



## **Guilt and Shame and the Workplace**

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### **Abstract**

The emotions of guilt and shame are pervasive in daily life. They help maintain a sense of personal identity, function as a mechanism of social control, and provide channels for processing stress or norm violation into self-punishment. They subtly shape behavior, often by causing people to behave so as to avoid experiencing them. It is unlikely any society could be maintained without them. As such, they have far-reaching implications for interpersonal relations, particularly in the workplace where employees must negotiate status, power, teamwork, and leadership opportunities. Past models have failed to consider cultural differences in the experience, application, and meanings of these emotions. A new theoretical framework using an indigenous approach is presented encompassing morality, ethics, and identity. Qualitative data is offered to support the framework in American and Chinese cultures and empirical evidence demonstrates that understanding these emotions and learning their appropriate function results in employees who are better equipped to make ethical decisions.

### **Biography**

Olwen Bedford has a Ph.D. in Sociocultural Psychology from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and an MBA in Asian management from Thunderbird, the global leader in international business. She is a relative newcomer to Singapore having joined NTU in August 2008 after 10 years in Taiwan working professionally and in academia. Dr. Bedford worked in crisis management with international public relations firm Ogilvy and Mather, and as director of strategy and planning for a large Taiwanese NGO where she led a research initiative on labor trafficking, and organized the first ever international climbathon at Taipei 101 and the world's first human trafficking film festival. Her research on filial piety conducted at National Taiwan University and Academia Sinica won the Misumi award for greatest contribution to Asian social psychology in 2004. Her studies conducted in conjunction with sociologist Hwang Shu-ling at Taiwan's National Defense University's Medical Center have been applied in social service programs and policy development in Taiwan. Her book coauthored with Dr. Hwang Kuang-Kwo applied her research on guilt and shame to the political psychology of Taiwan in an examination of the issues of democracy, nationalism, and strengthening Taiwan consciousness from the perspective of Taiwanese people and culture.

~~~~~ **All Are Welcome** ~~~~~