. Sartre’s work disclosed important aspects regarding the presence of the other in the experience of shame, leading to one significant premise for my argument: There is an inseparable and inevitable connection between the individual and the social. Bernard Williams and Helen Lewis’s work brought attention to the importance of neglected emotions like shame. Their work regarding demystifying shame’s bad reputation was significant in bringing it to researchers’ attention.

The background on the history of emotions and shame helped illuminate how and why emotions are considered to be lesser than reason. My exploration of the past literature on shame contextualizes this analysis. When it comes to gender, scholarly and culturally based stereotypes mark the beginning of exclusion and separation. Shame as an
emotion is particularly powerful in such exclusions. Exclusion works at all levels: the physical, the mental, and the emotional. Its impact on the psyche defines boundaries between the individual and the social.

In chapter three, I worked towards a conceptualization of shame, one that showed how such a stigmatized and neglected emotion can define boundaries, build power structures, and also illuminate what we take for granted. However, my new conceptualization of shame also required a review of current research: specifically, how it is defined and interpreted in different disciplines, how it is compared to other emotions, and why it is confused with guilt. I looked at common themes that emerged across disciplines. Arriving at a new conceptualization added to the discussion on the constitution of the phenomenon of shame as an emotion and power dynamic at both individual and social levels and its specific application to gender roles.

Accordingly, I started chapter three with a discussion on current academic research on shame. I analyzed scholarly discussions regarding the difference between guilt and shame from a variety of disciplines: psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Some of the discussions on both emotions stem from the work of Bernard Williams (2008), Christina Tarnopolsky (2010), Gabriele Taylor (1985), Helen Lewis (1971), James Mensch (2005), Martha Nussbaum (2006), and Phil Hutchinson (2008). The discussions concluded that shame and guilt differ in their focus, where guilt is about an act of wrongdoing and shame is about a perceived defect in the self. The discussion showed that one can lead to the other and both could be felt at the same time in connection to the same issue, which is one of the main reasons they are conflated.
Chapter three determined that shame is an embodied experience, felt at emotional, mental, and physical levels. A variety of scholarly discussions further asserted the complexity of shame, which can be neither theoretically described nor prevented. A formal definition of this phenomenon is neither simple nor necessary. Most importantly, the discussions revealed two important aspects related to the shame experience: it is ontological (one discovers an important aspect of one’s Self) and it is intersubjective (one relates to an other in order to discover an aspect of one’s Self). Both aspects affirm the inevitable presence of the other in the experience of shame.

The display of different perspectives on shame in a variety of disciplines was an indication of its intensity. It also showed the wide range of influence shame has on one’s cognitive, emotional, and physical states. Most importantly, this chapter demonstrated a scholarly consensus: Experiences of shame alert us to our presence in the world in connection to an Other. However, shame is more prevalent in personal connections, especially with people we care for, long to belong to, are interested in, and love. In chapter four, I thoroughly analyzed the power dynamic that is created as a result of our close connections to others.

The discussions in chapter four are based on two basic premises: (1) the individual and the social are intertwined and (2) shame is a declaration of interest, need to belong, and love. In this chapter, I thoroughly analyzed the intertwined connection between the individual and the social as well as the ways shame can seep through such connections, especially when moved by interest, the need to belong, and love. The body of scholarly work discussed in this chapter was complemented with examples, narratives, and poems from my own lived experiences. To analyze the chapter’s two central
premises, I discussed topics including self-inauguration and the other, subjectivity, relatiroliallity, meaning making, interest, idealization, and love. This gradually revealed a conclusion on shame encompassing two faces: controlling and productive.

My analysis also revealed the importance of sublimation, the expressing of desires and wishes through the arts, in inaugurating the subject into the social. I also elaborated on how, when individual desires, wishes, stories, and needs are not aligned with the norms one lives under, the expression of such needs is interrupted. The interruption results in shame for being ‘different’, ‘defective’, and not ‘norm-al’. This is where the first face of shame, the controlling face, reigns and pushes the non-‘norm-al’ to the margins to create a center for the ‘normal’. The controlling power of shame can be overt and directed by external forces (like society, patriarchy, and parents) or covert and controlled through the shamed cognitive processes and beliefs. In this sense, shame’s cognitive evaluative components enhance its controlling powers. To take examples from patriarchal societies, gender roles are not only coerced externally through shaming norms and beliefs but also internally. Many of the narratives I shared in the chapter showed how the shame instilled in gender stereotypes internalized women’s belief that they actually are less capable and defective. This internalized belief system enhances women’s self-alienation from public life and political participation; the status quo stays intact.

However, a big part of my discussion showed that the pain elicited from self and social alienation could become an instigator for critical thinking about that which we take for granted. This is where the productive face of shame comes into effect. I discussed that the productivity of shame is especially clear as we start to realize the direct connection of shame to interest, care and love. In this part of the discussion, I used a variety of
scholarly work including that of Sarah Ahmed (2004), Elspeth Probyn (2005), and Kelly Oliver (2004) to explore the intimate and strong connection between interest/love and shame. I showed how shame surfaces at the very moment interest or love is interrupted and threatened to be taken away from us, marking the beginning of shame’s productivity.

In this sense, the increases in a sense of shame does not indicate the end of interest and love, but it opens one’s eyes to their urgency and continuation even when interrupted. Such a realization, although painful, is also surprising. It adds and not subtracts and is productive instead of controlling. The productivity of shame is clear in two areas: the attention it brings to what is important to us and its ability to elicit involuntarily reflective and critical questioning regarding what we are interested in, what and who we love. The discussions show a fluid movement between the two faces of shame where the control it inflicts on the psyche is what elicits involuntary reflective questioning. The fluidity between the two faces stems from the inevitable connection we have between one another. As long as we continue to be interested in someone/something and long for connection, the movement between both faces of shame will not remain static but continue with every encounter, every change, and every stage of our lives.

**The Significance of my Work on Shame**

Since I started researching and paying attention to shame, I find myself engaged in conversations about it on an almost daily basis. Most significantly, when people know about my research topic, they do not hesitate sharing their intriguing stories and opinions on shame. Such public curiosity further highlights the importance of lived experiences in research. Although this research started as an academic task, it became much more than that for me. I became personally and emotionally invested in the topic and the level of my
investment helped expand my discussions beyond the confines of academia. Sharing and discussing shame in various circles (poetry, storytelling, peace circles, etc.) has made my research authentic, connected to lived experiences, and most importantly accessible to both the academic and non-academic spheres.

Although at an academic level shame has recently garnered serious attention, additional research on the topic is needed. Accordingly, my work adds to the available pool of academic research on shame. Moreover, within the scholarly work available on shame very few speak to shame’s “productivity” (Patisson, 2000; Probyn, 2005; Tomkins, 1995; Williams, 2008). Shame is mainly declared as a negative emotion, what some call “the sickness of the soul”. When I started researching shame, I too was inclined to view it as negative, oppressive, and a tool of control over one’s psyche. Even though my starting point with shame was a declaration of its negative controlling side, my analysis revealed its productivity as well. In addition to the above points, the significance of my contribution is related to the unique conclusion I present on this emotion: shame has a controlling face and a productive face.

**Shame’s Productivity**

In many cultures, shaming is considered necessary and “productive” in changing behaviors agreed upon to be ‘wrong’. My narratives along with the examples from the movie *Caramel* presented in chapter four illustrate this point vividly. Similarly, a number of philosophers utilized shame as a mechanism for behavioral change and self-repentance. The cases cited in chapter two include how Socrates shamed his interlocutors in public for the sake of changing their faulty political stances. Another example involves St. Augustine’s autobiographical work “Confessions” which cited St. Augustine’s
attempts at attaining atonement and divine forgiveness. St. Augustine continuously shamed himself for the sins he committed early on in his life. In both examples, shame is used as a tool of control over some behaviors considered to be wrong by some ideals (Socrates philosophical/political ideals) and higher powers (God and Christian ideals for Augustine). Although in both scenarios shame is used for positive change/ productivity, my stance on shame’s productivity is significant and different from these positions.

The productive face of shame I point to is not intentional and enforced for the sake of behavioral change. The productive shame I advance is one that appears without invitation, where the shaming situation provokes involuntary immediate acknowledgement and reassessment of others and oneself. In my analysis, both shame’s faces, the controlling and productive one, are interconnected and the pain embedded in shame’s controlling face brings forth its critical reflective and productive face. Such a productive face is not one that changes existent behaviors to fit cultural norms and values, but one that involuntarily provokes critical thinking regarding the same norms and values that marginalize and control us through shame.

For further clarification on the significance of my stance, I refer back to the main question of my dissertation: What constitutes the experience of shame as both an emotion and a dynamic of power, with a specific emphasis on women’s gender roles? My question is a reiteration of the purpose of my dissertation: looking at the impact of shame at both individual and social levels along with how it creates certain power dynamics and its impact on gender roles. In showing how we are inevitably and intimately connected to each other, I argue that shame is mostly pronounced through such connections, yet more so when such connections are moved by interest, the need to belong, and love. The
conclusion I draw states that the interruption of interest, the need to belong, and love result in shaming pain. However, I also argue that such pain is productive as it shows us that our interest, the need to belong, and love are still alive; it shows us that since we still feel and desire, we have hope and agency against marginalization and seclusion. Accordingly, the significance of the productive face of shame stems from its ability to make us reflect on what we are interested in, the price we pay to belong, and the things we do or are expected to do in the name of love.

Finding an alternative to shame as a negative phenomenon helps bring hope and possibility to the hopelessness shame often brings up. It helps us rethink our values and beliefs. Such reflection on shame with its two faces could open up possibilities for those groups pushed to the margins. It could empower women to rethink their roles in patriarchal societies. It could help the marginalized realize that the deficit is not in them but in the system, norms, and cultural beliefs they live within. Reflecting and reassessing helps shift the attention from a place of “stuckness” to a more active role where change can become a possibility.

Love and Shame

In addition to shame’s productivity, the connection between shame and love is yet another unique and important contribution of this research. To reiterate, I ended my previous chapter with a focus on the connection between shame and three important concepts: interest, the need to belong, and love. I will briefly summarize all three of these connections with a special emphasis on the connection between shame and love.

Using personal narratives as an example on the connection between shame and interest makes my contribution to existing research unique and significant. My narratives
weave lived experience with theoretical discussions on shame and interest. Most significantly, using personal narratives makes the topic understandable and accessible not only to academics but to non-academics as well. Hence, regardless of gender, ‘education’, socio-economical status, I believe providing ways where discussions on shame are accessible encourages widespread empowerment and change. This is an important contribution my dissertation brings to existing discussions about shame.

Although the connection between shame and the need to belong is alluded to in the literature on shame, it is not directly addressed. Highlighting the connection between shame and one’s need to belong allows for a shift from viewing shame as negative stance to a more empathetic one towards oneself. It helps us realize that the pain we feel as a result of shame is not because of a personal deficit but one that unlocks an ontological depth related to our need to belong and connect to an Other. Writing about this connection is significant as it invites a sense of responsibility and complicity in the choices we make in order to belong. This awareness opens up spaces for agency, self-reflection, and evaluation bringing out the productive face of shame.

In spite of the fact that shame’s pain alerts us to what we are interested in and care to belong to, its intensity is magnified when connected to what/who we love. The connection between shame and love is another significance my research brings to the scholarly works on the topic. Discussing this connection clarifies how shame enables certain power dynamics and roles, like gender roles, in the name of love. Significantly, my discussion about the connection between shame and love as a dynamic rooted in ideals we inherit from our loved ones is a breakthrough in the literature on shame. Throughout my research, I did not encounter a specific and direct argument on the
connection between shame and love, and more so on the way this connection controls us beyond context and time. The connection along with the narratives I present show that we will always be shamed and pained for not fulfilling ideals we inherit from our loved ones. The above realization is significant as it sparks reflection about what and whom we love, and how this love controls us.

The discussion on the relationship between shame and love is also unique. It opens up the space for change and mobility between both faces of shame, the controlling and productive one. It reveals how the intensity of shame’s pain that occurs at the moment love is interrupted makes us question what we are loved for and what/who we love. I also point out that despite the fact shame’s pain is controlling, its intensity can bring reflective evaluation in relation to what is enforced on us in the name of love (ideal love inherited from loved ones). In this sense, my discussion on shame and love is one that brings agency and hope to many marginalized groups, specifically women. Discovering and realizing that in spite of the pain embedded in shame’s exclusionary and controlling face, what we still love, hope, and want allow us to move beyond shame’s controlling face. This realization provides us with agency to question what is taken for granted. It is in this context that shame becomes productive and the space for critical reflection on how we blindly embody and abide by roles because of prescribed and described love (cultural, parental, marital, etc.) becomes accessible. To further clarify the significance of this connection between shame and love, I offer an example on gender roles in patriarchal societies.

To reiterate from my last chapter, gender roles in patriarchies are decided upon through the claims of love. For example, in Lebanon many women are Othered as
needing a loving father, brother, and eventually husband in order to be productive members of society. Accordingly, many women are bound to specific duties that are directly related to “love”. Thus, whether it is love for their families, their children, parents and/or communities, the expression of love is mostly pronounced in a specific framework prescribed by patriarchal and religious norms. Any attempt to exercise love outside the prescribed framework is shaming and painfully puzzling to many who are not aware of this dynamic. My research brings attention to this dynamic, opening up the space for both men and women in places similar to Lebanon to rethink what shames us in the name of love. Shame might accordingly become productive as it provides a chance to reconsider and rethink such dynamics outside the cultural box, freeing many from the daunting duty of a certain forms of “love”, one that is not ours but inherited from the ideals of those we love. Realizing the power of shame in love allows a shift from a place of control to a place of agency and hope. It is a movement between shame’s two faces, a beginning of reflection on what can be done differently to empower many of us considered defective because of gender, sexual orientation, social class, race, ethnicity, accent, and/or choices that do not fit the status quo.

Shame’s Fluidity

While most of the existing research on shame is about its controlling negative face where one can easily become depressed and immobilized, my research puts forth the possibility of new alternatives. This is embedded in the fluidity I propose between shame’s two faces, the controlling and productive face. Such fluidity diminishes the common stigma about shame being “a sickness of the soul”, elevating it to an emotion that prompts critical thinking, productivity, and mobility. My analysis and argument
show that there is no hiding from this emotion. As long as we are connected to each other, we are in a flux of interest, longing to belong, loving, and wanting to be loved. As long as we are in constant encounter with new or old people, new or old places, new or old ways of thinking, we will face times where our interest, love, and longing will be interrupted by shame. My research acknowledges shame’s existence and does not shy away from it. It allows spaces for conversation about shame’s pain. When shame is acknowledged, it opens a world of immediate and involuntary reassessment of beliefs, keeping a fluid movement between its two faces. Such fluidity is what moves us into action where we get the chance to reflect, reject, and re-evaluate. Likewise, within the state of reflection, we will always face new ideas, many of which can be hegemonic, marginalizing, and rejecting of our individuality. As long as we are not complicit in building margins and centers, as long as we care, are still interested in others and still love, we will face shame’s controlling face over and over again. Most importantly, as long as we remain aware and reflective of shame’s pain and in conversation with others and ourselves about it, shame can become a teaching tool at many levels.

**Implications for Education**

In order to illustrate the implications of my thesis on shame for education, I reiterate some of its basic conclusions: (1) as individuals we will always be connected to the social, and, (2) since this connection is embedded in interest, the need to belong, and love, shame is a persistent partner. Although my examination demonstrated that shame is always present, it also showed that shame is not a solely negative emotion. Despite shame’s controlling and painful face, it can be productive and can trigger critical thinking about the same structures that shame us. In this section, I show how my conclusion about
the two faces of shame offers new possibilities for critical pedagogy: “How one comes to find relevance for one’s present world in events that are not one’s own, but that have the capacity to say something more to the stories one already has, is…a central question of any pedagogy” (Simon, 2002, p. 20).

Understanding shame as a phenomenon with a specific focus on gender roles brings about pedagogical possibilities and ethical responsibilities to current social realities. Butler (2005) urges us to look at our ethical responsibilities exactly at the moment of despair and anguish. Through the controlling power shame exerts on our psyche, it urges us to assume responsibility and to be critically aware in the face of its pain. It urges us to take risks, where one is “undone by another… a primary necessity, an anguish…but also a chance to be addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act” (Butler, 2005, p. 136). These are the very moments where the productive face of shame comes through. The quotes by Butler and Simon create a sense of ethical responsibility that urges us to look at shame’s dynamic as a possibility for pedagogical change. Such pedagogy can help us understand the social context of shame along with its constant connection to positionality and participation. Through such pedagogy, we will be able to find relevance to events that contribute to and impact our own lived experiences. Moreover, the discussions in this section will work to deconstruct different forms of education that continue to keep dominant ‘knowledges’ intact.

**Education and Situated Knowledges**

I do not only refer to education as what is practiced in schools. I refer to education from a “situated knowledges” perspective; one that is a hybrid of experiences learnt from
the family, culture, streets, neighborhood, as well as formal educational settings like schools. My definition of education is in contrast to what Paulo Freire refers to as “bureaucratic education”. Here, the teacher enforces a specific rigid methodological perspective. Such pedagogy is mechanical, not dialogical, lacks both “epistemological curiosity”\textsuperscript{109}, and an invitation to see the world critically and differently. In this form of education, the only existent narratives are those handed to us from “the experts” and are taken for granted without questioning and reflection.

The two beliefs that underlie my synthesis on shame inform my thinking about such pedagogy: the individual and the social are inseparable and an interest in care and love for an ‘Other’ are revealed through shame experiences. Previous discussions indicated how one cannot escape knowing an Other\textsuperscript{110}; this is the only way to become an individual in the social context. The close connection between the individual and the social enforces specific forms of knowledge construction about the self and Other. For example, in patriarchal societies, there is a specific understanding of gender roles, one that is reproduced by the status quo. Such forms of knowledges are passed on from one generation to another and are deeply embedded in religious and cultural norms.\textsuperscript{111} In this respect, Ford (2007) asserts that knowledge and knowers are situated and hence marked by social positionality and political contexts. Ford (2007) writes, “It matters from where [social positions] we write and know, it matters with whom we write and know, and it

\textsuperscript{109} More reading about this term can be found in the article “Presence of mind in the process of learning and knowing: A Dialogue with Paulo Freire”. For a general reading on Freire’s views on education refer to his book “Pedagogy of the oppressed”.

\textsuperscript{110} The “other” in this context is anyone from a person’s culture, community, group, and so on. The forces that work at separating women and men through shame experiences cannot entirely prevent knowledge of an Other, evident in the continuous connections made on the streets, home, community, and school.

\textsuperscript{111} More examples on how the connection between the individual and the social enforces certain knowledge construction deeply embedded in cultural norms is clear in the narratives I shared in the previous chapter.
matters to what effects of knowledge construction and evaluation we pay attention.” (p. 307). My discussions on shame and patriarchies are situated within the social structures I belong to. My knowledges /education are a hybrid of lived experiences I gained from all the cultures I have lived in.

In line with the points made, I identify five implications from my major argument on shame for education: (1) Importance of lived experiences, (2) Importance of narratives as an educational tool, (3) Importance of emotional learning, (4) Attention to refugees’ experience and well-being, and (5) Recognizing the shaming implicit in grading/evaluation.

**Importance of Lived Experiences**

*Lived experience and academia.* This dissertation is an excellent resource for education regarding the implications of lived experiences. The topic of the dissertation originally came to being as a result of sharing one of my lived experiences in a graduate class.\(^{112}\) The writing elicited and brought forth memories about other experiences I lived through and witnessed. Each lived experience on shame along with its contextual significance impacted my future choices regarding the subtopics of the dissertation.

Although some of my lived experiences about shame were painful, controlling, and crippling, they proved to be the most significant of all. Recalling these experiences opened the door for critical introspection about the topic of shame resulting in a body of work that adds to the available literature on this phenomenon. Hence, this academic body of work on shame could not have been possible without the narratives I experienced and consequently shared.

\(^{112}\) The story is shared in details in the first chapter of the dissertation
Lived experiences and schools. Realizing the significance of lived experiences for learning is essential. We arrive in the classroom with worldviews created by our lived experiences. Since we are in constant connection to others from different contexts, religions, and beliefs, our worldviews are likely to clash with that of others (friends, colleagues, students, teachers, and school curriculums). At times, the discrepancies between ones’ worldviews and that of others are confusing. When our worldviews are dismissed, it can result in shame and anger. Thus, paying attention to our own and our students’ lived experiences is essential.

An example from a second grade student whom I taught years back clarifies my point. My student declared that boys are stronger than girls. When I asked him how does he know such “truth”, he told me that when his parents fight his mom cries a lot and his father has told him that his mom cries because she is a woman. This seven-year old declared a worldview gathered through his lived experiences at home and possibly reinforced by his culture: women are weaker than men because they cry; men are stronger, therefore they do not cry. This story opened up an opportunity to critically think about and discuss gender stereotypes in the classroom. I am now aware that our classroom discussions at that time might have created some discrepancy between my student’s lived experiences/worldviews and the new information he became exposed to. I am more aware now that as educators we need to be more cognizant about the sense of shame and unease experienced when our perceptions are not consistent with that of others. I also need to be more aware of the dynamics of asymmetrical power arrangements between us and our students, which affect the kinds of knowledges each student constructs. These spaces afford us the opportunity to reflect, discuss, and try to engage in what Lugones
(2003) calls a “loving perception” towards others and ourselves. In these spaces, the shame felt should not be hidden and pushed away but acknowledged, questioned, and reflected upon, making it productive. In this way, shame becomes a way to “travel” into not only the other’s world but into one’s world as well.

Lived experiences and communities. The above discussion is quite relevant to what is happening in our world today, especially when it comes to the U.S.’s rising “us versus them” rhetoric. With the new Trump administration, the politics of shaming is alive and well, expressed in an ‘arrogant perception’ about ‘them’- the different, not-white-enough, not-American-enough, etc. It is a shaming strategy that keeps the margins, centers, and status quo intact by leaving no space to understand and even love an Other. Lugones (1987)’s point regarding her perception of her mother is an excellent depiction of the above scenario:

To love my mother was not possible for me while I retained a sense that it was fine for me and others to see her arrogantly. Loving my mother also required that I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother’s world, that I witness her own sense of herself from within her world. Only through this “‘travelling’” to her “‘world’” could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject even if one subjected, and only then could I see at all how meaning could arise fully between us. We are fully dependent upon each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we

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113 The ideas about “arrogant perception” and “world travelling” are related to Maria Lugones’ work on margins and centers and the shame being marginalized inflicts on the psyche. As an American Latino, Lugones grapples with her own feelings of inadequacy and shame within the North American culture and reflects on her own biases viewing her mom with an “arrogant perception” that became a hindrance to understanding her mother’s world.
are lacking. So travelling to each other’s “worlds” would enable us to be through loving each other. (Lugones, 1987, p. 6)

Although the United States’ latest strategic shaming of the ‘Other’ has created painful reactions and exclusion of many communities, it nevertheless resulted in a productive phenomenon. More than ever, communities across North America are critically reflective, supportive of one another and raising questions about issues such as positionality, existing norms, belonging, and migration. The January 2017 women’s march against Trump is a great example of this. The center’s arrogant and shaming worldview worked as an educational tool about existent realities. It created a fluid and spontaneous movement between peoples’ worlds.114

Similarly, the politics of shaming in the Lebanese culture acts as a similar tool for marginalization. Women are shamed for not fulfilling a cultural/religious image of womanhood and men who treat women as an equal are shamed for not being manly enough. Factions shame each other for not being as good as ‘us’, all for the purpose of controlling one another. Whether it is women, men, or factions, lived experiences are denied and controlled through an “arrogant perception”.115 This perception does not allow the productive critical face of shame to come through and makes stepping into the other’s world nearly impossible. Therefore, to educate others at a community level, to understand “what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes” (Lugones, 1987, p. 11),

114 The February 2017 attack on a mosque in Quebec Canada brought together many communities from different faiths. For example, in Toronto, a group of women from two traditions, Muslim and Jewish, showed solidarity and gathered for Friday’s prayers at one of the mosques in Toronto.

115 ‘Arrogant perception’ is about assuming an attitude about someone based on the color of their skin, gender, name, religion, country, and social status. For example: Based on the color of their skin, education, and poor status, many of the domestic helpers who arrive in Lebanon from Ethiopia and Sri Lanka are assumed to be less than their employees and are treated appallingly. Accordingly, many workers became the exact person their employees projected on them.
‘world-travelling’ is necessary. In this respect, Ford (2007) asserts that “before situating ourselves as knowers, educators must make … themselves accessible to the perceptions and ‘worlds’ of people who are differently situated from… themselves, including the perceptions such people have of … them” (p. 319).

I wonder what kind of education we need in order to bring the above ideas to fruition. How can our communities and classrooms become a fertile ground for not pushing shame away, but acknowledging its presence and learning through it? How do we engender spaces for the two faces of shame within our communities’ educational settings? To answer some of the above questions, I start with the significance of narratives as an educational tool.

**Narratives as an Educational Tool**

To reiterate, one of the central principles in my discussions on shame is the inseparable and intertwined connection between the individual and the social. My discussions also illustrated how one of the most poignant connections we have with others takes place when we tell our story. Although shame is overwhelmingly controlling, telling painful and shaming stories releases its grip on us, allows conversations to flow, and helps one’s voice to be heard. Students and teachers’ narratives can provide a fertile ground for reflective discussions on what and who shames us. Hence, providing students with the space to share their painful narratives is essential for learning to take place. Likewise, it is essential for educators to share, when appropriate, their own painful narratives and critically engage with them. Since our worldviews start with lived experiences and narratives, inviting people and storytellers from different communities to share these stories is also essential.
One might wonder about the practicality of implementing such ideas within existing curriculums. I reiterate that I view education from a ‘critical pedagogy’ perspective where curricula work as a guide not as an absolute power. Portelli and Vibert’s (2002) notion of “Curriculum of Life” is a good example of how teaching from a reflective critical pedagogy looks like. Portelli and Vibert’s (2002) ideas are based on their belief that any curriculum should represent a “dynamic relationship among teachers, students, knowledge, and contexts” (p. 36). Using personal narratives in the classroom allows education to be “grounded in the immediate daily worlds of students as well as in the larger social and political contexts of their lives” (Portelli & Vibert, 2002, p. 38). Students’ painful and shameful narratives bridge the gaps between school and the world, opening the door for a reflective stance about “issues of power, difference, and marginality” (p. 39). This creates a fluid movement between shame’s two faces, the controlling and the productive face.

One of the best forms of learning in the Lebanese culture takes place through women’s informal sharing of narratives. To reiterate, gender roles are strictly prescribed through the Lebanese Personal Status Law: a biased law that serves the existing patriarchal communities. However, when women gather over lunches and dinners, they share their stories and thus reflectively and critically learn about such laws and rights. Many women form support groups and their education starts there. Such is the significance of narratives as a critical form of pedagogy at the community level, one that creates “possibilities for the co-construction and co-production of knowledge.” (Portelli & Vibert, 2002, p. 30).
Importance of Emotional Learning

Writing a dissertation on emotions with a specific focus on shame is an example of emotional learning at both personal and collective levels. For me, writing on shame was never an isolated endeavor. The process involved extensive sharing, discussions of ideas, and learning about emotions with friends, colleagues, and women from my home country, Lebanon. The process also involved presenting on the topic in academic circles and conferences. This, along with the opportunity to add to the existing academic body of knowledge on shame, makes this dissertation a learning tool about the significance of emotions in our lives. Through this work, many will learn about the power of emotions and shame, and critically reflect on their perceptions regarding emotionality and gender.

When talking about shame and gender roles, emotional learning seems to be of utmost importance. Discrimination around gender roles stem from archaic ideas regarding subjectivity and objectivity. While objectivity is connected to rationality and ‘real’ scientific knowledge, subjectivity is connected to the emotional non-rational realm and is consequently seen as lacking in knowledge. Historically, women were considered to be more subjective, and emotional, and therefore not as knowledgeable and wise as men. Because of the perceived lack of capacity for ‘rational’ decision-making, women were excluded from the public and at times even the private sphere.

My young student’s story reflects a Lebanese cultural perception that is clearly represented in the country’s Personal Status Law. Any man or woman drifting away from the above narrative is shamed and demeaned. Learning this narrative starts at home.

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116 For more information on the Lebanese status law refer to the following article: https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws
Boys and girls start school with a worldview about what emotions each one of them is expected to express and appreciate. Due to the recent influence of Western thought on the private education system\textsuperscript{117} in Lebanon, some conversations and discussions regarding emotions and gender roles were incorporated as part of the curriculum. However, the patriarchal cultural narrative is still dominant and ingrained in each individual’s cultural education.\textsuperscript{118} My narrative about crying in one of my higher education classes and the shame it elicited is an example of my cultural education on emotions: Strong rational academics do not cry in public. Hence, I believe that learning about emotions is essential. Such emotional learning can loosen shame’s grip over us. Educating people about the cultural and historical background that underlies our prejudices regarding emotions can provide a fluid movement between the controlling and productive faces of shame.

Emotional learning should be incorporated within all curriculums at any educational level. For example, teaching young kids to express their emotions without fear of judgment and ridicule is an important step in that direction. Introducing classroom literature about gender and emotions and linking it to students’ lived experiences/stories can help learners demystify their fear and clarify their misunderstanding around emotions. As parents, leaders, and educators, it is essential to be role models in emotional learning. Through sharing our stories and revealing our fragilities, pains, and fears, we will help break the cycle of emotions as less than reason.

For people who only believe in evidence and rationality over emotions, it is

\textsuperscript{117} The public and private education sectors in Lebanon are completely different. Most of the Middle and almost all of the upper class families enroll their children in the private sector. Public education is outdated and lacks exposure to new educational initiatives and ideas. While the public education curriculum is based on cultural and local ideologies that reflect the status quo, private school education and curriculum are inspired by the Western educational system and represent the Western ideology.

\textsuperscript{118} I mentioned before that education is not only about schooling but a hybrid of knowledges we acquire from the culture, home, and religious contexts.
important to provide them with scientific information on affect.\textsuperscript{119} This will highlight the impact of emotions on our brain, body and psyche. Moreover, in cultures like Lebanon where emotions are either suppressed or pushed away, it is important to find ways that can help people (parents, students, teachers, patriarchs) tap into their emotional side.

In recent years, I participated in a group that uses an emotional learning tools called \textit{Inner Guidance Questions}. \textit{Inner Guidance Questions} are a collection of practical tools developed by Larry Nusbaum, a physician and psychotherapist. They are based on answering simple questions that can help individuals tap into their emotions in a safe and reliable way.\textsuperscript{120} Nusbaum’s tools can be used to address a wide range of issues in a variety of contexts-- with individuals and groups in community and school settings. The tools can be used with children as well as adults.

Thus, learning about our emotions enables critical thinking about the prejudices we hold and their immediate connection to norms and social structures. This makes me think of another important implication of my dissertation for education, one connected to the Canadian refugee experience and the emotional prejudices and structures connected to it.

\textbf{Attention to the Canadian- Refugee Experience and Well-Being.}

Some of my narratives in the previous chapters are related to the shame we feel in migration, what I call “being between two worlds”. My narratives as a Canadian immigrant show that even when immigration is a choice, it does not necessarily take

\textsuperscript{119} Based on the scientific work of Le-Deoux, Goleman introduced the theory of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) to show the importance and impact of our emotions. Many schools introduced and worked through this theory emphasizing the importance of what was called at the time “Affective Education”. My Master’s thesis is based on the Importance of emotional Intelligence as a model for value based education.

\textsuperscript{120} An example of Inner Guidance tools is provided in Appendix A
away the puzzling sense of shame in our new home. For the refugees in Canada, the shame is of twofold: 1) leaving their home country was not a choice but a forceful reality, and 2) most of the newcomers have no knowledge of Canada’s language and customs.

I have had the experience of working on a research project entitled “Assessing parenting strains and buffers among Syrian refugee parents during early integration into Canada.”

Before arriving in Canada, most of the Syrian and Iraqi refugees seek refuge in neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Part of my role was to conduct interviews with the Syrian refugee mothers, the main caregivers of children. During the interviews, shame surfaced as a theme. Many women felt shame for leaving their parents (especially their mothers) behind, others felt shame because they were treated less than citizens in the transition countries, and some expressed the deep shame inflicted on them by others in their communities for having to work and support their families. Both men and women expressed their shame for not being able to speak the host country’s language. Through the pains expressed, these refugees also reflected on what they hope to achieve in Canada. Many shared their gratitude for being provided with opportunities to learn the English language and stated that once they master it they will look for jobs in Canada. Most significantly, the women unanimously expressed the feeling of empowerment and pride in their capacity to learn the language faster than their spouses.

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121 This research belongs to the University of Toronto sociology Department. The analysis and results of the research are still in progress.

122 In most rural areas in the Arab world, women are not supposed to work outside their domestic labor. They are shamed when they do so.

123 I conducted my interviews in Peel region where couples were attending English language schools. They all start at level one and the women were advancing faster than men.
worldviews they were raised with and still hold today.

I believe a lot can be done to empower and decrease the sense of shame among refugees in the early stages of their resettlement. For example: Refugees wait for at least two years in the transition country to receive immigration approval. When approved, they are asked to attend a two days “cultural orientation”, a program run by the “International Organization for Migration”. Most of the refugees I spoke with do not think the program is very helpful to their adjustment. 124 I believe if refugees get involved in language acquisition programs while waiting for their immigration papers, they will be better adjusted when they arrive in their host country. Possessing greater language communication skills can diminish the sense of shame these refugees feel toward their inability to communicate their needs in their first year of arrival.

Once settled in the host country, it is important to provide refugees with the space to share their narratives with each other, their sponsors, and other Canadians. Within the spaces created by and for those on the margins, in this case refugees, the sharing of one another’s stories help implicate the marginalized in each other’s lives and forge new relationships. Stories told and heard “create the testimony-witness relationship and hence possibilities for pedagogies” (Simon, 2000, p. 20). Stories told and heard will provide the newcomers with the chance to critically reflect on and compare their own cultural shaming experiences with others; a chance to move between the two faces of shame.

I am also part of a private sponsor group for an Iraqi family and my main role is liaising between the family and children’s schools. This has been an eye-opener to the

124 It is important to mention that privately sponsored families adjust much better than government-sponsored families. The privately sponsored have a whole group of Canadians and Arabic speaking individuals to help them with every step they take. This is not the case for the government-sponsored group, where most of the families feel alone and in need for more care, especially with matters that require English language communication.
struggles and shame some of the children experience because they cannot master the language quickly. Although many of Ontario public schools are providing newcomers with a two years transition program called LEAP (Literacy Enrichment Academic Program), along with on-site translators to help students and parents communicate with the schools personnel and teachers, a lot more is needed. While mastering the English language is very important, attending to the traumatic experiences most of the refugee children witnessed is essential as well. Patience, empathy, and genuine care are the first steps to alleviating students’ embodied anxiety and shame that can easily get triggered by their inability to communicate and perform well at school. Extensive teacher training on the impact of trauma and war on children is necessary. Many of the schools do not have counselors to help students who witnessed war and experienced loss to heal and adjust. Additional attention, empathy, and opportunities (like art therapy, emotional learning tools for children) to help these students express their emotions are needed. More care, counseling opportunities, and reassurances are also needed for parents to help them provide a safe home for themselves and their children.

**Recognizing the Shaming aspect Implicit in Grading/Evaluation**

I remember the shaming impact grades had on me as a child/teenager. Many of the teachers at the schools I attended would return class tests and assignments announcing each student’s grade out loud. To this day, I remember the desire to hide when my grades were bad. In one of the parent-teacher meetings I attended in Toronto with the family of an Iraqi boy, the teacher showed us his spelling test where she had circled in red every mistake the boy had made with the grade of 0/8 plastered on top of the paper. Knowing that this young Iraqi boy is not supposed to have grades during his
first transition year along with the fact that he joined the school just two months earlier and was just learning the alphabet, I cautiously asked the teacher about her rationale behind the grade and hinted that it might be discouraging. The teacher insisted that the red circles along with the grade would help him work harder.

To students, any form of grading is an evaluation of who they are as individuals. In many cultures, children’s school grades are considered to be an evaluation of the whole family, especially parents. Based on their children’s grades, parents are either proud or ashamed. Therefore, grades can become a dangerous shaming mechanism not only for the individual student, but also for the family. Many of the creative and artistic students who cannot function under the pressure of a normative educational system continue “failing” and harboring a deep sense of shame. Many drop out of school, convinced they are not good enough believing deep down that they have failed their parents.

Although I am aware that moving away from grading and standardized testing is a farfetched hope in most educational institutions, different strategies can be adopted to decrease the shaming aspect of grading. Instead of using grading as an indicator of students’ ability, we need to look at grading as an indicator of how we are doing as teachers. Students’ grades can help us capture what is missing in our students’ learning and can be a source of motivation to adjust and adapt our teaching strategies. Similarly, cultural education about the impact of shaming because of grading needs to be addressed. I constantly hear parents praising the child who has good grades and lamenting over their other child’s underachievement. Many parents blame and shame themselves for not being attentive or tough enough on their children.
To be able to step away from the systemic shaming caused by grading, cultural conversations and emotional learning about the impact of shaming (what many consider to be “tough love”) needs to be addressed. Only then, we will start realizing the impact of this phenomenon on our own and students’ psyche. Only then, we will start to critically reflect on what we value as parents and where these values come from. Only then will we fluidly move through the controlling face of shame into its productive nature.

**Broader Implications for the Future**

This dissertation is a theoretical research project about a complex yet intriguing emotion: shame. Through this work, I have presented an overview of the history of ideas on emotions and shame with two premises in mind: the connection between the individual and social is inevitable and shame is tightly connected to interest, the need to belong, and love. Since there are a wide range of disciplines that investigate emotions and shame, compiling a full and comprehensive research on emotions and shame in one dissertation is not a possible task. Although the dissertation adds another layer to the conversations on shame, i.e. a productive face revealed through interest, care, and love, it does not solve all of the problems related to shame and emotions. Also, the scope of the dissertation does not allow for a thorough overview about the shaming processes that exist within the hegemonic structures it refers to. Its scope does not allow me to research all the different layers of cultural shaming. It does not reveal the connection between shame and kinship/belonging, an expanding phenomenon in the Middle East that keeps the controlling face of shame alive and active. Finally, within the scope of the dissertation, there was no room for more elaboration on the different forms of ‘love’ along with its connection to shame and culture.
Recommendation for Future Studies

This dissertation opens spaces for more in-depth studies related to shame, some of which include: (1) Contextual quantitative/qualitative and comparative (across cultures) studies about shame and gender roles. Such evidence-based studies will illustrate how the controlling face of shame works in various contexts and how it will provoke the critical thinking needed to move into the productive facet of shame. (2) Research on the connection between shame and migration is essential. It will help in the understanding of the emotional needs of a large number of immigrants and displaced peoples arriving in Canada. For example, narratives based research and analysis can help release the grip shame has on the newcomers’ psyche. It can also help researchers, policy makers, and sponsors of Canadian refugees pay attention to their emotional needs and find ways to help them adjust to the new challenges they face. (3) Research analyzing Middle Eastern Authors’ scholarly work is also required. Such work will reveal cultural stories and narratives similar to the ones I refer to in this dissertation. (4) In-depth research on the impact of emotions on teachers and their students can also inform future academic endeavors. (5) More research on the connection between shame and the Arts (poetry, music, painting, and creativity) is necessary. This will encourage different ways of expressions and give hope to those who have either been silenced or pushed to the margins. Such research will show how the shamed can defy bigotry through expressions that not only move us to the productive face of shame but also alter difficult realities where possibilities seem impossible.
Final Thoughts

I reiterate that I view education as a hybrid of knowledges we continuously learn throughout our lives. Whether it is the education we learn from our cultural and religious communities, countries we travel to, and places we live in, the small neighborhoods we are raised in, or the family units we are huddled in, one thing is certain: the constant presence of an Other. Although the presence of Others is constant, our encounters with them are both challenging and changing. While some encounters elicit new senses of shame, others elicit old forms. I am convinced that shame is ever present, a companion, a teacher that can be controlling and hegemonic, yet can also elicit critical thinking about all the care, love, and interest embodied in our connections with Others. The process of researching and writing about shame in the last couple of years has forced me to face it head on. Through such encounters, old and new stories emerged and new ways of thinking about interest, love, and the need to belong emerged. Shame became my teacher, companion, and muse. Without its power and grip on my psyche and the fluid back and forth between its two faces, the door to my creative expression would not have opened.

I end with a quote by Hannah Arendt on ways to work through shame at all levels:

Rather than focusing on shaming those who shame us, let’s make films, tell stories, tend parks, paint murals, open farmer’s markets, build schools and universities, support clinics and foster misfit salons. These words will not wash away bigotry, ignorance, and traumatic shame whole cloth, and full inclusion maybe beyond their scope. But alternative places and worlds—“house[s] where freedom can dwell”—may lessen shame’s grip. (Arendt, 1965 as cited in Locke, 2007, p. 159)

Dare we take up her challenge?
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Appendix A / Emotional Learning Tool

General Questions for Inner Guidance

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Our bodies and minds have an inner wisdom that can heal and guide us. This inner wisdom, or intuition, speaks to us in different ways at different times. It is not dependent on I.Q. or education, but more on our willingness to allow it. It seems to be part of a larger coordinating force that guides nature and all of life. Like animals, we also have built in instincts designed to keep us safe, healthy and balanced, in the right place at the right time, and in harmony with the greater ecosystem.

This deep guidance system comes as standard equipment, built in at all levels of life, from earthworms to elephants. It seems to be a function of life itself. The difference between animals and us is that we have the ability to override this system. We do this often to the point where we lose awareness of our own signals and replace them with signals that come from outside us. We become dependent on outer cues for navigation and ignorant or mistrustful of our own. The effect on our personal lives, our health, our relationships, our culture, and the health of our planet is staggering.

The purpose of this exercise is to help you realign with your inner guidance system. It involves asking yourself a sequence of simple questions with instructions to: feel, breath, and imagine the results that follow. Although the questions are simple it is not always easy to do. The effects though, can be life changing and have been for many people.

It involves literally asking questions within yourself and paying attention to the very first thing that comes to you. The first response is often subtle and may seem
irrational or wrong. It is often symbolic and may include a flash of an image, a thought, a word, an emotion, a physical feeling, a smell, taste, or sound. This is often followed by one, or a series of much stronger thoughts that seem in opposition to the first thought. These thoughts may be very compelling, but for the purpose of this exercise, stick with your first response—even if you think it’s wrong!

The questions are simple and straightforward but the responses you get may seem strange at first. This is largely because most of us are not used to communicating directly with this part of ourselves, and like learning a new language, it can seem awkward and confusing until you get the hang of it.

When you try these questions, first find a comfortable private space. This general version of the questions does not require a particular focus in mind. In this approach your inner world will offer you what you most need in the moment. It is useful when strong emotions are present or just to have a general check in and attunement with yourself.

You don’t need to worry about ‘doing it right’. It helps to approach this process playfully and trust whatever comes. You can’t blow it, even if you don’t get responses that you think you should. Make the bar so low that just trying makes it a success. Your inner world will appreciate the space. Enjoy!

Feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or just to share your experience.

lawrencenusbaum@hotmail.com
1. Ask yourself: What emotion am I feeling right now?
   • Breathe and note your first response-- if it is not an emotion word, then ask:
     “What emotion is inside my first response?”

2. Say to yourself: I am feeling (insert your emotion) right now.
   • Take 3 relaxed breaths and note your experience

3. Ask yourself: Is there a physical sensation that I am aware of as I do this?
   • If yes, then feel this sensation for a few breaths

4. Is there a place in your body you feel the most?
   • Feel the sensation in this place for a few breaths

5. Ask yourself: Is there a message for me in this sensation?
   • Note your first response

6. Feel the truth in this message as you breathe
   • Is there anything you notice as you do this?
II Hope

1. Ask yourself: What is my greatest hope right now?
   • Breathe and note your first response

2. Imagine this hope happening as you breathe
   • Follow the very first thing that comes to you and let it unfold
     for at least 3 deep breaths -even if it seems unusual

   • What do you notice? Flashes of senses, thoughts or feelings?

3. Ask yourself: Is there a physical sensation that I am aware of as I do this?
   • If yes, then feel this sensation for a few breaths

4. Is there a place in your body you feel the most?
   • Feel the sensation in this place for a few breaths

5. Ask yourself: Is there a message for me in this sensation?
   • Note your first response

6. Feel the truth in this message as you breathe.
   • Is there anything you notice as you do this?
III Help

1. Ask yourself: How can I help my hope happen?
   (Variation: What’s the next step for me to do towards my hope? )
   • Note the first thing that comes to you as you breathe

2. Imagine this happening as you breath
   • Follow the first thing that comes and let it unfold for at least 3 breaths
   • What do you notice? Flashes of senses, thoughts or feelings?

3. Ask yourself: Is there a physical sensation that I am aware of as I do this?
   • If yes, then feel this sensation for a few breaths

4. Is there a place in your body you feel the most?
   • Feel the sensation in this place for a few breaths

5. Ask yourself: Is there a message for me in this sensation?
   • Note your first response

6. Feel the truth in this message as you breathe
   • Is there anything you notice as you do this?
Here you can use the power of your imagination in a playful way to create a written dialogue. Your dialogue can be with anyone or anything in the whole universe. It can be with something that emerged in the previous exercise, your future, the past, a person, your nose, God, a tree, absolutely anything! Because it happens in your imagination, you get to make up the responses. In the spirit of curiosity and play, when there is no pressure to produce anything in particular, surprising results can emerge.

1. Ask yourself: Who or what would be good for me to have a dialogue with right now?
   • Note the first thing that comes to mind, even if it surprises you

2. Choose an initial to represent you, and an initial to represent what you will dialogue with
   • For Example: If I was dialoguing with a tree, I would choose L for Larry and T for the tree

3. Choose who or what starts, write down the initial, and just start writing from that place
   • Make it up, keep the pen moving, then switch to the other and go back and forth
   • Let it flow, follow your first responses, continue for at least 5 minutes -and have fun!