Shame, Dysfunctional Attitudes, and Trauma: An Exploratory Study

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Health Consequences of Shame

- Research by Dickerson and colleagues:
  - Cortisol responsivity
  - Proinflammatory cytokines
    - Social evaluative tasks
    - Shame-specific
    - Promote disengagement
  - Chronic shame predicts suppressed immunity, disease proneness

Definitions

- Shame
  - Feeling that the self is flawed
- Dysfunctional Attitudes
  - Systematic negative biases in thinking
- Trauma:
  - Non-interpersonal
  - Interpersonal: Perpetrator not close vs. close to victim

Dysfunctional Attitudes and Shame

Research Questions (cont.)

- Question 1: Are people with high dysfunctional attitudes more likely to have trauma history?
- Question 2: How do trauma and dysfunctional attitudes affect baseline shame?
- Question 3: How do trauma and dysfunctional attitudes affect shame following negative feedback?

Method

- Participants signed up and completed study via SONA Systems. (N = 307)
- Measures
  - Shame Posture Measure (SPM)
  - Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS)
  - Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale (DAS)
Method (Cont.)

YOUR WORK NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

• Short problem set
• Feedback
• Shame Posture Measure
  State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS)

Manipulation check: Shame pre and post negative feedback

Mean change: .71
p < .05

Shame Posture Measure Validation

• SPM and SSGS shame subscale (r = .66, p < .001)
• SPM and SSGS guilt subscale (r = .44, p < .001)
• SPM and SSGS pride subscale (r = -.41, p < .001)

Question 1
Baseline dysfunctional attitudes and trauma

71% with trauma
Χ²(1) = 4.14, p < .05

Question 2
Baseline shame

• Higher shame with high dysfunctional attitudes (partial eta² = .10)
• DAS x trauma interaction (partial eta² = .03)

Question 3: Shame change with feedback

Χ²(3) = 9.85
p < .05
V = .27
Summary

• Question 1: Trauma and DAS highly related
• Question 2:
  – High DAS associated with higher shame.
  – DAS x trauma interaction
• Question 3:
  – High DAS/trauma group shamed by negative feedback above and beyond already high baseline shame

Future Directions

• Shame and Betrayal
  – Ongoing study
• Multilevel examination of shame
  – Emotion, cognition, behavior, biology
• Longitudinal work for chronic shame effects
• Development of shame-focused protocols

Thank You

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References


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