

## COLLECTIVE SHAME AND THE POSITIONING OF GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

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### RESUMEN

Uno de los temas centrales de la identidad en los jóvenes alemanes es el *sentimiento de culpa* o *vergüenza colectiva* por los crímenes del Tercer Reich. Un estudio en la anterior Alemania Oriental y Occidental revelan un modelo complejo de aceptación y rechazo de este pasado histórico. Para examinar la relación de la tercera generación con el pasado Nazi se propuso un modelo teórico de vergüenza colectiva. La experiencia de vergüenza depende de los efectos de audiencia y se interpretaba como una forma de posicionamiento de identidad. La vergüenza se relacionó negativamente con distintos indicadores de identidad nacional y autoestima colectiva, y positivamente con el deseo de reparar el pasado. En conjunto, los análisis de ecuación estructural indican que la autoestima colectiva (o identidad social) más que la vergüenza colectiva era la fuerza impulsora que marca el modelo global de relaciones entre las variables. Los resultados se interpretan desde la teoría de la identidad social para proporcionar un marco de comprensión del posicionamiento histórico de la identidad nacional, autoestima colectiva y vergüenza de colectividad.

### ABSTRACT

A major identity issue for young Germans is how to deal with the notion of *collective guilt* or *collective shame* for the crimes of the Third Reich. Survey data from both the former East and West Germany reveal a complex pattern of acceptance and denial of this historical past. A theoretical model of collective shame was proposed to examine the third generation's relationship to the Nazi past. The experience of shame was dependent on audience effects and interpreted as a form of identity positioning. Shame was negatively correlated to various indicators of national identity and collective self-esteem, and positively related to desire to make reparations for the past. Overall, structural equation analyses suggested that collective self-esteem (or social identity) rather than collective shame was the driving force behind the entire pattern of relationships among variables. Results are interpreted within social identity theory, to provide a framework for the understanding of the historical positioning of national identity, collective self-esteem and collective shame.

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**Key words:** collective self-esteem, collective guilt, social identity theory, third generation

### Collective Shame and the Positioning of German National Identity

For over fifty years, three generations of Germans have been caught up in a collective psychological problem concerning the crimes of the Third Reich. Governed by the social and political circumstances of its time, each generation since the Holocaust has developed its own relationship to the

Nazi past (Adorno, 1977; Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1975; Hübner-Funk, 1990; Fulbrook, 1999). As the first and second generation fade from view, issues of the third generation (the grandchildren of the generation that lived during the Third Reich) become relevant. The essential difference between the first generation and the third generation is that, for the latter, issues surrounding the Nazi past are not about the acts (the crimes) or an event (the Holocaust). Rather, the issues surround who one is, that is, they are about being German and the responsibility associated with this. In this paper we develop a theoretical model of collective shame to account for the complex issues of *identity positioning* posed by the relationship of the German people to their recent historical past.

A central insight of self-categorization theory (SCT: Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987 an elaboration of social identity theory, SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is that identity is not fixed within an individual but rather is situated in the interactions between people and between groups. Characteristics of the situation in interaction with qualities of the individual cause a particular social identity to become active or salient, and this identity is what determines affect, cognition and behavior for the person in that context (Turner et al., 1987; see also Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1994). In SCT, the way people see themselves is intimately bound up with a process of social comparison with others, particularly other groups in the social environment.

According to the basic theory, what identity becomes active in a given situation is determined by relatively abstract and content-free principles such as the meta-contrast ratio (Turner et al., 1987) and comparative and normative fit (Oakes, Haslam, Reynolds, 1999). More recently, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) in a variant on social identity theory have theorized more extensively about the prior knowledge and shared histories that social perceivers bring in to the situation that may lead them to construct their identities in particular ways. This brings SCT more into line with Moscovici (1981)'s thinking that processes of social identification are intimately tied up with the *content* of social representations (shared beliefs) concerning a group and its outsiders. Following from this, Liu and his colleagues have argued that social representations of history form an essential component of the underlying, cultural-specific background that *instantiates* and *constrains* the processes of social comparison and identity salience (Liu & Hilton, in press). Rather than treating context as a "black box" outside the scope of theory as in standard accounts of SCT, a social representations approach holds that particular culturally constructed contexts recur and form part of the social fabric wherein social comparisons

between groups take place (see Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). In intergroup relations, an often reoccurring context is representations of history, that at a popular level are dominated by accounts of warfare and other conflicts.

Representations of history are mobilized to position groups relative to one another (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Liu & Hilton, in press). They are resources that can be used to influence what social identity becomes salient for a person (including categorizing someone against their will, see Branscombe, Ellemers, Doosje, & Spears, 1999), and whether that identity is perceived as positive or negative (“value threat”: Branscombe et al., 1999). While Branscombe et al. (1999) analyzed these two as conceptually distinct, we concur with Reicher and Hopkins (2001) that identity salience and identity valuing are intimately connected in culture-specific contexts where groups are jostling for political power and other resources. Part of the process of social comparison between groups includes reciprocal attempts by the interacting groups to define the in-group and out-group, both in terms of who is in and who is out, and what qualities are associated with the groups. We term this process of negotiation identity positioning.

Social identity theorists have claimed that people may have a particular relationship to a historical event that contributes positively to their personal and social identity (Gaskell & Wright, 1997). Actual historical events, however, may not always fulfill such a positive image. Groups may be tempted to forget, to re-construct, to re-elaborate, and re-invent themselves to maintain a positive self-concept, but others in the social milieu may not allow this to happen (e.g., Middleton & Edwards, 1990; Pennebaker, Paez, & Rimé, 1997). The interaction between a group’s attempt to establish a positive identity and other groups’ attempts to enforce a different view is part of identity positioning. In our view, social identity emerges at the confluence between how a group views itself and how important others in the social environment view the group. Hence, identity positioning may be a useful concept to link theories of self-categorization to interpersonal emotions and political power (see Davies and Harré, 1990 and Harré and Van Langenhove, 1991 for more discursive uses of the term identity positioning).

For Germans, the unfortunate consequence of World War II is that the Holocaust and memories of Hitler and the Third Reich form a central part of the culturally constructed backdrop wherein intergroup relations between Germans and people of other nationalities are conducted. While previous research (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1975; Jaspers, 1987; Märthesheimer, 1979) has framed the problem in terms of collective guilt, there is reason to argue that this notion is less appropriate to describe the third

generation's relationship to the Nazi past. According to most theorists (De Rivera, 1984; Izard, 1977; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), to feel a sense of guilt a person must accept responsibility for a moral violation caused by their action or inaction (but see Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998 for an alternative view). The third generation, however, cannot be considered either guilty of - or responsible for - the crimes of the Third Reich. For the third generation, we argue, the Nazi past is an identity issue, not an issue of commission or omission.

By acknowledging their membership in a group, people may experience shame as a consequence of the past and present deeds of that group, even if they are not personally responsible. Goldberg (1991) stated that shame "... is frequently the result of having been in some way associated or identified with someone who has committed as guilt-involving act" (p. 56). The evolution of national identity involves a continual relationship between past and the present. To declare that one is a member of a nation does not only tie oneself to that particular people and their activities of the present, but also to that people and their activities throughout time (Connor, 1993). Therefore, the connection between the Nazi past and the present extends across the bond of national identity. It is not unreasonable to talk about the question of collective liability in belonging to a nation. According to Leicht (1993),

"Doubtless, no one who was born at a later date can be guilty for the Third Reich. But in the history of peoples there is no possibility of forgoing a heritage of liability. We are liable for the debits and credits of our national heritage" (p. 247).

An essential factor in feeling shame for the acts of others lies in some degree of identification with a reference group, and a readiness to evaluate oneself from this perspective. Thus, a degree of social identification (e.g., *belonging* and *attachment*) may be an important precondition to feeling shame (Wicker, Payne, & Morgan, 1983).

The literature on the outcomes of shame is somewhat unclear. Shame is associated with misdeeds when caught by someone and is connected with a feeling of wanting to hide (Taylor, 1985; Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Barrett, 1995). Hence shame can function to distance the individual from the evaluating others. However, shame is also seen as crucial in the development of conscience, as it can provide the motivation for self-corrections (Goldberg, 1991; Kaufman, 1989). Hence, shame could be viewed as a motivation for restoring relationships and making amends for damage to one's social status (Lansky, 1995). Because of Germany's central position in Europe (audience effects), and strength of the European

unification movement (the social milieu, see Hilton, Erb, Dermot, & Molian, 1996; Breakwell & Lyons, 1996), we felt that a reparative model of shame would fit with the data for Germany better than an avoidance model.

*Collective shame and the positioning of German national identity.* The theory of collective shame and identity positioning developed here has two components. The first, as the term identity positioning implies, concerns audience effects.

What is shaming depends on the audience. Shame can be triggered when one fails to uphold one's identity claims in the presence of others, particularly out-group members who are in a position to judge one's self or group. In other words, shame depends not only on the self, but what others are present and how they seek to position the self (see Ellemers, Barreto, & Spears, 1999; Barreto, Spears, Ellemers, & Shahinper, 2003). The experience of collective shame should be much stronger when placed into the social context of an out-group audience, particularly one that one's own group has transgressed against.

Germany was a defeated nation at the end of World War II. Since the beginning of the new Federal Republic of Germany, foreigners have evaluated much of the political and social cultures of Germany in accordance with their interpretations of the Nazi past. As an occupied nation, partitioned between two power blocks, Germany was positioned by the allies not only physically, but morally in terms of a narrative about history. For example, Liu et al.(2005) reported that across twelve cultures, World War II was perceived as the most important event in world history, and Hitler was judged the most influential (and universally negatively perceived) individual. In terms of audience effects, the third generation of Germans is in the unenviable position of having to regularly face, and often accept, negative social comparisons concerning their history (Kocka, 1993; Mommsen, 1993; Schulze, 1993). By contrast, Japan has been faced with far weaker audience effects regarding its negative behavior during World War II because of its position as an island nation conquered by the United States rather than by an alliance of Asian countries (Hein & Selden, 2000).

When audience effects are weak, in other words, when it is easy to escape being viewed negatively by out-group members, a modal reaction may be to hide, deny, or avoid the implications of the past. One could, for example, ignore Hollywood films about World War II, or avoid conversations with foreigners about the historical past. However, as a people in the center of Europe, it would be hard for all Germans to maintain such a distance from negative evaluation.

Second, shame is related to group identification, but the exact sequence of relationship between social identification and collective shame is open to debate. It could be that collective shame serves as the lynchpin of a motivational system driving both social identity and associated actions. Shame may serve to reduce collective self-esteem, and drive reparative actions.

Alternatively, from the perspective of social identity theory, collective shame could be seen as the outcome of identification processes, so that a high identifier would also be less likely to experience collective shame (see Doosje et al., 1998). According to this perspective, social identity, or collective self-esteem is what drives feelings of collective shame, and high identifiers are able to employ strategies to deny or mitigate the effects of collective shame. Doosje et al's (1998) work is central to the emerging literature on collective guilt; this work is complementary to the present conceptualization in that while the two draw on different traditions, they address similar issues and have similar relationships to other variables. Perhaps the major difference is semantic rather than functional; shame theorists argue that one cannot feel guilt for deeds one did not commit, while collective guilt theorists argue for an enlargement of the concept of guilt in group contexts (see Branscombe & Doosje, 2004).

*Hypotheses.* The concept of collective shame is framed in relation to social identity theory to address four general objectives. First, it is of interest to examine whether or not the third generation feels shame for the Nazi past. Second, it is essential to explore the various contexts for the feeling of shame, and see how these relate to the situational positioning of social identity. Third, it is relevant to know whether or not shame for the Nazi past relates to German national identity and collective self-esteem. Fourth, there is a need to discover whether feelings of shame relate to the willingness to confront, and accept responsibility for the Nazi past. Finally, it is important to ascertain the motivational forces behind the entire system of variables related to social identity and collective shame; which of these two factors is more central to the entire system of variables involving willingness to confront and accept responsibility for the Nazi past.

As our discussion of positioning implied, the level of shame can be influenced by different types of audience, which signify different types of social context for judgements to be made on German identity. It was anticipated that there would be significant differences in the levels of shame between different categories of audience - higher levels of shame experienced with out-group compared to in-group audiences (Hypothesis 1). Following the analysis of social milieu and audience effects described

previously, it was hypothesized that for Germans, a reparative model of collective shame would be culturally appropriate. Hence, it was anticipated that there would be a positive significant relationship between shame and willingness to confront the Nazi past (Hypothesis 2). Following the same reasoning, it was expected that there would be a positive significant relationship between shame and willingness to accept responsibility for the Nazi past (Hypothesis 3). It was hypothesized that there would be a negative significant relationship between shame and symbolic attachment or liking for national symbols (Hypothesis 4). Shame is also associated with a variety of problems related to low self-esteem (Nathanson, 1992; Tangney, Burggaf, & Wagner, 1995). It was therefore predicted that there would be a negative significant relationship between shame and collective self-esteem (Hypothesis 5). Finally, we had no a priori hypothesis as to whether collective shame or social identity (as measured by collective self-esteem) would drive the entire system of variables, but rather put alternative models to the test.

## Method

*Characteristics of the participants.* The total sample comprised 532 students selected from 6 different universities and training colleges in the regions of Berlin, Magdeburg, Munich and Dachau. Thirty-two foreign students were excluded from analysis and 12 students were unable to participate because of late arrival. Seven students explicitly declined to participate. Therefore, the final sample for analysis was 500 students, consisting of 94 (18.8%) psychology, 50 (10.0%) civil servants, 83 (16.6%) automechanic students from former West Berlin. There were 53 (10.6%) army students from Munich, 82 (16.4%) automechanic students from Dachau, and 138 (27.6%) psychology students from Magdeburg, giving the total of 27.6% of the sample were from the former East Germany, and 72.4% were from the former West Germany.<sup>1</sup> There were 275 men (55.3%) and 222 women (44.7%) (3 participants did not specify their sex). The age constraints of 15-36 years were strictly observed ( $M = 22.1$ ).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The data were collected in a class setting, foreign and Jewish-German students as well as students who are outside the age range took part in the research, but had to be excluded because of the specific German perspective of the third generation. Excluding them right from the beginning was considered to be too disturbing for the German participants in the class, and too disruptive for the procedure.

<sup>2</sup> The first generation is defined in this research as those adults who lived through the years of the Third Reich 1933-1945. The second generation refers to the children of those lived through this period. The third generation, in general, are those born in the 1960s and 1970s, the grandchildren of the generation which lived during the Third Reich. Despite the fact that the boundaries between the generations are

*Development of the measures.* For all of the subsequent measures to be described, item responses were made on 5 point Likert scales, and scale items were reversed where appropriate so that the higher the score the higher the concept in question.

*Liking for national symbols.* National consciousness, for the purpose of this study, was defined narrowly as *the individual's attachment to the national unit*. Gallenmüller and Wakenhut (1992) developed a questionnaire using national symbols as the measurement of the consciousness of national belonging. In this study, an assumption was made that liking for national symbols is based not on aesthetic, but on political and social considerations which reflect a symbolic attachment to the national unit. The liking for national symbols scale consisted of 12 items with an overall reliability of .86.

*Collective Shame.* Since the end of World War II, much of the discussion has centered around the notion of collective guilt - and little attention has been given to the feelings of shame. Consequently, there was no existing scale for the measure of shame for the Nazi past. A shame scale consisting of 7 items was constructed largely based on theoretical and phenomenological definitions of shame. For example, "I feel ashamed because the Germans committed so many crimes against the Jews" and "I feel ashamed of what our grandparents did during the Third Reich." The items formed a reliable scale with the overall reliability-coefficient  $\alpha=.81$ .

It was thought that the topic of the Nazi past would be quite repellent to most students. To disguise the intention to explore shame about the Nazi past, 7 items of the shame scale were split up and embedded in the items measuring shame relating to general social issues, (for example, "I feel ashamed when German chemical factories simply drain their waste into rivers" and "I feel ashamed because so much money is spent on armaments in Germany") that characterise feelings of shame about any modern Western nation.

A second set of questions were designed to examine the contextual nature of shame. Participants were asked to respond to the question "I feel ashamed when I visit a memorial in remembrance of the persecution of the Jews, for example a museum, monument, or a former concentration camp." The item responses were made on a likert scale ranging with 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). If the participants gave a respond of *one* (strongly agree) or *two* (agree), they were then asked

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fluid and imprecise, the categories of first, second, and third generation are useful as they mark the progressive distance from the Third Reich.



to rate their degree of shame experienced when visiting museums or monuments for the victims of the Holocaust in different comparative situations. There were five different conditions, 1. With a Jewish person, 2. When alone, 3. With another person, 4. With grandparents, 5. With a foreigner. These items were analysed individually, and separately from the shame scale described previously. Responses were made on a scale ranging from 1 (very low shame) to 5 (very high shame), with the *higher* score signifying stronger feelings of shame.

*Willingness to confront the Nazi past.* Over the years there have been numerous debates on whether or not to end public discussion of the Nazi past. These types of questions have been surveyed repeatedly by research institutes such as Allensbach Institute (1997). This measurement is relevant for the purposes of this study, as it reveals the level of willingness of the third generation to confront the Nazi past. The willingness to confront the Nazi past scale consisted of 5 Likert-type items selected from previous national surveys conducted by Allensbach Institute (1997). For example, "Today, fifty years after the war, we should no longer talk so much about our Nazi past and the persecution of the Jews" and "The constant discussion of the Nazi past is damaging to the international image of Germans and Germany in the world." The scale was internally consistent with an overall reliability coefficient alpha for the scale=.84.

*Willingness to accept responsibility for the Nazi past.* As previously discussed that the third generation is neither guilty of, nor responsible for, the crimes of the Third Reich. However, the memory of these crimes is strongly connected to the German nation as a whole. Through the process of national belonging and family connections, the third generation is not able to relinquish the heritage of collective liability for its historical past. The willingness of the third generation to to accept responsibility for this part of their history and see the continuing consequences of the Holocaust consisted of 6 Likert-type items generated from previous national surveys conducted by Allensbach Institute (1997). For example, "It is still Germany's moral duty to pay for the compensation of living survivors of the Nazi terror." Reliability analysis indicated that the scale was internally consistent with a reliability coefficient of 0.77.

*Collective self-esteem.* The issues surrounding the Holocaust continue to act as a threat to national self-esteem. A collective self-esteem scale of 12 items was adapted from the 16 items developed by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992). The scale consisted of three categories, in which each category assessed different aspects of collective self-esteem. The items were phrased in terms of German identity. The public subscale items

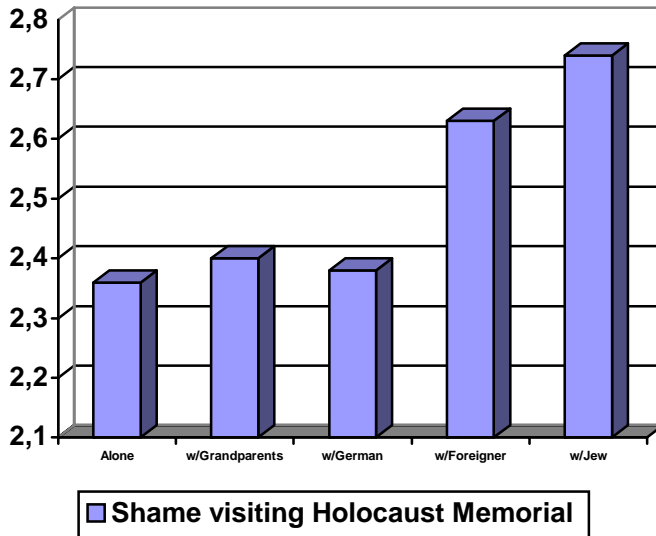
assessed the individuals perception of other's evaluation of one's social group (for example, "Germans are unpopular in the world"). The private subscale items assessed the individual's self-evaluation of one's social group as a whole (for example, "I have good feelings about Germany"). The identity concept subscale items which assessed the self-evaluation of the relationship of one's social group membership to one's self-concept (for example, "Being German is an important reflection of who I am."). The membership subscale items (for example, "I feel I don't have much to offer to the social groups", and "I am a co-operative participant in the social groups I belong") were omitted as they were not relevant to the present study. Reliability analysis indicated that the scale was internally consistent with the overall reliability coefficient alpha for the scale=.87.

*Procedure.* The questionnaire "Deutsch-Sein, Wie ist das?" had a short introduction which stated that the research was about German identity. Respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers, and that the researcher was interested only in their honest and spontaneous reactions. The questionnaire consisted of 8 sections: national identity scales, identity positioning by others items, positive aspects of German culture, shame scale, willingness to confront the Nazi past scale, willingness to accept responsibility for the Nazi past scale, collective self-esteem scale and the demographic variables. The order of the items in the questionnaire was considered important. The items referring to German identity were placed before the items referring to the Nazi past, as these may have potentially influenced the respondents' attitudes towards being German. In turn, these were followed by the collective self-esteem items to draw attention to the fact that German collective self-esteem is in many ways influenced by the Nazi past. The participants were asked not to return to change their answers on previous items after reading later items in the questionnaire. Participants were shown each national symbol in the liking for national symbols measure for 15 seconds. They were asked to record their responses before the next symbol was shown. The participants then completed the rest of the self-administered questionnaire, which took approximately 25 minutes.

### *Results*

The contextual nature of shame as an identity positioning emotion was illustrated with the participants' rating of the levels of shame felt when visiting museums and monuments for the victims of the Holocaust while accompanied by various people thought to act as different evaluative audiences for the individual experiencing shame (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Audience effects in the experience of shame for young Germans



It is appropriate to stress that only those participants who reported the experience of shame when visiting museums and monuments for the victims of the Holocaust were asked to respond to these contextual questions about audience effects. The difference in the levels of shame experienced when respondents reported being accompanied by out-group members compared to when accompanied by the in-group was striking. There was a higher level of shame when the individual was with a Jew ( $M=2.74$   $SD=1.90$ ) than when alone ( $M=2.36$   $SD=1.62$ ),  $t(309)=7.24$ ,  $p<.001$ , or with other Germans. Similarly, there was a higher level of shame when with a foreigner ( $M=2.63$   $SD=1.82$ ) than when alone,  $t(309)=6.07$ ,  $p<.001$ , or with other Germans. There were no significant differences in the level of shame between being alone and being accompanied by another German ( $M=2.38$   $SD=1.63$ )  $t(309)=.80$ ,  $p>.05$ . The same trend was followed, when the individual was accompanied by grandparents ( $M=2.40$   $SD=1.67$ ) and when alone ( $M=2.36$   $SD=1.62$ )  $t(309)=1.42$ ,  $p>.05$ . The hypothesised relationship (hypothesis 1) between different types of audience and shame was supported. These results remained consistent after controlling for age, gender, education, religion, political orientation, and West-East location. Audience effects in the experience of levels of shame were compared after en-

tering these variables as covariates using multivariate GLM procedures and none of the covariates were statistically significant, while the main effect remained.

*Identity, collective self-esteem and shame.* The majority of the variables' distributions did not depart substantially from normality. Overall, it could be said that there was a moderate level of collective shame ( $M=3.2$   $SD=.80$ ), and a slightly higher level willingness to confront ( $M=3.8$   $SD=.85$ ), and accept responsibility for, the Nazi past ( $M=3.5$   $SD=.72$ ). A moderate level of liking for national symbols ( $M=3.1$   $SD=.72$ ) and a lower level of collective self-esteem ( $M=2.8$   $SD=.70$ ) were consistent with the data from previous national surveys conducted by Allensbach Institute (1997).

The results indicated that willingness to confront the Nazi past increased as the feelings of collective shame increased ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<.001$ ). And responsibility for the Nazi past was not denied, as there was also a moderate level of willingness to accept this responsibility. As expected, willingness to accept responsibility increased as the feelings of shame increased ( $r=.66$ ,  $p<.001$ ). These results are in accord with hypotheses 2 and 3, and support a reparative model of shame rather than an avoidance model.

However, comparison between the levels of response for the cognitive (willingness to confront the Nazi past), and behavioural intentions (willingness to accept responsibility for the Nazi past) with respect to the crimes of the Third Reich showed that there was a higher level of cognitive response as indicated by participants willing to confront the Nazi past ( $M=3.84$   $SD=.81$ ) compared to significantly less willingness to accept responsibility for it ( $M=3.55$   $SD=.73$ )  $t(416)=9.10$ ,  $p<.001$ .

It is also interesting that a high level of attachment to the national unit - referring to strong liking for national symbols - should have such a negative association with the willingness to confront the Nazi past ( $r=-.50$   $p<.001$ ), and an even stronger negative association with the willingness to accept responsibility for the Nazi past ( $r=-.64$   $p<.001$ ). Similar patterns were found in the relationship between collective self-esteem and the willingness to confront ( $r=-.33$   $p<.001$ ), and accept responsibility for, the Nazi past ( $r=-.60$   $p<.001$ ). National identity appears to have a powerfully negative relationship to both the cognitive and behavioural intentions components of subjective reactions to the Nazi past.

There was a positive and significant relationship between liking for national symbols and collective self-esteem ( $r=.76$ ,  $p<.001$ ). There was a negative and significant relationship between shame and liking for national

symbols ( $r=-.47$ ,  $p<.001$ ). A negative and significant association between shame and collective self-esteem also was established ( $r=-.44$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Therefore, the hypothesised relationships (4 and 5) between shame, liking for national symbols, and collective self-esteem were supported.

Table 1. Pattern of relationships among collective shame, collective self-esteem, liking for national symbols, and willingness to confront and take responsibility for Nazi past.

	Collective Shame	Collective Self-esteem	National symbols	Confront Nazi Past
Collective Shame				
Collective Self Esteem	-.46**			
Liking for National symbols	-.47**	.76**		
Confront Nazi Past	.50**	-.35**	-.50**	
Responsibility for Nazi Past	.65**	-.63**	-.67**	.61**

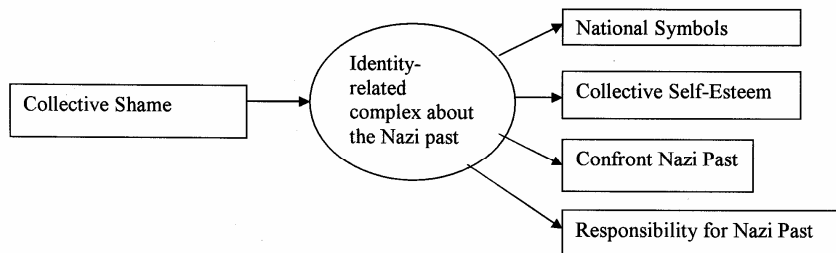
There are at least three theoretically plausible explanations for the pattern of correlations described above. The patterns of correlations may be driven by social identity, they may be driven by collective shame, or they may be driven by both these factors together.

In order to differentiate between a collective shame model and a social identity model and a combined model, structural equation analyses were conducted. Three structural equation models were constructed, in which the covariance between the items were explained in terms of either social identity, collective shame, or the two together driving the entire package of inter-relationships seen in Table 1.

In comparing the models, the variables were constrained to consist of two components. The first component consisted of the motivational driver: either social identity (as indexed by collective self-esteem), collective shame, or both together. The second component consisted of all the other variables, conceptualized as a latent variable dependent upon the motivational force of the driver component. Figure 2 shows the driver component on the left, and the dependent variables on the right for the collective shame model in simplified form. The dependent variables are viewed as a “complex” of affect, cognition, and behaviour related to the Nazi past.

For the social identity model (see Figure 3), the positions of collective shame and collective self-esteem (CSE) were reversed, so that CSE was the driver for the entire system of variables. For the bidirectional model, CSE and collective shame were allowed to covary and drive the remaining three manifest variables through a latent variable just as in the previous models.

Figure 2. Model with collective shame driving identity related complex about the Nazi past



None of the simplified models (as exemplified by Figure 2) provided an adequate fit for the data according to a traditional Chi-square test of fit, and so the residual correlation matrices was examined. Direct paths from the driver component to the dependent variables (unmediated by the latent variable) were allowed for each of the three models in order of the largest remaining residuals.

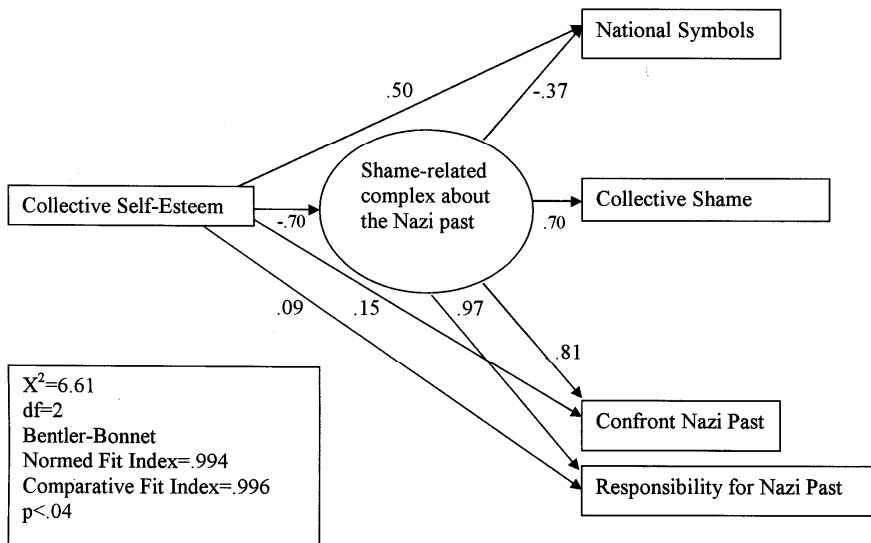
Following this procedure, the best-fitting model for the data ( $X^2(2)=6.61$ ,  $p<.04$ ; Bentler-Bonnet Normed Fit Index=.994, Comparative Fit Index=.996; sRMR=.075; see Bentler & Bonnett, 1980; Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1999) was the social identity model shown in Figure 3 (all paths shown in the Figure were significant). By comparison, fit indices showed that the collective shame model ( $X^2(2)=59.2$ ,  $p<.0001$ ; Bentler-Bonnet Normed Fit Index=.934, Comparative Fit Index=.937; sRMR=.185) and the bidirectional model ( $X^2(2)=39.0$ ,  $p<.0001$ ; Bentler-Bonnet Normed Fit Index=.956, Comparative Fit Index=.958; sRMR=.214) provided a less acceptable fit with the empirical data<sup>3</sup>. In particular, the latent variables in the latter models provided a less adequate fit than for data than in the social identity model, suggesting that the “shame related complex about the Nazi past” shown in Figure 3 is the best way to conceptualize the dependent variables. The huge negative path between CSE and the shame related complex together with positive direct paths between CSE and national symbols, willingness to confront, and willingness to take responsibility for

<sup>3</sup> Hu & Bentler (1999) have argued that it is important to consider both the standardized Root Mean Square Residual (sRMR) and one or more index of comparative fit when considering the overall adequacy of the model. They advocated cutoffs of CFI and NNFI's of .95 or higher, and sRMR values below .08.

the Nazi past suggest that while collective shame and CSE are incompatible, it may be possible to maintain CSE while making behavioural amends for the past.

These findings held up when the samples were divided into East and West Germans. The social identity model provided the best fit for the data of each of these subgroups.

Figure 3. Social identity model with collective self-esteem driving shame related complex about the Nazi past



Given the superior fit of the social identity model, one final analysis examined whether specific aspects of CSE were more closely-related to specific variables in the shame-related complex. The model shown in Figure 3 was modified with CSE as a latent variable consisting of the manifest components of private, public, and identity subscales (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). This CSE component model provided a comparable fit to the data to the simple CSE model ( $X^2(10)=18.3$ ,  $p<.05$ ; Bentler-Bonnet Normed Fit Index=.987, Comparative Fit Index=.994; sRMR=.045). It had the added benefit of demonstrating that direct positive paths between private CSE, identity CSE and national symbols, and private CSE and willingness to confront the Nazi past were required to improve model fit beyond what was provided by the path between the latent variable of CSE to the shame-related complex.

## **Discussion**

Results confirmed the major parameters of a theoretical model of identity positioning and collective shame. First, supporting hypothesis 1, we found significant audience effects for feelings of collective shame. The results indicated there were significant differences between self and out-group audiences but there were no significant differences between self and in-group audiences. Thus shame may only become pronounced in certain contexts, particularly when one cannot uphold a desired image in the eyes of others. The results also emphasise that shame cannot be fully analysed in the absence of other people. It is not that we fall short of standards in our own judgement - but we fear that we may be seen by an audience of others as falling short.

Second, within the context of German history, collective shame is not such a negative phenomenon as some of the literature seems to indicate, but rather, favours the idea that collective shame can have a constructive function by motivating self-corrections (Kaufman, 1989; Goldberg, 1991) when denial is not an easily available option. Supporting hypotheses 2 and 3, shame played an important positive role in willingness to confront, and accept responsibility for, the Nazi past. This is complementary to Brendler's (1991) findings that young Germans consider the Nazi past of high personal interest to them.

Equally, collective self-esteem and liking for national symbols were also a major factor in the level of willingness to confront, and accept responsibility for the Nazi past. A high level of identification with the national unit corresponded with relatively low levels of willingness to confront and accept responsibility for the past. This bolsters our suggestion that collective shame functions as an identity positioning emotion. It varies as a function of group/intergroup context, and is negatively associated with liking for national symbols and collective self-esteem.

Overall, social identity, as indexed by collective self-esteem, appeared to serve as a motivational driver for the entire system of relationships. Structural equation modelling indicated that collective shame is best thought of as part of a complex of affect, cognition, and behavior about the Nazi past driven by concerns about collective self-esteem.

Results illuminated the dilemma of identity that the Nazi past holds for the German people, even those who were two generations from being born during the Third Reich. High identification with the national unit was correlated with low shame, low willingness to confront the past, and lack of responsibility for the Nazi past. These results suggest that for third generation Germans, perceptions of the Holocaust are a matter of identity



rather than an issue of the commission or omission of acts. Young Germans find themselves in the unenviable position of either feeling shame for the past and making amends, and having low identification to the national unit, or feeling a strong sense of national identity, avoiding shame, and denying responsibility for the past. However, path modelling suggested that while collective self-esteem is incompatible with collective shame, after controlling for collective shame it may weakly motivate some willingness to make amends for the past.

This position afforded by the historical past may be extreme, but it is by no means unique.

Liu and his colleagues (Liu, Wilson, McClure, & Higgins, 1999) have documented similar identity positioning problems for New Zealand Europeans in their historical relationship with Maori (indigenous people) that they colonized and mistreated in the past, and Doosje et al. (1998) reported that identity moderated collective guilt reactions to experimental manipulations involving the Dutch's historical injustice.

The dilemmatic nature of these results points to the utility of the concept of identity positioning and a theoretical model of collective shame in linking the strategies for dealing with negative social comparison in self categorization theory. Results showed that shame was not much of a problem as long as Germans only had to deal with themselves or other Germans—it was when their audience was outgroup members that the feeling of shame intensified. Hence, social creativity strategies adopted by German political leaders in the past, can be interpreted as an attempt to negotiate an identity position for Germans relative to the other peoples who form the social environment of Europe. Therefore, social creativity strategies are contextual in their use—while Germans are dealing with other Germans, the Nazi past is less salient and shame for the past is not an issue. However, when we consider social context at two levels, the overall social milieu provided by the dominant ideology of Western liberalism, and audience effects from other peoples who inhabit this milieu—then the Holocaust and the Nazi past become a collective problem for German social identity.

Just as different self-categorizations are activated in different situations, our results suggest that different strategies for dealing with negative social comparison can be adopted in different situations. Among Germans, for example, where the feeling of shame for the Nazi past is lower, it might be plausible to adopt a social competition strategy—comparing Germans' crimes with Allies' crimes in the war such as the fire-bombing of Dresden for example. In some situations, as when a lone German is visiting Israel, on the other hand, an individual mobility strategy might become more viable;

to lower identification with Germany and seek some alternative classification to avoid the heavy feeling of shame that this situation may engender.

The first strategy is difficult to maintain on the world stage once Germans step outside the confines of their nation. The second strategy does not provide a collective solution to the problem of negative positioning by history. Hence, two generations of German leaders have engaged in social creativity strategies with the aim of repositioning German national identity on the world stage.

The arguments used by Joschka Fischer and other German leaders during the Kosovo debate was not to deny responsibility for the past, or to challenge facts about the past, but to reposition Germans as a people who have learned from the past, and who are now champions of Western liberalism rather than the arch-villains of World War II. To position Germany as defenders of liberal values is to change the social milieu wherein the past is interpreted. This is an extraordinarily difficult thing to accomplish in an enduring way, and will remain a challenge for future German leaders to maintain and to extend.

The finding that the outcome of shame in Germany fits with a reparative model rather than an avoidance model may be culture specific. With the geographical location of Germany at the heart of Europe, and concerted efforts to establish a European union, hiding from the shame of the Nazi past is far less an option for Germans than for Japanese, who face similar problems about their actions in World War II (see, Hein & Selden, 2000). Recent research by Atsumi and Yamori (2004) revealed that Japanese media provided few reports of historical problems such as the Korean comfort women and the Nanjing massacre until the mid 1990s; rather, they focused on Japanese suffering like the atomic bombings and the futile heroism of Japanese servicemen. Furthermore, many high school Japanese history curricula end at the beginning of the twentieth century, and so qualitative interviews with Japanese university students revealed ignorance about the facts of Japanese war crimes. In their own popular imagination, Japanese see themselves as victims in World War II. This produces significant problems internationally because the rest of Asia, especially China and Korea, sees them as aggressors. The problem of collective shame is magnified in East Asian cultures (Bedford, 2004), where collectivism embeds self within a web of social relations and group memberships. This makes facing up to collectively shaming events highly stressful (see Haslam, Jetten, O'Brien, & Jetten, 2004), as it is tantamount to dishonouring one's ancestors. However, the Japanese tendency to avoid confronting and taking responsibility for their negative conduct during World War II is a constant source of po-

litical division and strife in East Asia, making the possibility of an "East Asian Union" beyond the realm of dreaming.

Hence, from our perspective the adoption of strategies to deal with negative social comparison is more culturally constrained than is stated by Tajfel and Turner (1979) in their seminal formulation of social identity theory. Identity is negotiated, it emerges at the confluence of what one group presents and another will accept. Previous attempts at social creativity by Germans, for instance changing the out-group with which comparisons are made (the crimes of the Third Reich are compared not with Allies' crimes in the war, but with the terrors of Stalin and Pol Pot), led to direct conflict about the interpretation of history dubbed the *Historikerstreit* (the dispute of the historians, see Kocka, 1993). So it is impossible to consider the enduring impact of different strategies for dealing with negative social comparison without an analysis of the audience and social milieu. Even though different strategies may be adopted in different situations, there is an enduring structure of social situations and world power that is difficult to avoid. With regards to the impact of social representations of history on the presentation of social identity, we emphasize constraint more than strategic self-presentation (c.f., Ellemers, Barreto, & Spears, 1999).

The theoretical model of collective shame developed here enables us to understand how the post-war generations may attempt to repair their social image. Shamed people may make amends by acknowledging their wrongdoing, and this is driven by concerns over collective self-esteem. Over the years, West Germans have come to accept more and more of the responsibility for the persecutions of the Jews (Bergmann & Erb, 1991). One of the first acts of the GDR's new democratic parliament elected in April 1990 was to deliver a public apology to the state of Israel and the Jewish people in acknowledgement of the East Germans' share of responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi past (Watson, 1995). Making reparations is another practice to repair one's social image (Gilbert, 1997). Under the German Restitution law, 15 billion DM were paid to the individual victims or their families and a further 2.5 billion DM were made under the German-Israeli agreement in 1962 (Watson, 1995). Finally, taking a moral position in warning against and seeking to prevent crimes similar to those of the Third Reich from being repeated can be seen as an attempt to repair the shame of the Nazi past. Each of these positions generates a new historical understanding, and new expectations for the future (Straub, 1993).

In the final analysis, what can one say about the third generation's relationship to the Nazi past? On the basis of this research, the concept of

collective shame is extremely important in understanding German identity. German national identity is not only a set of characteristics but it is also a set of processes in which a nation is evolving in the pursuit of a more positive or acceptable identity. The Nazi past, as with many other peoples' histories, is not merely a relic, but a present legacy that shapes the political and social culture of a nation, acting as a source of orientation in identity and self-image. The political and moral choices that Germans continue to make in response to the identity positioning by their historical legacy has become one of the great unfolding stories of our time, as European unification coalesces around the events of the Great Wars. It remains to be seen how other nations with similar difficulties in their past face them, and to see whether the theoretical model of collective shame and identity positioning developed here brings any insight into these processes.

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