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# **Across Time and Beyond Skin: Self and Transgression in the Everyday Socialization of Shame among Taiwanese Preschool Children**

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## **Abstract**

*This study examines the construction of the culture-specific self through a form of seemingly harmful socializing practices among young Taiwanese children. Spontaneous daily family interactions have been systematically and longitudinally videotaped in seven families and events of shame are found to occur regularly at all datapoints. One third of these events occur in chains, involving multiple episodes about the child's transgressions committed at different times, mostly in the here-and-now, followed by reenactments of the past and expectations for a better self in the future. While in nearly half of the episodes, some authority is explicitly invoked to judge the child's behaviors, family members are always co-present with the child and ready to share his/her transgression and shame. Findings of analyses on spatiotemporal and relational markers in these situated events suggest a dynamic and fluid view of the self and a holistic treatment of multi-leveled contexts.*

*Keywords:* shame, moral socialization, discursive practices, self and culture

This study asks how constructions of socio-cultural selves and interpersonal relationships could possibly be accomplished in a form of apparently risky socializing activities. It is an extension of the first author's earlier work (Fung, 1994, 1999), which documents how shame is manipulated in daily disciplinary practices at home with preschool-aged children in Taiwan. In these recurring events, termed 'events of shame,' the child's self is portrayed as a flawed one who often disobeys and transgresses rules, and feelings of shame are provoked with the threat of ostracism and abandonment. When examining the lexical and syntactical content, these events are rather hostile to the young child and put his/her positive self-esteem at high risk. Healthy development is nearly impossible, according to scientific research reports as well as popular literature on how damaging shame or shaming is to the self, interpersonal relationship and mental health. While these parents seem to routinely disregard the importance of protecting and enhancing the child's self-esteem, what are their emotional resonances and motives underlying these surface phenomena? In addition to the

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lexical level, are there any additional messages implicitly or indirectly conveyed through different communicative channels at various contextual levels? How might children at such a young age possibly understand the encoded deeper meanings? And how can we, as researchers who may or may not share similar epistemic stance with the caregivers, ever possibly understand how these children make sense of these frequently occurring activities?

These emotionally charged interactions are indeed at once individual and collective, rooted in historical origins and cultural contexts, targeting at a desirable self. To interpret such culturally confined discursive practices out of their higher-order contexts can be equally dangerous. Through an ethnographic investigation grounded in meticulous documentation of actual interactions between members and novices, the current study takes a closer look at the spatiotemporal and relational dimensions embedded in the sequential development within these events. Discourse markers of time and relationship may not only provide meaning for a child to interpret caregivers' invocations of shame in daily experiences, but also allow us to understand how social development could be brought about. Most importantly, we argue that making inferences in such a search for meaning for both the child and the researcher requires knowledge of higher-order contexts far beyond the utterances, the event, and even the genre. The implications suggest treating the self as situated in its cultural and relational contexts, rather than defining it narrowly by the existing physical world and boundaries of individual skin.

In the latest version of the *Handbook of Child Psychology*, a group of leading cultural psychologists (Shweder et al., 1998) advocates a much broader view of the self—the cultural self—to supersede the prevailing presupposition of a conceptual self in developmental studies. The conceptual self is treated as objectified, cognitively represented entity, and a set of internal, stable, bounded attributes or qualities. In contrast, the cultural self is perceived as the subject of experience in relation to others, a process of becoming through actively engaging in meaningful acts and activities. The significance of being a person is heavily context-dependent, inseparable from his/her cultural and historical backgrounds, social and situational surroundings, and interpersonal contingencies. By the same token, culture is no longer considered merely as an independent variable, a homogenous, coherent, and timeless whole, or abstract and tidy governing principles underlying every aspect of our lives. Cultural members are constantly exposed to and choosing from contesting and differentially powerful systems, instantiated in concrete daily life experiences. This multifaceted, permeable, and situated conceptualization of self in culture is widely shared in recent anthropological and psychological works on self and identity (e.g., Gonc, Miller, & Rappaport, 1999; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Holland, 1997; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Ashmore & Jussim, 1997; Neisser & Jopling, 1997; Briggs, 1992, 1998; Mageo, 1998; Strauss & Quinn, 1992, 1997; Bachnik & Quinn, 1994).

Although conveyed in different terms, such as selfways (or the process of selving) in Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama (1997), or self-in-practice in Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain (1998), or self-in-action in Holland (1997), or modes of awareness in Briggs (1998), or fluid situatedness in Miller & Hoogstra (1992), theorists of cultural selves commonly lay a stronger emphasis on processes over outcomes. In every culture, the process of becoming begins with birth. Following the approaches of language socialization and discursive practices, this study takes the stance that the process of becoming is best understood through the joint participation of members and novices in the recurrent semiotically mediated daily interactions, acts, and activities, solidly

grounded in their emerging contexts (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Ochs, 1990; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Miller et al., 1996, 1997, 2000; Holland, 1997; Goodnow, Miller, & Kessel, 1995). This stance aims to move beyond the unidirectional and bi-directional models of socialization. While top-down unidirectional models fail to account for the autonomy and creativity of all participants as active agents, including the young novice (Knapp, 1999), dialectical bi-directional models do not seem to fully capture such a synthetic, interlocking, and unfolding nature of the mutually constitutive process between the self and the equally dynamic and multi-leveled cultural contexts.

Language is a particularly useful and powerful tool in socializing the novice—only through language can messages and instructions be explicitly conveyed, the temporal and spatial worlds in the past, present and future be possibly connected, and linguistic as well as nonlinguistic contexts and social terrains be intentionally or unintentionally marked (Miller & Hoogstra, 1992; Miller & Sperry, 1987; Miller & Sperry, 1987; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Schieffelin, 1990; Ochs, 1988). Discourse, in particular, is where language and culture interface—it is not only an endpoint of language acquisition, but also a path to sociocultural knowledge (Ochs, 1990, 1996; Miller & Hoogstra, 1992). It can be defined as ‘a set of norms, preferences, and expectations relating language to context, which speaker-hearers draw on and modify in producing and making sense out of language in context’ (Ochs, 1990, p. 289). Discourse is not simply strings of sentences and clauses, and meanings can go far beyond the lexical and prepositional content (Gumperz, 1996; Miller & Hoogstra, 1992; Ochs; 1990, Hanks, 1996). According to Ochs (1996), various situational dimensions, often clustered together, can be subtly indexed in discourse: the temporal and spatial locus of the communicative situation, the social identities (e.g., roles, relationships, status) of participants, the social acts (e.g., asking a question, making a comment or an assertion) and activities (e.g., storytelling, teasing, pretend play) taking place, as well as the participants’ affective and epistemic (e.g., norms, beliefs, expectations) stances. Moreover, the most powerful socializing property of linguistic indexes is the capacity to index not only the ongoing or current context but past and future contexts as well, which can be termed recontextualization and precontextualization (Ochs, 1990, 1994).

Although the children’s ability to switch codes, to form speech events as organized contexts, and to negotiate for future plans suggests that they are able to understand context at an early age (Ervin-Tripp, 1996), making sense of context requires rather complex cognitive and social inferencing. Through engagement in recurring discursive events over time, such a process becomes habitual and automatic to native speakers, which makes articulation difficult or even impossible (Miller & Goodnow, 1995; Goodwin & Duranti, 1992; Gumperz, 1992). Due to the manner of how messages and cues are conveyed through various communicative channels during the interactions, the interlocutor faces an array of potential meanings rather than fixed and immutable ones (Gumperz, 1992, 1996). These messages, whether verbal or nonverbal, visual or auditory, do not come in equal weights, so that meanings of the behaviors can be manipulated in a subtle way. For instance, the same utterance or speech, when delivered in different ‘keys’ (or tones) may be interpreted very differently, overriding its overt content (Hymes, 1972). Similarly, while certain aspects of interactive exchanges go forward to the ‘attentional track’ as being within a main story line, others are treated as the background, rather than the official stream, of the ongoing focal event. However, the latter ‘disattend track’ may in fact underpin how the main story line is set up and developed (Kendon, 1992). Instead of any single sign or cue, the on-line assessments

depend on co-occurrent judgments in relation to each other in the prior and present discursive structure. Each additional move within the interaction may also modify the existing context and hence create a new arena for subsequent interaction (Hanks, 1992). Taken together, situated interpretation is a matter of inferences, which are cooperatively and interactively made and validated by all parties involved in an effort to sustain communication as well as achieve pragmatic goals—socializing the novice in this case (Gumperz, 1992, 1996; Ochs, 1990, 1996; Goodwin & Duranti, 1992; Kendon, 1992; Miller & Hoogstra, 1992).

### *Design and Method*

This study attempts to examine meanings of socialization of shame on its own terms, particularly with respect to the development of the culture-specific self through interpersonal relationships. It is ethnographic in approach and longitudinal in design, with an appreciation of the potential complexity in contextualizing discursive practices. Seven<sup>1</sup> middle-class well-functioning nuclear families in Taipei (the capital city of Taiwan), recruited through various sources, participated in this study over a period of two years.<sup>2</sup> All fathers held white-collar jobs; four mothers were housewives, while the others worked as clerks or teachers. All the children were normal and healthy, balanced in gender (four girls and three boys) and birth order (four first-borns and three second-borns). All families maintained close contacts with their extended families, particularly in one family where a female relative (the mother's oldest sister) stayed with the child and shared childcare on a daily basis. Since this was part of a larger project,<sup>3</sup> all families were informed that the researcher was interested in how the focal child learned to talk naturally in the home environment. After rapport was established between the researcher and the child and his/her family, the child's spontaneous interactions with family members were systematically observed and videotaped. Starting when the child was two and a half, the researcher visited the family twice every three months until the child reached the age of four, and each visit was recorded for two hours.<sup>4</sup> The corpus for the analysis of sequential development within each event in the current study involves datapoints at 30, 36, 42, and 48 months of age,<sup>5</sup> which yield a total of 108 hours. These videotapes were transcribed verbatim, following the standardized conventions of CHAT (MacWhinney, 1991). Each transcript includes a record of what the focal child said, what other speakers said, descriptions of all participants' nonverbal expressions and behaviors, and explanations for situations and contextual features. Codes derived from fine-grained discourse analyses are discussed below along with the relevant findings.

### *Events of Shame*

Among other ongoing activities, two types of spontaneously occurring events involving shame are identified—*prototypical events of shame* (+T+S) and *nonprototypical events of shame* (−T+S). Before discussing events of shame in detail (see below), it is very important to first situate these events in the broader context of everyday moral socialization in the families of these young children. As shown in the taxonomy in Figure 1, during usual family interactions, the caregiver spends time with the child and his/her sibling on a variety of mundane and playing activities, including caretaking (such as cooking, feeding, helping the child change clothes or go to the toilet), reading, singing, drawing, reciting (e.g., poems, phonetic symbols, the English alpha-

bet, nursery rhymes), playing house, and playing with Legos and jigsaw puzzles. The caregiver might also chat, talk, or tell stories with the child or simply monitor his/her activities from some distance. On these occasions, there is no transgression nor shaming involved at all ( $-T-S$ ). When the focal child transgresses rules, as children all over the world do, the caregiver would employ a wide variety of disciplinary measures, including reasoning, bargaining and ‘bribing’, redirecting the child’s attention, removing the child from the spot, making empty threats, or simply ignoring. In other words, while there is transgression and disciplining, no shaming is involved ( $+T-S$ ). Shaming is indeed only one of many disciplinary measures to deal with children’s transgressions ( $+T+S$ ). Sometimes, shaming might also occur through invoking previous transgression with no observable precipitating transgression ( $-T+S$ ).<sup>6</sup>

The caveat here is that moral teaching takes place with or without transgression or shaming, and in non-disciplinary as well as disciplinary encounters. Rules can be conveyed, implicitly or explicitly, intentionally or unintentionally, through ‘fun’ activities (e.g., playing, book-reading, storytelling) and by ‘favorable’ strategies (e.g., praising, encouraging, awarding, setting up good models to the child). For instance, when neither transgression nor shame is involved ( $-T-S$ ), there is one noticeable form of discursive events in which the caregiver literally drills the child at length for what he/she should or should not do or say, if certain situations arise. In other words, the caregivers rehearse the future together with the child with an attempt to prevent him/her from transgression, and hence, eliminate the need for shame.<sup>7</sup>

There are 338 events of shame identified in the 108 hours of home observational data, 79% of which are prototypical ones. Several elements are found to be crucial in determining a prototypical event. They include: 1) a precipitating transgression committed by the focal child; 2) at least one participant attributes the wrongdoing to the focal child; 3) at least one participant reprimands the child in an effort to forestall or bring an end to the transgression; 4) through various communicative resources, the participant(s), consciously or unconsciously, attempts to provoke the child’s feelings of shame by casting him/her in an unfavorable light. Major ways to induce shame in the child include: 1) Using explicit labels or markers for shame, e.g., ‘*Xiuxiu lian* or *Diudi lian* (Shame on you),’ ‘You made your mother lose face,’ ‘*Ni can bu cankui* (Aren’t you ashamed of yourself),’ ‘*Diu si ren* or *Hao diu lian* (How shameful),’ ‘*Guai buhao yisi* or *Hao bu haisao* (How embarrassing); 2) Invoking a third party to sit in judgment: e.g., ‘Auntie (Researcher) is laughing at you,’ ‘Go ask your teacher and see

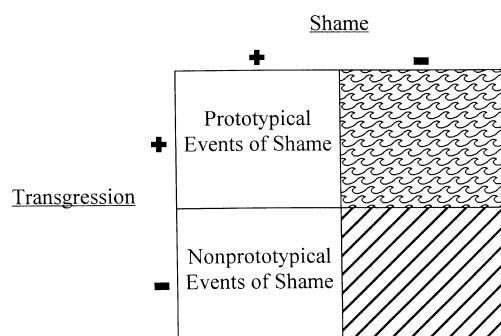


Figure 1. Taxonomy of Everyday Moral Socialization.

if she would approve,' 'Uncle hasn't visited us for a long time, because he's scared of you'; 3) Threats of abandonment or ostracism: e.g., 'No one wants to make friends with you,' 'We'll give you away to the neighbor upstairs,' 'We'll all go to the park without you,' 'Leave her alone and let her cry'; 4) Making disparaging attributions: e.g., 'Such a disobedient child,' 'How come you're so sissy,' 'By the time he's five, I bet I'll have to move into a mental institution,' 'You're terrifying'; 5) Name-calling: e.g., '*tufei* for boy or *tufei po* for girl (bandit),' '*ai ku gui* (crying devil),' '*chou ba guai* (ugly monster),' '*bendan* (stupid egg),' '*huaidan* (rotten egg)'; 6) Threats or warnings of corporal punishment: e.g., 'Aren't your bones itchy and need a spanking,' 'I'm gonna *xiuli* (fix, meaning to spank) you'; 7) Removal of love or invoking the caregiver's feelings: e.g., 'Mama is really mad,' 'I must have owed you too much in my previous life (so that you bring so much trouble to my current life)', 'The louder you cry, the less I'm gonna love you'; 8) Withdrawal of privilege: e.g., 'If you keep doing this, I'm gonna throw it (the child's favorite toy) in the trash can'; 9) Making unfavorable comparisons to the child's peer(s) or sibling(s): e.g., 'I've never seen any three year old who behaves like you,' 'Even your baby brother knows what to do;' and 10) Taunting or challenging the child in a sarcastic manner (*jijiangfa* in Chinese) and other less frequently used expressions: e.g., 'I've just told Auntie (Researcher) that you've turned four and are a big boy now (with an implication that the child's behavior invalidated the parent's earlier statement and hence made the parent lose face),' 'I'll go spank your teacher instead of you then' (when the child lied that her teacher said it was acceptable to disobey one's parents).

Please note that no single behavioral form defines an event. What sets the event of shame apart from other ongoing activities is rather a *configuration* of a variety of communicative devices, channels and strategies. These communicative resources range from verbal, vocal (e.g., sigh, making disapproval sound), paralinguistic (e.g., emphatic stress, loud or slow delivery) to nonverbal (e.g., frowns, eye-rolling, displaying shame gesture by striking index finger on cheek, pushing the child away from lap, enforcing punitive acts) channels as well as pauses and reticence. They also range from explicit (when reference to a shame label was employed) to implied, indirect, and implicit (similar to the explicit ones but without explicit label and marker) ones, and can be done in different 'keys,' serious, ambiguous, or playful.

The remaining (21%) identified events of shame are characterized as nonprototypical, which are similar in every aspect as the prototypical ones except that they occur in the absence of a here-and-now transgression. Instead, the caregiver invokes and reenacts the focal child's previous transgression and shameful experience in the specific distant past or as a habitual tendency, and then proceeds to shame the child. The boundary of an event starts with an 'accusation' of the child's behavior as transgression in the prototypical event, or with the first utterance when the child's past transgression is invoked for the nonprototypical events. It involves all the consequent shaming and disciplinary activities directed at the focal child, organized around his/her transgression (and subsequent transgression), until the participants' attention and topic shift or are interrupted.

### *The Spatiotemporal Dimension in Events of Shame*

A significant number of events of shame, prototypical or nonprototypical, involve a number of transgressions that are linked together by the caregiver. These *sequential events*, or multi-episode events, occur in several ways: 1) The initial transgression

leads to a narrative account of a, or a chain of, similar transgression(s) committed by the child in the past; 2) During reprimand, the caregiver reenacts a narrative account of the child's past punitive experience (caused by a previous transgression, which could be irrelevant to the current one) as a way to warn the child of similar consequences if he does not comply; 3) The child's inappropriate response to parental reprimand, (such as crying, talking back), is interpreted as another transgression which leads to more subsequent shaming; and 4) More of the child's here-and-now behavior(s) while he is reprimanded, whether it is related or unrelated to the initial transgression, is interpreted as further transgression, resulting in more shaming. The boundary of each 'episode' (or subevent) within an event is determined by all the criteria for the event of shame as described earlier. In other words, each episode can also be seen as an event itself, except that shaming might not always be involved in every single episode. If within an event, shaming becomes directed at a sibling instead of at the focal child, this digressive episode is not included in further quantitative counts. In the following section, Examples 1 and 2 demonstrate how multiple episodes within the boundary of a prototypical or a nonprototypical event can take place.

*Example 1: A sequential prototypical event (Didi at 42 months)*

While Didi plays with his sister (Tingting at 64 months), Mother urges him to stop playing and go to pee, because he has not done that since waking up in the morning. She says a couple of times, 'Hurry, you're gonna wet your pants, I'm telling you. *Ni hao xiu* (How shameful you are).' (first episode, +T+S) Didi keeps playing, picks up a ball from the floor, and demonstrates to the researcher how he threw that ball right into his sister's face and made her mouth bleed a couple of days ago. While Didi repeatedly describes his behavior as '*zhen lihai* (fantastic)' (referring to his throwing accuracy), Mother shakes her head and covers her face saying, '*Wo dou pa le ta* (I am really scared of him). He's really [terrible]' (second episode, -T+S) She suddenly remembers that Didi has not gone to pee yet and urges him to do so again without shaming him. (third episode, +T-S) Didi keeps playing and Mother says, 'So, next time, don't throw ball at people, okay? Hmm?' Didi answers, 'Yes, yes.' Mother says, 'You got to remember it; don't just say 'yes'', and goes on to discuss with Didi about the awful consequence of hitting and bleeding. Didi, however, argues, 'I also bled, like what happened yesterday.' (fourth episode, -T-S, future-oriented) Neither Mother nor Sister can remember what has happened yesterday. After a while, Tingting recalls that Didi slipped on the wet floor in the bathroom the day before. Mother starts to shame Didi for crying after falling, '*Didi zui fan le, zui ai ku le* (Didi is most annoying, simply loves to cry).' Sister joins in, '*Aikugui* (Crying devil)!' and strikes her index finger on her cheek (a shaming gesture). (fifth episode, -T+S) While Tingting accuses Didi of saying dirty words, '*Gouchoupi* (Stinking doggy ass)', to resist her shaming, Mother says that Didi has learned all the bad words from Tingting, and things can only get worse when he grows up if she does not watch over her own behavior. Sister answers, '[Unlike you,] I am not scared of him yet. I'll beat him up after I start the primary school (meaning becoming big and strong enough then).' (sixth episode, +T-S for Didi, -T+S, future-oriented for Sister)

This 3.7-minute long event, containing six episodes, involves four transgressions committed by the focal child: not going to the bathroom, hurting Sister, crying too often, and saying dirty words. Two occur in the here-and-now and two in the past (a couple of days ago, and on the previous day); three of them result in him being shamed. In addition, the future is also called upon (in the fourth episode). Therefore, altogether, there are four different spatiotemporal worlds. When analyzed more closely, the first here-and-now transgression also denotes future-oriented imperative, and the past transgression regarding hitting Sister with the ball is a retelling of a story collaboratively told by Mother, Tingting, and Didi earlier in the same taping session. Please also note that in the last episode, the child's transgression leads to parental

shaming directed at his sister instead of him, which carries a strong implication for the future.

The next example is about a chained event, which occurs without a precipitating transgression. About ten minutes prior to this event, after several unsuccessful prompts from the aunt, Angu told the researcher about what happened the day before—she was spanked by the aunt in church for interrupting a meeting. Here, the researcher cannot help but ask for more details of that earlier co-narrated past shaming.

*Example 2: A sequential nonprototypical event (Angu at 33 months)*

Aunt tells the researcher, ‘Well, some people [in the church] are quite fond of her. Sometimes, *ta shi hen fan ren* (she can be very annoying) . . .’ In order to prevent her from causing more trouble, prior to the meeting, she had explained very well to Angu about the nature of the meeting and asked her to stay outside the room. (first episode, –T+S) Aunt then mentions another shameful experience—Angu was literally thrown out of the church office twice when they were there a week ago. ‘*Buhao yi si; wo juede hen buhao yisi* (Very embarrassing; I felt very embarrassed)’ says Aunt, ‘Also, she, she cursed. She said dirty words; she cursed. *Suoyi hen diulian a* (So, it’s very face-losing)!’ (second episode, –T+S) On that day of the meeting, Aunt could not bear it and spanked Angu when she went in to interrupt the meeting for the second time. The child then reacted ‘*shualai* (roguishly)’ (referring to her crying aloud and the church people’s mitigation described in the earlier co-narration). (third episode, –T+S) Angu, who is drinking milk, now looks up to Aunt and makes a funny noise. Aunt laughs while commenting, ‘Look, she confesses.’ Angu says, ‘*Wo xiaci bugan le* (I won’t do it again).’ Aunt praises her for her confession, seriously prompts her to say the rules again, ‘[Tell me,] why you can’t go [in to the office],’ and asks her to remember it. (fourth episode, –T–S, future-oriented) When the child wanders away (still in the same room), Aunt tells the researcher that she believes Angu actually did not intentionally make troubles, and goes on to talk about another of her transgressions in the church—removing and lining up books and brochures neatly on the floor. Although Aunt herself does not think it is a big deal, ‘Some people didn’t approve it,’ she said. ‘What can you do? Saying dirty words is no good though.’ Aunt now turns to Angu, asking, ‘*Duibudui? Ma zanghua shi buhao* (Right? Saying dirty words is no good).’ Her attention soon shifts to stop the child from approaching the researcher’s camcorder. (fifth episode, –T–S)

In this 1.2-minute long sequential event, three different past transgressions are invoked: interrupting the meeting, lining up books on the floor, and saying dirty words, which all happened in the church at different times: the day before, last week, and the habitual past. It also involves at least two shaming experiences in the past: being spanked publicly by the aunt and being thrown out of the office by the church people (more than once). In a way, Angu’s aunt tries to explain why she had to enforce such a harsh punishment—spanking the child in front of others. It is because 1) some of Angu’s prior behaviors have already been disapproved by the church people; 2) she has already explained the rules to the child and makes a deal with her in advance before the meeting; and 3) Angu continually and knowingly breaks the rule during the meeting. Furthermore, the two past shaming incidents are retellings. As mentioned earlier, the first telling of the spanking incident happened ten minutes earlier in the same taping session. This co-narration itself belongs to a sequential prototypical event, triggered by Angu’s here-and-now transgression—unwilling to finish her craft task, as a warning of the possible consequence of being spanked again. The incident of being thrown out was first told two days earlier in the previous taping session. Again, this narration itself is also part of a sequential prototypical event, triggered by an unrelated precipitating transgression—not eating pudding in a proper manner (the connection was the child’s disobeying, *bushou guiju*, on both occasions). In both accounts of her being thrown out, unlike most other nonprototypical events, neither the child’s

transgression nor the rule is explicitly reported. We can only guess from almost the end of Example 2 that it is Angu's arrangement of books on the office floor, which would not be seen as a transgression from the caregiver's perspective. However, the face-losing feeling still is highlighted in both accounts—the caregiver not only accepts other's shaming of the child, but also appropriates it to be her own, a point to be further discussed later in this essay.

As shown in Table 1, 33% of all 338 events of shame are sequential, ranging from 25% to 44% for each child. Except for Angu and Xiaofen, prototypical events seem to be more likely to occur in chains than nonprototypical ones. Half (ranging from 33% to 65%) of the sequential events *simultaneously* contain multiple transgressions (up to six in succession) in multiple spatiotemporal worlds (up to four in succession). The remaining events contain several transgressions in one spatiotemporal world (either in the present or in the past) or a similar transgression in different spatiotemporal worlds. When all the episodes (subevents) are unpacked and analyzed together with the remaining single-episode events (507 episodes in total), the majority deal with here-and-now transgressions (in other words, done mostly in the present tense), followed by invocations of previous transgressions (which are mainly conveyed in the distant or habitual past tense).<sup>8</sup> In these past episodes, the temporal reference goes back as recent as before the taping session on the same day, yesterday, couple days ago, and as distant as a couple months or a year ago to almost three years ago during the child's infancy. Future-oriented episodes are also found to occur among most children, although at a much lower rate.<sup>9</sup> All the future-oriented episodes are marked with at least a movable adverb of time, such as 'in the future' and 'next time,' and often end with a tag question in one or more utterances, such as '*hao bu hao* or *xing bu xing* (okay or not okay)?' '*dui bu dui* (right or not right)?' '*dong bu dong* (understand or not understand)?' '*ke bu ke yi* or *neng bu neng gou* (could or could not/can or cannot)?' '*hai yao bu yao* (any more/anything like this again)?' In such episodes, with a noticeable shift of temporal reference to the future, the emphasis is usually on the rule (for instance, reasoning to the child or prompting the child to explain why his/her behavior was not acceptable) rather than on the transgression, and/or on a demand for not repeating the same mistake.

### *The Relational Dimension in Events of Shame*

Although across all episodes in all events, the child is portrayed as a 'transgressor,' he/she also always engages in interpersonal relationships regardless of which spatiotemporal world he/she is in. Other than the focal child, people involved in the events of shame, prototypical or nonprototypical, imaginary or real, basically fall into two categories:

- 1) The ratified participant or co-present other: This refers to those present in the spatiotemporal world when the child's transgression occurs or is invoked. For episodes dealing with here-and-now transgressions, in addition to family members, the researcher is always a co-present other or sometimes a participant during the interactions. For past and future episodes, there are two levels of contextualization. Similar to the here-and-now context, the 'recontextualization' in the narrated nonprototypical episodes is always a relational one as well. The focal child, as the protagonist, is almost always (89%) surrounded by at least one immediate family member,<sup>10</sup> and sometimes, family acquaintance(s) (such as school teacher, peer, and adult friend) and extended

**Table 1. Summary of Major Findings in Sequential Analyses**

	Didi (Boy)	Angu (Girl)	Axin (Boy)	Longlong (Boy)	Meimei (Girl)	Wenwen (Girl)	Xiaofen (Girl)	TOTAL
Total hours of observation	16	16	16	16	16	12	16	108
Total no. of events of shame	76	83	44	43	20	26	46	338
Occurring rate of events of shame (per hour)	4.8	5.2	2.8	2.7	1.3	2.2	2.9	3.1
Proportion of sequential events	34%	27%	43%	26%	25%	35%	44%	33%
Proportion of sequential events in +T+S	39%	23%	46%	30%	29%	40%	41%	35%
Proportion of sequential events in -T+S	13%	35%	29%	0%	0%	17%	50%	26%
Proportion of sequential events containing >1T & >1W	65%	55%	37%	36%	40%	33%	55%	50%
Total no. of episodes in all events	124	114	68	60	28	38	75	507
Present:past:future in all episodes	71% 27% 2%	60% 31% 9%	69% 24% 7%	80% 20% 0%	79% 21% 0%	63% 29% 8%	64% 35% 1%	68% (345) 28% (140) 4% (22)
Proportion of episodes containing judgmental other(s)	44%	42%	59%	62%	39%	63%	27%	46%
Family:researcher:other in judgmental others	37% 47% 17%	52% 18% 30%	35% 35% 30%	37% 43% 20%	50% 21% 29%	31% 40% 29%	45% 23% 32%	40% (116) 35% (100) 25% (73)

Note 1: +T+S = prototypical events of shame; -T+S = nonprototypical events of shame; T = transgression; W = spatiotemporal world.  
 Note 2: No significant developmental trend was identified within the age range of this study.

family member(s) (29% and 7% respectively). Occasions where the child is alone only occur in the 'precontextualization' of future episodes (9%). In the remaining future episodes, the child is with family members (73%) and unacquainted or acquainted others (23% and 18% respectively).

2) The judgmental other: This refers to people invoked or invited by the caregiver to *explicitly* evaluate, criticize, and judge the focal child, creating the effect of 'we' as a group versus the child alone, or being compared against the 'less' favorable focal child (mostly peers in this case).<sup>11</sup> As shown in Table 1, nearly half (46% or 235 episodes) of all episodes contain one or more judgmental others (289 in total<sup>12</sup>, or 1.2 per episode). The percentages of judgmental others are rather similar across different spatiotemporal worlds: 47% among the here-and-now episodes, 45% in the past episodes, and 45% in the future world. As shown in Table 1, among them, the immediate and extended family members account for 40%, followed by the researcher (35%) and then the unacquainted or acquainted other (17% and 8% respectively). Although granted a kin term, 'Auntie', the researcher is definitely an outsider to the family. Hence, the group of outsiders (non-family members) is larger than that of insiders (family members). The category of the older generation is also larger than that of peers (64% vs. 22%), while the remaining are the family (except the child) as a whole (6%), and the hard-to-judge generic other<sup>13</sup> (8%).

While the researcher is always physically present, almost all (92%) of the explicit invocations of her as a shaming technique occur in episodes dealing with here-and-now transgressions.<sup>14</sup> The presence of the researcher, a respectful adult friend, apparently provides added weight to the caregiver's discipline. Even reenacting the child's past transgression in front of the researcher itself might implicitly invite her to be a judgmental witness. Nevertheless, 24% of all the judgmental others appearing in present and past episodes are neither a participant nor a co-present other in either spatiotemporal world. Of these non-present judgmental others, the most frequently invoked category is total strangers (60%), particularly the generic other, followed by father (22%), other family members<sup>15</sup> (12%), and family friend and teacher (6%). Interestingly, both Wenwen's mother and Xiaofen's mother invoke the children's future boyfriends who would not marry them after watching their misdeeds recorded on the tape (one occurs in a present episode when the child is picking her nose, another in an episode about the past when the mother comments on the child's inappropriate dressing in the previous taping session). Angu's aunt also invokes the child's unborn sibling when she talks about how difficult Angu was as a baby in a past episode, saying how much better behaved than Angu the unborn child will be.<sup>16</sup>

Taken together, while family members are almost always present with the child in various spatiotemporal worlds, they are also invoked to judge the child's behavior. The fact of frequent invocations of judgmental others, particularly acquainted or even unacquainted outsiders, to convey and reinforce rules might suggest that the primary caregiver, in fact, does not think of herself as authoritative and forceful enough. Across all families, the father is also often invoked during his absence. 'Father's slipper' (in Didi's family) or 'father's stick' (in Xiaofen's family) becomes the symbolic '*jiafa* (domestic discipline)' for mothers to exercise punishment (mostly threats of punishment). Meimei's mother often complains to the researcher that in contrast to the respect the father commands, her children are never '*pa* (scared of)' her or listen to her, although she is the one who accompanies and disciplines them all the time. When Xiaofen's mother tries to stop the child's transgression, she would say to her in a scary

voice, ‘Hurry. Daddy is gonna come back. He’ll spank us.’ Indeed, it seems that although the caregiver always plays the role of ‘shamer’, she is also ready to share the child’s transgression and shame as shown by Angu’s aunt in Example 2 and by Axin’s mother in the following example.

*Example 3: A ‘shame-sharing’ event involving the child & the caregiver (Axin at 48 months)*

During the last quarter of the taping session, Axin comes out of the bedroom on his bike. Mother asks him to put the bike back and he starts to negotiate with her when will be an appropriate time to bike. Mother says not until late afternoon, because after the taping session, the child has to have lunch and take a nap. Axin is quite reluctant and still tries to negotiate with her. Mother says, ‘School master has said that we should follow fixed work and rest routines, *buran suozhang hui ma ei* (otherwise, School Master would reproach [us].)’ (first episode, +T-S) Both Axin and his younger brother (29 months old) wonder if their school master will reproach her. Mother answers, ‘*Na yi tian, suozhang youmeiyou zai ma* (That day, wasn’t the school master reproaching)?’ Axin asks, ‘Whom did she reproach?’ Mother says, ‘[She] reproached me, didn’t she?’ Both children ask why. Mother replies, ‘*Ta shuo wo meiyou ba nimen liangge dai hao* (She said that I didn’t raise you two well), and didn’t have you sleep during nap time, right?’ (second episode, -T+S) Since Axin is still riding the bike, Mother asks the child to put his bike back, ‘Otherwise, School Master would reproach Mommy again for allowing you to ride in the house.’ After explaining to Axin why riding inside the house is not appropriate, she asks, ‘Axin, *ni youmeiyou tinghua* (Are you listening)?’ She asks again in a louder voice and shifts attention to the younger child, while Axin is still on his bike. (third episode, +T-S, future-oriented)

In the above 1.5-minute long sequential event, whether the school master really reproached Axin’s mother or not, the point that the mother made clear is that if her children misbehave, it is she who would be blamed by others for not teaching and raising them well. This is true regardless of whether the transgression occurs at school (not taking a nap as other children did) or at home (riding bike in the house). While on the surface, this event appears to be an account of the mother’s transgression and shame rather than the child’s, it might convey an important socialization message of not bringing shame to one’s parents and family. Moreover, through invoking an authority figure, the bond between the mother and the child indeed remains intact. While the caregiver is in alliance with the child, and sensitivity to others’ possible criticism and judgment is cultivated, there are also cases in which the child is trained not to be ‘oversensitive,’ as shown in the following example.

*Example 4: A ‘shame-sharing’ event involving siblings (Wenwen at 42 months)*

Right before this event, Wenwen and her younger brother (Honghong, 27 months old) each plays in a different corner of the living room. When Honghong stops playing and walks to the center where some of Wenwen’s coloring sheets are left on the floor, Mother, pointing to the floor, orders both kids to pick up the papers and put them into the drawer. Honghong now sits down on the floor and begins to tear and crumple Wenwen’s coloring sheet. As soon as Wenwen realizes it, she turns to Mother for help and cries in her arms. Mother replies, ‘Yes, he’s doing the right thing. Why haven’t you put them away? Mom has told you. You got to put your stuff away; otherwise, Honghong would tear up everything.’ Honghong now stands up, walks towards the balcony, opens the door, and throws the crumpled paper out. Wenwen looks at him sadly, and sobs on the floor, ‘Don’t throw it away. Mama, don’t.’ Mother urges her to go collect her stuff from the floor. Wenwen keeps crying and Honghong tears and throws more of her paper out to the balcony. (first episode, +T+S) Their father comes out from the bedroom checking what has happened. He takes the crumpled paper back to Wenwen, asks her to calm down, and takes the brother to pee (and later into the bedroom). Since the child is still whining, Mother says, ‘*Wo buguan ni* (I’m not gonna care for you). *Wo gen ni jiangguo hua* (I’ve already told

you before), *ni bu xin ba* (but you didn't believe it). *Zai ku wo ye bu guan ni* (I'm not gonna care for you even if you keep crying). I've already told you before. . . . *Haole, haole, buyao shua laipi le* (Okay, okay, stop being roguish now.)' The child finally stops crying and begins to pick up her stuff and put them into the drawer. (second episode, -T+S) While the living room becomes quiet, Mother discusses with the researcher the problems of her two kids. She concludes, 'Don't know what to do! *Ta a, ta tebie xiaoqi* (She, she is especially selfish), never allows her brother to touch her stuff, *ta didi you tebie xihuan liao ta* (while her brother especially likes to provoke her).' (third episode, -T+S) Wenwen keeps collecting her paper, coloring pens, and books from everywhere. Mother approves her behavior, repeatedly reminds her of the rules, and suggests to her, 'Don't handle things by crying. *Xiaohaizi ku cheng zheyangzi, yidian ye bu yonggan* (A child crying like this is not courageous at all).' Finally, holding Wenwen in her arms, Mother says to her softly, 'Now, everything is put away and your brother won't reach them, right? He cannot get them, right? Honghong has his own stuff and won't take yours, understand? Do you understand? *Bukeyi zheyangzi name laipi* (Don't ever be so roguish); *yihou wo cai buguan ni* ([otherwise] I won't care for you in the future) . . .' (fourth episode, -T-S, future-oriented) Wenwen nods and notices that one pencil case is still left on the floor. When she walks away to collect it, Mother asks the researcher, 'Are kids in other families as naughty as ours?' She says, '*Ta hen xiaoqi e* (She is very selfish)! She always protects her own belongings well. Whenever she goes out, she always remembers to bring all her stuff back. She never forgets . . . She protects her own stuff cautiously.' (fifth episode, -T+S)

This five-minute long event involves, from the caregiver's perspective, two precipitating transgressions committed by the focal child: leaving her belongings out without keeping them in the drawer, and crying. In terms of the spatiotemporal dimension, in addition to the present, it also involves a general tendency toward being selfish (*xiaoqi*) in the habitual past (which was mentioned twice), and a strong implication for the future towards the end. What is most interesting about this event is that, from an outsider's point of view, it is the brother who should be reprimanded for tearing up and throwing the sister's belongings away. Why is the sister to be admonished instead? First of all, similar to Angu's instance in Example 2, the caregiver emphasizes that they have taught Wenwen the rule of not leaving things out and the consequence of her violation (indicating that similar incident(s) must have happened before), but Wenwen apparently has not learned from previous lessons. Second, ironically, Wenwen always protects her belongings well, as the caregiver relates at the end. Therefore, instead of not collecting her stuff, the fundamental problems are, as the mother put it, 'being selfish' (not allowing her brother to touch her stuff) and 'being easily provoked' (crying over it). Both point to over-sensitivity and too much concern for the self.

Likewise, at 48 months of age, when Didi lost a game to his sister, he slapped her heavily on her arms, his sister kicked him and they got into a serious fight. Their father intervened when the sister began to cry. He acknowledged the child's transgression and reported it to the mother when she came out from the kitchen asking what had happened, '*Didi laipi, ranhou jiu gei ta yi bazhang* (Didi was roguish and slapped her).' He also said a few times that Didi is such a *tufei* (bandit), who '*shu da ying yao* (always fights when losing and loots when winning).' However, in this 6.5-minute long event, the shaming activities are mainly directed towards Didi's sister, particularly at her crying. Both parents seemed rather unsympathetic. Father compared both kids' bruises on their arms and concluded that they were even, but 'You even kicked him; did he kick you?' Mother said, 'Even kissing can make you cry. Go, Didi, kiss her and make her cry.' Didi later even joined in, saying, '*Xiuxiu lian* (Shame on you)' twice to Sister.<sup>17</sup> Father explained to the researcher, 'He (Didi) is like a bandit. His sister

has more self-esteem (*bijiao you zizunxin*).<sup>18</sup> While the bandit has little sense of shame, high self-esteem seems to imply too much sensitivity. Similar incidents—when the focal child is reprimanded and shamed for a transgression committed by his/her sibling, or when both children are reprimanded and shamed for a transgression committed by the focal child—occur for all children<sup>19</sup> in all families, representing 8% of all events.<sup>19</sup> The phenomenon of ‘shame-sharing’ events between the child and his/her caregiver or sibling seems to suggest that the boundary of transgression and shame could be blurred among family members, because, perhaps, other members can not escape from some sort of collective responsibility for a transgression committed by one family member.

### *Conclusion*

Our microanalysis of the sequential development in the routinely occurring discursive events of shame in Taiwanese families reveals the dynamic and fluid nature of the self-building process in everyday socializing practices. More than 300 events of shame are identified in over 100 hours of videotaped spontaneous home interactions. One third of these events, prototypical or nonprototypical, consist of multiple episodes within an event; half of them simultaneously contain more than one transgression committed by the child in more than one temporal and spatial world. Although most of the 507 episodes deal with the child’s transgression in the here-and-now, nearly 30% involve reenactment of past transgressions, and some (4% of all episodes and 8% of episodes of sequential events) even bring the child to the future—with expectations that the child would not transgress, hence would not be shamed.

In terms of the relational dimension, while the child is almost always with at least one immediate family member at any level of the contextualization as a ratified participant, non-family members are more likely to be explicitly invoked as a judgmental other. Nearly half of all episodes contain at least one judgmental other, and about one fourth of them are not physically present in either the past or the present. Taken together, in these situated events, the spatiotemporal world could transform between episodes (ranging from the child’s infancy to projections to his/her teens), similar episodes could be repetitively narrated, each time with a different emphasis and/or intent, and important messages could be conveyed indirectly or implicitly in a subtle manner. Even though the child has to face portraits of flawed selves, threats of abandonment, and unfavorable evaluations from others, he/she is always in a relational context, in which his/her transgression and shame are often shared by others. The caregiver is ready to appropriate the child’s shame as hers and ‘allocates’ the responsibility for the child’s behaviors to his/her sibling (or vice versa).

Making inferences from and deriving interpretations of these practices, for both the novice and the researcher, rely heavily on relating words to context. Such a process extends far beyond the lexical and semantic content, the boundary of any specific event in the immediate setting and interactions, and even the entire genre. It could perhaps be illustrated by the analogy of figure versus ground, a concept widely used in the indexical expressions of spatial references (Talmy, 1983; Bloom et al., 1994; Hanks, 1992). In representing spatial scenes, language imposes an asymmetrical primary-secondary division between figure and ground. As in ‘the pen rolled off the table,’ the figure (the pen) is conceptually movable, localized, and salient in relation to the ground (the table), which is relatively stationary within a frame (Hanks, 1992). In order to truly understand the perceptual features of the figure, which are often highlighted in

the foreground, its position and location relative to the ground and the seen but unnoticed background itself must also be taken into account.

Similarly, the deeper meanings encoded in events of shame cannot be properly interpreted and understood if they are dissociated from the surrounding wide range of multi-layered contexts in everyday moral socialization. While all participants navigate through the ongoing emotionally charged discursive activities as the main story or attentional track on the center stage, the relatively stable and enduring and seemingly disattended ground, in fact, is equally important, because it sets the stage for the focal events. It might include the experiences and relationships shared among family members, parental love, care, and tolerance, the normally well-behaved self who obeys rules, standards expected for a full-fledged cultural member accepted by others, as well as the caregivers' own upbringing, living-world knowledge, and child-rearing beliefs. This demand for incorporating a holistic treatment of context in child development, horizontally involving multiple levels of contextualization as they unfold in time and vertically involving the long-term history of relationships and the relevant larger historical and institutional processes, is also an important point made in Watson-Gegeo (1992).

Events of shame certainly index the asymmetrical power relationship between caregiver and child—the former has much greater access and control over cultural resources than the latter (Miller & Goodnow, 1995). However, with mutually strong commitment to sustain their communicative exchanges as well as interpersonal bonds, these discursive journeys take the child not only to observe his/her present and relive his/her past, but also to prepare for a better self in the future. What they collaboratively do, hence, is to examine the child's behaviors across various spatiotemporal worlds. Such a process is often done through overt evaluation and criticism from the perspectives of other people, including the acquainted, the unacquainted, generic outsiders, or society in general. In other words, the novice's self-reflection is accomplished intersubjectively and interpersonally,<sup>20</sup> which, on the one hand, suggests a multifaceted, permeable, and relational view of the self, while on the other, indexes his/her status as an immature cultural member. Similar to Ochs' (1994) finding on the future-orientedness implicit or explicit in stories of recollected personal experience, any given event of shame can be located along a temporal continuum, which should not be treated and analyzed as a self-contained package. These socializing activities allow young children to continuously and creatively move their lives forward through the accumulative experience and knowledge of past and present life events.

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## Notes

1. Since sequential analysis is the focus of this study, two children, Yoyo and Jingjing, were dropped from my previous sample of nine children, because of their low occurring rates of events of shame, compared to the other children.
2. For a detailed ethnographic account of Taipei and these families, please see Fung, 1994, 1999.
3. This is a project on narrative practices across different cultural groups led by Peggy J. Miller and sponsored by a grant from the Spencer Foundation.
4. Over the course of two years, the researcher had become a family friend to each of these families, participating in family gatherings outside the taping schedule, and sharing the good and bad times in the families. The researcher still maintains personal contact with almost all of them now.

5. Except for one child, Wenwen, who had already turned three when the observational phase began.
6. Both types of events of shame occupied about 5% of the total observational time.
7. For examples, please see Chapter 7 in Fung (1994).
8. Since Mandarin Chinese has no markers of tense, the frame of time in the speech is signaled by movable adverbs of time (such as this morning, last week, tomorrow, one time), or perfective, imperfective, experiential and delimitative verbal aspects (such as *le*, *zai*, *zhe*, *guo*, *hai*, and duplication of verbs). (See Li & Thompson, 1981).
9. The rate for future-oriented episodes doubles (8%) if only looking at sequential events, while the rate for past episodes slightly increases (31%), and the rate for present episodes decreases (61%).
10. For Angu, since she lived with her aunt's family instead of her own during weekdays, it was Aunt, the primary caregiver, who was always with her in the past episodes.
11. Here are some examples: 'I bet your teacher has had enough headaches (due to the child)', 'You're being so impolite; there'll be no any *xiaopengeyou* (little friend) who wants to play with you,' 'Let's find out what Daddy would say when he gets back home (a threat of reprimand).'
12. Within each episode, it was a type rather than token count. In other words, if one category, 'school teacher' occurred more than one time in one episode, it was only counted once. Also, if the invocation was a group of people, for instance, 'teachers' or 'church people,' it would be counted as one category, same as its singular form.
13. Examples here included *bieren* or *renjia* (other people) and *meiyou ren* or *nayou ren* (no one).
14. On non-shaming occasions, the caregivers also often invoked the researcher for eliciting cooperation from the child, requesting the child to behave or come out to the livingroom (where the camcoder and all the other family members were), otherwise, 'Auntie would leave soon,' or 'Auntie won't come to visit you again.'
15. All extended family members (e.g., grandparent and uncle), except only Angu's aunt invoked the child's mother.
16. This event occurred when Augu's mother, who was not present, was about three months pregnant.
17. Two minutes after the father intervened in their fighting, Didi realized that he was no more the target of shaming and disciplining. Still standing in front of the father and listening to his speech with the sister, he picked up a folded paper airplane from the floor to play with. His tense body became relaxed, and he began smiling.
18. Except for Angu, because her baby sister was not born until towards the end of the observational phase.
19. The above stories about Wenwen and Didi's sister may lead readers to wonder whether this was a gender issue here. However, what seemed to matter more was instead birth order, for the older child was often explicitly asked by the caregiver to set up good models for the younger sibling(s). Unfortunately, our sample size is too small to speak to any of these possible explanations.
20. I am particularly thankful to my colleague, Fei-wen Liu, who pointed this out to me during our personal communication.