

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

INHIBITORY ASPECTS OF SEX GUILT, SOCIAL CENSURE
AND NEED FOR APPROVAL

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
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ABSTRACT

Two experiments were conducted to reexamine earlier theoretical formulations of Sex Guilt by Mosher (1965) and Galbraith and Mosher (1968). Mosher has argued that High Sex Guilt subjects are both less dependent on and less sensitive to external cues portending social punishment for sexual behavior than are Low Sex Guilt subjects. An alternative "two-factor" theory involving State Guilt arousal and social reinforcement was proposed to account for his findings. This view opposed Mosher's interpretation by stating that High Sex Guilt subjects are as sensitive to changes in external social punishment cues as Low Sex Guilt subjects. In the present experiments, male and female undergraduates were preselected from the upper and lower thirds of the Sex Guilt scale of the Mosher Forced-Choice Guilt Inventory and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, the two scales being orthogonal. Mosher's original Sex Guilt by Social Censure-Approval design was extended by the addition of the Need for Approval variable, in order to allow for a manipulation of the reinforcement effect of Social Censure-Approval, independent of changes in State Guilt.

The present two experiments were therefore based on a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design involving High and Low Sex

Guilt, High and Low Need for Approval, and Social Censure-Approval. In the first study, 118 female college students were seen individually by a male experimenter. They were asked to read a sexually arousing literary passage and to listen to a taped "positive" or "negative" evaluation of this passage by a female confederate posing as another subject. In this way, the females were led to expect Social Censure or Approval from the confederate for subsequent sexually oriented responses which they made on perceptual defense and word association measures. In the second study, 120 male college students were seen in groups of four by a male experimenter. Bogus evaluative feedback (semantic differential scales) was "exchanged" between the four males after viewing 10 erotic or pornographic slides. At the end of both studies the subjects completed a Postexperimental Questionnaire on sexual experience, attitudes and demographic information.

In both the male and female studies, there was a failure to replicate Mosher's Sex Guilt by Social Censure-Approval interaction obtained originally with college males. It was felt that the use of the experimenter in these earlier studies, both to introduce the arousal condition (i.e. showing "nude pinups") as well as being the Censuring and Approving social agent, led to some confounding of variables. In the absence of any manipulation check in these earlier studies, one might speculate that High Sex Guilt subjects could view an experimenter who would show "dirty" pictures as simply

"approving", regardless of subsequent attempts by the experimenter to portray an Approving or Censuring attitude. The Low Sex Guilt subjects, however, may act in a less evaluative manner toward the showing of the pictures and be more influenced by the experimenter's subsequent role playing attempts. In the present studies, the experimenter did not play the Censure-Approval roles. Manipulation checks clearly showed that all subjects perceived the social cues portending Censure or Approval. Further results showed the expected Sex Guilt main effects for males and females on sexual inhibition and State Guilt arousal. In addition, males demonstrated greater inhibition under Social Censure than Approval. Few Need for Approval differences were evident, and little support was found for the proposed two-factor theory of Sex Guilt. Results on the Post-experimental Questionnaire supported the positive relationship between Sex Guilt and Sex Experience, as well as providing further clues as to the relationship of Sex Guilt to Need for Approval and Social Censure. In conclusion, Mosher's theoretical view of Sex Guilt appears questionable, although, the Sex Guilt construct is supported in predicting main effect differences in inhibition and guilt arousal.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is little of man's behavior which has not been attributed to a concept of guilt. The early growth of psychology from its philosophical roots was paralleled by theoretical attempts, and more recently some empirical attempts, to come to terms with the development of conscience, and, moral and ethical behavior. Western civilization has placed a great value on the individual, his freedom and his dignity. Underlying this value on individualism is the notion that man is not guided simply by standards of the moment, by social approval or disapproval, but rather by internalized standards of proper conduct or the "rightness" of a situation. With the development of internalized standards comes the development of guilt in the possibility of transgressing these standards. That guilt is a normal part of "healthy" social and psychological functioning seems apparent from this perspective. However, the concept of guilt has also been widely employed as an explanation for psychopathological functioning. The clinician may point to the lack of guilt in the psychopathic personality, the conflict involving guilt feelings in the depressive conditions, or the guilt motive underlying obsessive-compulsive defenses.

The explanatory utility of the guilt construct has been important in encompassing behaviors extending from the search for man's most idealized goals to behaviors labelled as mental illness.

In a recent article speculating on more than ten years of empirical research in the area of guilt, Donald Mosher (1972), states that "learning about sex in our society is in large part learning about guilt (p. 51)." The personality disposition of Sex Guilt is viewed by Mosher (1961, 1965a, 1968) as an internalized (ie. trans-situational) self-reinforcement mechanism. It operates as a generalized expectancy for self-mediated punishment when standards of proper conduct are transgressed. Mosher has argued that High Sex Guilt persons are less dependent on, and less sensitive to external cues portending social punishment for sexual behavior than are Low Sex Guilt persons. It will be argued here, that studies to date have not clearly differentiated the part played by guilt in producing inhibitory effects on sexually related behaviors under varying external conditions of social approval and disapproval for sexual expression.

The literature in personality has recently seen a renewed interest in the "situationism" controversy and the person-situation interaction (eg. Bowers, 1973). In understanding the Sex Guilt personality construct, it is important to understand the interaction of this supposed "internalized" reinforcement mechanism (Mosher, 1965), with

external reinforcement cues operating in the immediate environment. Is the High Sex Guilt individual, as Mosher would argue, less "attuned" or "hyposensitive" to situational punishment cues, paying more attention to internalized standards of moral conduct? Or, is the High Sex Guilt individual in direct "conflict" with the external social environment, being "sensitive" to external reinforcement cues, yet at the same time having to reach a compromise between these cues and internalized moral standards? Certainly the early existential (see Barrett, 1958), and psychoanalytic (see Freud, 1949) theories propose a conflict oriented view of guilt. Man is seen as caught between his internalized moral standards and the realities and demands of his social environment. Guilt leads to a struggle between man's inner and outer world rather than to a lack of sensitivity to social demands. This thesis proposes a conflict or two-factor theory of the Sex Guilt-situation interaction, in contrast to the differential sensitivity view proposed by Mosher.

This introduction will first look at the current theory and research surrounding the Sex Guilt personality construct. Within the context of this literature, the focus will shift to a further attempt to clarify the relationship between Sexual Guilt and external social censure and approval contingencies for sexually related behavior. Two recent developments in the literature will be introduced as

a possible means of elucidating this relationship. The first is the parallel between the personality variables of Need for Approval and that of Sex Guilt (Schill, 1972). The second is the differentiation between the concepts of Trait Guilt and State Guilt (Otterbacher and Munz, 1973).

The Recent Empirical and Theoretical
Approach to Sex Guilt: A Review

The bulk of the Sex Guilt research stems from Mosher's (1961) development of a sentence completion measure of three aspects of guilt: Hostility Guilt, Morality-Conscience Guilt, and Sexual Guilt. This scale derived much of its content validity from a psychoanalytic view of guilt, while later employing social learning theory in tests of the construct validity of the measure. The scale was first standardized on a male population, therefore, the early work forming the basis of the Sex Guilt construct (Mosher, 1965a; Galbraith and Mosher, 1968) has not been replicated on a female population. Later, Mosher developed two further methods of measuring guilt and standardized all three measures on both males (Mosher, 1966a) and females (Mosher, 1968). For males and females, Sex Guilt was found to be differentiated from Hostility Guilt and Morality-Conscience Guilt as well as from measures of social desirability and anxiety. Levy (1961), criticizes

the tendency for psychological research to increase in an area simply because a technique of measurement becomes available. However, it is clear that the publication of the Mosher scales provided the means by which an already important theoretical concept could be tied more securely to an empirical base.

Moral Conflict and Inhibition of Behavior

Inhibition of behavior in moral conflict situations has been attributed to both internal and external reinforcement mechanisms. On one hand, Rettig and colleagues (Rettig and Singh, 1962; Rettig and Rawson, 1963) have argued that the primary basis for inhibitory behavior in moral conflict situations is the expectancy for external negative reinforcement combined with an expectancy of the severity of this external reinforcement. This is generally consistent with the early Hartshorne and May (1928) specificity doctrine of moral behavior. On the other hand, Mosher and colleagues (Mosher, 1961, 1965a; Galbraith, 1968; Galbraith and Mosher, 1968) have argued that more emphasis be placed on the self-monitored or internal reinforcement mechanisms in accounting for behavior in moral conflict situations.

Mosher (1965a), states that "Guilt may be defined as a generalized expectancy for self-mediated punishment (i.e., negative reinforcement) for violating, anticipating the violation of, or failure to attain internalized standards of proper behavior" (p. 162). These standards of proper behavior

are thought to be related to a person's feelings of self-worth or self-esteem and include internalized prohibitions ("should not's") and internalized positively valued ideal-goals ("ought to's"). This generalized expectancy of guilt is seen as a personality disposition which varies between individuals according to their history of reinforcement. Mosher has speculated as to child-rearing practices which foster such differences. For instance, a personality disposition towards guilt is particularly likely "in a context of parent-child relationships in which the parents promise vague and delayed external punishment for improper or immoral behavior as they define it" (Mosher, 1965a, p. 162). Mosher further speculates that this self-reinforcement mechanism is a source of avoidant motivation which leads to conflict in moral approach-avoidant situations.

Theoretically, both Rettig and Mosher owe allegiance to Social Learning Theory in their use of the expectancy construct to explain moral behavior. Mosher, also employs Miller's (1959) model of approach-avoidance conflict to further his arguments. Bandura and his colleagues (Bandura and Walters, 1963; Bandura and Perloff, 1967) have also argued for the part played by self versus externally monitored reinforcement to produce conflict situations. The point of these theoretical arguments has been to explain and predict what produces transsituational behavior stability into changing interpersonal situations.

In a modern society, a person is faced with a