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Self-conscious emotions in virtual communities of iranian migrants: a cross-cultural examination of persian lexicon of shame, guilt, and pride

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Abstract

While studies of emotion across different cultures and languages have a long history, the research on self-conscious emotions in Persian culture seems to be in its infancy, especially with regards to the cultural and linguistic construction of these emotions. Hence, the present exploratory study carries out a preliminary analysis of self-conscious emotions of guilt, shame, and pride in Persian culture, and the way they are culturally and linguistically constructed. Using authentic data from the content of a group of Persian diasporic bloggers this work breaks new ground in the analysis of certain emotions in Persian culture, and sheds light on Persian cultural schemata with regard to the construction and manifestation of self-conscious emotions. Using a Grounded Theory Approach, the study runs a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic analysis of these emotions and illustrates how the archaeology of Persian culture affects the construction of these emotions. The discussion also highlights some of the triggers of self-conscious emotions for the Iranian bloggers in the diaspora as posted on their weblogs. The study concludes with some suggestions for further exploration of emotion concepts in Persian.

1. Introduction

Shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride are generally considered self-conscious emotions as they are evoked by reflecting on and evaluating the 'self'. In essence, what self-conscious emotions have in common and what distinguishes them from other emotions is their foundation in social relationships in which individuals evaluate and judge themselves and others as part of their interaction. In other words, these emotions are not experienced in a "social vacuum" (Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995). Lewis (2008) maintains that self-conscious emotions have received little attention owing to unclear elicitors of these emotions, and this is because "the elicitation of self-

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conscious emotions involve elaborate cognitive processes that have, at their heart, the notion of self" (p. 742). Therefore, in order to explore these emotions particular attention should be paid to the role of 'self'. Tangney (2003) argues that self-conscious emotions have self-regulatory functions and are basically emotions that reflect critically on the self and guide people's behaviour in regard to moral and social standards. Furthermore, they motivate individuals to stick to these standards and avoid violating them. In fact, the moral functions of self-conscious emotions "provide immediate punishment (or reinforcement) of behavior" (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007, p. 347).

Wierzbicka (1992) states that any classification of emotion concepts is to some extent arbitrary because of the complex nature of emotion terms in any language. Nonetheless, it is possible to have some basic groupings based on "certain semantic dimensions" (p. 550). Goddard (1996), for instance, considers emotions such as shame, pride, love, pity, jealousy, and respect in English as social emotions reasoning that these emotions involve a second person or group of people as opposed to the emotion concepts which are individual such as sadness and happiness. While cognitive scientists use "social emotion" to classify the above emotions, social psychologists use "moral emotions" for some emotions such as shame and guilt as they are the emotions "that respond to moral violations or that motivate moral behavior" (Haidt, 2003, p. 853). Yet, some psychologists (cf. Tangney & Fisher, 1995; Tangney et al., 2007) consider emotions such as shame and guilt as self-conscious emotions based on the role of the self in these emotions.

This type of categorisation may not give a clear-cut picture of exactly how many groups of emotion words exist in a given language but will help the researcher to focus on emotions that have certain commonalities with each other. Based on this understanding and classification, this exploratory analysis will focus on the category of self-conscious emotions in order to illustrate how emotions such as shame, guilt, and pride are viewed in the Persian culture and language. The discussion is mainly based on some of the terms and expressions which are embedded within the lexicon of the Persian language and are used by a group of Iranian diasporic bloggers to express their emotions.

In discussing the emotional experiences of the Persian diasporic bloggers special attention is paid to the moral aspect of self-conscious emotions as it significantly affects the view of 'self' in interpersonal relationships and social contexts in Persian culture. In principle, two prominent features of Persian culture are religiosity and dualism (Zare, 2011). As individuals grow up in this culture, they learn and internalise certain fundamental values and any violation of these values may cause emotional experiences such as shame or guilt for individuals.

2. Material and Method

Literature Review of Self-Counscious Emotions

In thinking about how the concepts of shame and guilt apply to Persian culture, it is helpful to refer first to the view of guilt and shame in the literature. There have been many attempts to distinguish shame from guilt especially in psychology and anthropology. The most radical and influential view in psychology is Lewis' (1974) definition of shame and guilt in which the key distinction between these two emotions is the role of the 'self'. She argues that in a shaming experience 'self' is the centre of evaluation and the focus is on the 'self' while in a guilty experience "the self is negatively evaluated in connection with something bad but is not itself the focus of the experience" (p. 30). In other words, shame experience equates "I am bad" while guilt experience equates "I have done something bad".

The anthropological description of the function of shame and guilt in different societies has culminated in classifying cultures into "shame cultures" and "guilt cultures". The most famous differentiation is the categorisation of Japan as a shame-based culture and the United States as a guilt-

based culture by Benedict (1946) in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. In her analysis of these two cultures she concludes that the United States is a "guilt culture that inculcates absolute standards of morality and relies on men's developing a conscience" while Japanese culture is shame-based due to its reliance on "external sanctions for good behavior" (p. 222). This view of cultures has been criticised on the ground that in various cultures both shame and guilt elements are present to some degree in both the individual and the society but the tendency towards one or the other is different (Creighton, 1990; You, 1997).

Based on various studies of shame and guilt across a number of cultures (see e.g. Stipek, 1998; Cole, Tamang, & Shrestha, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Boiger, Mesquita, Uchida, & Barrett, 2013; Boiger, Güngör, Karasawa, & Mesquita, 2014) it becomes clear that there are some fundamental distinctions in the tendency and integration of these two emotions. However, as You (1997) remarks, "it is dangerous to use these distinctions to label specific cultures" because both of these characteristics are present in any given culture but one is more dominant than the other.

Persian culture can also be considered along this line of thinking since both shame and guilt are integrated and interwoven into the society. From the shame perspective, Persian culture may fall into the shame-based category as individuals are afraid of exposure of any behaviour and the accompanying shame that may taint the individuals' self and other family members. In some cases, the shame is even deliberately exposed as a means of social control in order to let other people evaluate the individual and ultimately amend the behaviour.

Methods

The data in this paper come from a virtual community of Persian bloggers who publish their daily experiences of life in the Australian diaspora. The study followed a convenience virtual snowball sampling (Baltar & Brunet, 2012) and relied on the blogroll of each newly-found weblog. When a new weblog was found, the other weblogs' hyperlinks that were available in the blogroll of the new weblog were used to access other Persian weblogs. In order to make sure that all the bloggers were living in Australia, the "About Me" section of each weblog was checked in order to identify the bloggers' location. If there was no geographical information available, then the reliance was on the content of the posts that each blogger was publishing. In cases that there was no clue as to where the blog was publishing from, then the weblog was excluded from the study. In total, forty-four blogs were identified and included in the study. All the weblogs were publishing in the Persian language, and their contents were authentic experiences of the bloggers that demonstrated their daily life in Australia through interaction with each other. This provided the opportunity to collect and use their online communication in this study as naturally occurring data (O'reilly, Lester, & Kiyimba, 2019) without any intervention.

Since the original data were all in Persian, they were translated into English. The translations went through several revisions by native speakers of both languages to ensure their accuracies. In cases that there were Persian terms or expressions that were culture-specific and not easily translatable, then a transliteration was used along with a rough English translation and cultural explanation.

Due to the large volume of information in the virtual community of bloggers and the fact that content needed to be revisited, all the forty-four weblogs were downloaded for offline use using WinHTTrack, an offline browser utility. The offline database was updated regularly as new contents were added online. Using a Grounded Theory Approach, the data were revisited an analysed through open, axial, selective codings, and memos. A number of themes emerged including self-conscious emotions, which were specifically used in this study. A summary of self-conscious emotions analysed in this study is presented in Table 1:

Table 1.
Summary of self-conscious emotions, Persian transcription, English translation, and semantic meanings

Self-Conscious Emotions of Shame, Guilt, Pride			
Emotions	**Persian Transcription**	**English translation in English-Persian bilingual dictionaries**	**Semantic Meaning Used in the Study**
Shame	*khejālat*; *sharm*	embarrassment; blush; shyness; coyness; uneasiness; confusion; bashfulness	shame, modesty, embarrassing moment
Guilt	*gonāh; azāb-e vojdān*	blame; crime; misdemeanor; sin	sin; torture of conscience
Pride	*eftekhār*	honour; best; glory; pride; conceit; arrogance; snobbery	honour; glory

In order to protect the identity of the bloggers, all the possible online and digital identifier such as the bloggers' real names or pseudonyms, blog names, weblog hyperlinks, blog URL, etc. were excluded to ensure anonymity.

3. Results and Discussion

Looking at the classification of cultures into "shame cultures" and "guilt cultures", Persian culture may be labelled as a guilt culture based on the dominant religious ideology. In this sense, guilt is experienced when individuals feel they have violated some moral norms and standards. The person affected by guilt may utter the expression *ehsās-e gonāh mikonam* (I feel guilty). The original meaning of *gonāh* is 'sin' with a religious denotation but is used in a guilt context where people feel they have done something morally wrong. This means that self-justification and divine justification are both part of Persian culture. Therefore, Persian culture seems to be a shame culture in which the actual guilt is an internal and non-material experience. Among the available definitions of shame and guilt in the literature, Lewis' (1974) conceptualisation of shame and guilt best describes the Persian culture. According to Lewis, both shame and guilt are feelings associated with negative evaluation because individuals feel they have violated certain norms and standards with respect to what is morally right or wrong. She further adds that the evaluation can be by the self or other people, but the observation of the weblogs shows that the evaluation of both shame and guilt is by the blogger (self) as all the posts are about the internal expression of these feelings. In a way, they resemble an emotional confession by the bloggers. For example, take a look at the following post by a blogger:

I have got a new *maraz* (disease). Instead of feeling happier from having happier moments, I feel sadder and think of those who I left in Iran. I wasn't like this, but it seems that immigration and having a good time without my immediate family and friends doesn't make me happy. These four days I was only travelling and having fun…. But late at night when we were going back the sky above us was so beautiful and clear that it put me into a hallucination. I remembered many people. Thousands of questions came to my mind. Thousands of wishes and homesickness that turned my fun moments and travelling into depression.

In this post the blogger is reflecting on self by writing about her change of feelings due to thoughts of her family and friends back home. The post is like a moral confession in which she reveals her guilt because she thinks having fun without family members and friends is the same as showing no care and forgetting about the suffering of those who are left behind. The feeling of guilt is so strong that

she uses the word *maraz* (disease) to compare her feeling of guilt to a disease that is bothering her, and it is growing worse. It seems that as she becomes happier in Australia, the guilt grows stronger. Toward the end of the post she compares her feeling to a hallucination that throws her into her past remembering people back home which causes her homesickness. The irony in her writing is that the feeling of hallucination is filled with homesickness and sadness instead of the joy and ecstasy that may come with a hallucination. This reveals that her hallucination looks toward the past and not the future. This type of description implicitly shows that she is not happy having fun without her family members and friends, and she feels guilty as a result.

The language of shame in Persian

The discussion starts by introducing *khejālat* (roughly "shame") and how it is used in Persian in interpersonal communication and then elaborates on both its social and moral dimensions. The reason to label *khejālat* as both a social and a moral emotion is that the type of feeling it connotes in the Persian language can have both social and moral action tendencies. In fact, this is where the difference between the English and Persian usage of the concept may start as it does not fit properly into the social emotion classification in English. Unlike shame in English whose meaning involves other people, *khejālat* in the Persian language and culture can also be present in intrapersonal interactions where the source is inside the person rather than other people.

In bilingual dictionaries *khejālat* is variously translated as "shame", "embarrassment", "blush", "shyness", "coyness", "uneasiness", "confusion", and "bashfulness". Nonetheless, with such a variety of translations none of the English equivalents capture the social and moral dimension which is understood by native speakers of Persian. Contrary to the negative connotation of shame in English, Persian culture sometimes regards *khejālat* and its synonym *sharm* (shame; modesty) as a type of positive attribute which is necessary in building morality in human beings and keeping them away from bad deeds.

There are a broad range of situations in Persian where a person may feel *khejālat*. On a social level it may range from embarrassing moments or those that induce shyness where the individual feels he/she has done something inappropriate to situations where the person has some personal characteristics such as physical problems, ugliness, or differences in social class that cause a *khejālat* feeling. In each of these situations the type of feeling that the person reveals may have a different translation in English. In order to clarify the point, the application of *khejālat* in a number of extracts taken from a weblog will be analysed:

…I was so mixed-up today that I forgot to ask the salesperson for the chicken that I had paid for and left the shop. When he saw me after half an hour when I went back to pick the chicken up, he gave it to me without a word. I'm sure he had felt pity for a young woman with Alzheimer's disease; or maybe he had thought to himself that I was a *bimār-e ravāni* (literally mental patient)….It was a bad feeling and I *khejālat keshidam* (roughly I felt embarrassed)….

In this excerpt the blogger talks about an embarrassing social situation where she blames herself for forgetting her shopping. Her feeling is a combination of what the salesperson may feel about her and her own feeling of being mentally preoccupied. This has brought her a kind of embarrassing moment where she encounters the salesperson, and a confusing and bashful feeling that an Iranian can imagine in such a situation. Her choice of verb with *khejālat* gives the reader the impression that she might have been red in the face when she encountered the situation. Now consider the following excerpt:

I'm craving an Iranian wedding party… so that I dance for so many hours that the people who are with me come and force me to sit down because of their *khejālat* (roughly shame)….

In the above writing the blogger is trying to imagine an Iranian family/social circle where her dancing may bring shame to her companions. Here the concept of shame is not only the result of the situation but also tainted with some moral values that may cause embarrassment and bashfulness. The moral value behind this experience is that traditionally and religiously it is not acceptable for women to dance in a public place especially in the presence of men who are considered *nāmahram* (not intimate; not of close relationship, i.e. outside the family/social circle). In such cases, women should protect their public image (*zāher*) and not damage this image. This means that they should keep their *sangini va vaghār* (literally gravity and dignity) and not do anything that may cause damage to women's face. Thus, the use of the word *khejālat* is a combination of moral shame, embarrassment, and blushing to anyone related to her in that situation. The final excerpt shows another application of the word *khejālat*:

Today when I went to the hospital for my operation, I felt *khejālat* (roughly ashamed and guilty) of myself because of my thoughts about death last night…. There were so many young and old patients that had come to the hospital on their own that I felt *khejālat* (roughly blushing, embarrassed) to have taken my husband with me. It was good that the hospital was private and classy and it was ok to have a companion; otherwise I would have sent my husband home from *khejālat* (roughly shame and embarrassment) ….

In the above extract, the first part of the experience is not directly related to the situation but derives from within the person. She feels that her bad thoughts about dying during the operation were not logical and therefore she feels *khejālat* due to her illogicality and cowardice. In this situation the elicitor of the emotion is not public but a private one in which she construes the elicitation of emotion as a failure of the self. She is ashamed of being a coward and not as brave as the other patients. This kind of feeling is where the distinction between shame and guilt becomes a bit fuzzy since the source of the emotion is private. In the Persian language this kind of feeling is considered positive as it allows the sufferer to learn something from that experience and try to use the experience to improve the self. The concept of *khejālat* here is equal to *sharm* (shame; modesty) which is a positive form of shame in Persian culture and is used in contexts where individuals feel shame as a way of correcting their behaviour.

Sharm has both positive and negative valence based on the context and situation. In bilingual dictionaries the translation for *sharm* is almost the same as *khejālat* but with the addition of the term "modesty". *Sharm* in Persian sometimes acts as a moral barrier against the social elicitor to regulate unacceptable behaviour. It is like a cover that protects a person's *zāher* (outer) and *bāten* (inner). With such a meaning, it is synonymous with the word *hayā* (roughly modesty; self-restraint), an Arabic borrowing. Therefore, when a person feels *sharm* the feeling is accompanied by an element of modesty. It is also quite common to use the expression *sharm va hayā* together in Persian in situations where the moral concept is felt to have been violated.

Naturally, *khejālat* and *sharm* are often close to each other and may be used in the same context. The range of English equivalents may cover a range of words such as shyness, embarrassment, dishonour, feeling guilt, feeling awkward, etc. The following are some examples from some weblogs that illustrate the meaning of *sharm* in different contexts:

1. *pesaram hamish-e az harf zadan-e joloyeh dokhtarāyeh ham sen va sālesh sharmesh misheh.*
Literally: My son always feels *sharm* talking in front of girls of his age.
2. *ehsaas-e sharm nemikonid az inkeh hoghugheh digarān ro mikhorid? Man ke sharmam miyād.*
Literally: Don't you feel *sharm* from eating [violating] other people's rights? I feel *sharm*.
3. *man ye chizi ye jāee khundam ke bāes shod sharm va hayā ro ghurt bedam va ye soāl dar morede sex peporsam.*

Literally: I read something somewhere that caused me to swallow (ignore) *sharm va hayā* and ask a question about sex.

In the first sentence, the blogger talks about *sharm* that causes her son to be shy in front of girls of his age. This is a personality element that Iranian children learn as rule of conduct in public which makes them define a moral border between themselves and the opposite sex. In the second sentence, the blogger is questioning the morality of violating people's right telling the reader that this kind of behaviour will bring moral shame on people, and they should avoid this kind of violation. In the third sentence, the blogger is trying to justify the moral violation of talking about sex as a woman which is taboo in Persian culture by using the expression *sharm va hayā rā ghurt dādan* (literally swallow shame and modesty which is roughly translated as "to become morally shameless"). In the above sentences the concept of *sharm* is used with a moral connotation which is a protection of the self from failure. In these examples the concept of *sharm* is a positive attribute that is essential to building human morality. Consider the following examples from the weblogs:

1. *ba'azi vaghtā sharmam misheh ke begam irāni hastam.*
Literally: Sometimes I feel *sharm* to say I'm Iranian.
2. *az zan budan-e khodam sharmam misheh.*
Literally: I feel *sharm* of being a woman.

In these two sentences the application of *sharm* is somewhat similar to dishonour and the blogger feels negative about her identity in the society. In such contexts *sharm* is a negative feeling that one may feel on account of something that is directly related to oneself. Here the feeling is a combination of anger, dishonour, embarrassment, and shame that comes to the person as a kind of criticism toward the self and identity.

What emerges from the above examples is that *khejālat* and its counterpart *sharm* are different from any comparable equivalent in English, and any translation of these two words in English does not cover their broad range of connotational meanings in Persian. In other words, the above discussion reveals that the concept of *khejālat* and its counterparts in Persian are culture-specific and cannot be easily translated into English.

The language of guilt in Persian

Closely related to the concept of shame is guilt which may be considered as a central moral emotion in Persian culture. In Western culture both shame and guilt are considered to be negatively-valenced moral emotions and the two concepts seem to be synonymous to both community members and academics (Tangney et al., 2007). However, there have been many attempts to differentiate between these two emotions. Tangney et al. (2007) offer three categories of research for this differentiation. These categories include the focus on the events that elicit both emotions, the public or private nature of the event, and the degree to which individuals interpret the event that caused the emotion as self-failure or self's behaviour. Based on several studies done in psychology (see e.g. Keltner & Buswell, 1996; Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002; Tracy & Robin, 2006), they reject the first two categories and state that the third category is a good indicator of the distinction between shame and guilt. This view is based on Lewis' (1974) proposal on the source of the emotion where she attributes shame to a negative evaluation of the self and guilt to a negative evaluation of a certain behaviour. Since shame puts the self at risk, it is more painful and devastating than guilt as a result of a specific behaviour.

This proposition does not match exactly with the Persian definition of guilt. Guilt in Persian is usually accompanied by a spiritual component that brings more pain to the individual. In order to understand the concept of guilt in Persian, it is better to first look at its meaning in Persian and the

ideology beyond it. In bilingual English-to-Persian dictionaries guilt is variously glossed as "*taghsir*" (blame), "*jorm*" (crime), "*bezeh*" (misdemeanour; sin), and "*gonāh*" (sin). In the Oxford English dictionary, the following definitions are common for the word guilt:

1. a. The fact of being responsible for the commission of an offense. b. Law The fact of having been found to have violated a criminal law; legal culpability. c. Responsibility for a mistake or error. 2. a. Remorseful awareness of having done something wrong. b. Self-reproach for supposed inadequacy or wrongdoing.

While both English and Persian definitions of guilt generally cover all the legalistic concepts of guilt, the word *gonāh* (sin) is not a common definition for guilt in English dictionaries even though English has the religious connotation for guilt as well. This is where the difference in Western culture and Persian culture may emerge as guilt in Persian is strongly rooted in religious ideology. In many English-to-Persian translations, the phrase "feeling guilty" is usually translated as *ehsās-e gonāh kardan* (literally feeling sinful) which does not seem a good translation. A better translation would be *azāb-e vojdān* (roughly torture of conscience) but to any Persian speaker the concept of guilt is immediately translated into *gonāh* with a religious connotation. For this reason, the word *gonāh* was checked as a central concept in Persian culture for guilt in bilingual dictionaries to find out its English equivalents. All the present dictionaries translate *gonāh* as "sin", "transgression", "crime", "guilt", "vice", "misdemeanour", "misdeed", and "blame". It is notable that the first meaning for *gonāh* is sin denoting that any single act of guilt is an act of sin that may come with spiritual punishment to the person. This aspect of guilt in the religious component of Persian culture may give the feeling a positive valence as in Persian culture it is believed that in any experience of guilt the person's soul should suffer till the *bāten* (inner) gets purified. Therefore, the source of any guilt experience may be a certain behaviour, but that behaviour will reflect on the soul of the person causing him to be spiritually preoccupied with the experience. One blogger has shown her guilt of living in the diaspora far from her family in quite a number of posts:

It had been three days that you were gone [dead] and I didn't know. Nobody told me.
You were that sick? Why when I was talking to you on Tuesday night and asked you if you wanted me to come and see you, you said, "No dear, I'm ok and it's these people [family members] who are making a fuss over it. There is nothing wrong with me."
I'm far from everything at the moment. You loved me that much that you didn't want me to be in trouble to come and see you? Why didn't you tell me? I even sent some spies from my husband's side to bring me some news, but they betrayed me and didn't tell me anything.
What is the use of my crying for you anymore? They tell me that I don't need to go back. They're right. It's three days that you're gone and I was taking care of my good and happy life here.
It's now too late for everything, too late. It's even late to suppress that pride that I have inherited from you and tell you I love you.
I should return now to see what? To see you in the grave? No. You? It's impossible. I hope it's not my leaving that caused *degh dādan*. Maybe you died of sadness? Mom says that you were talking to my picture all the time. Then, why didn't you talk with me? You wanted to surprise me? You wanted to burn me? Oh God! I'm being suffocated….

The language of the post is a good example of the expression of guilt in Persian. The content of the post is like a soliloquy or dramatic monologue in which the blogger expresses her feeling of guilt regarding her father's passing away. She feels guilty for leaving the family, and she feels that her leaving may have caused her father's death. She uses the verb *degh dādan* as a possible source of her father's death. This verb for which it is not possible to find any English equivalent is used in Persian for situations where a person gets so full of sad and painful emotions and reaches such a level that

the overflow of those emotions may kill them. It is a mental state in which the person experiencing the emotion cannot communicate the sad and painful feelings to others by getting them off his/her chest and he/she will suffer consequently. Because of the *rābete-ye ātefi* (emotional dependency) among Iranian family members, the blogger thinks that her distance and the rupture between her and the family has caused this event for the family, and she feels guilty as a result. Due to *rābete-ye ātefi* in Persian culture, families do not break sad news to other members, especially if they are living far from the family. They think that sad news will affect them emotionally while they are away. That is why the blogger talks about sending people as spies to their house to get some news about her father's health. All these elements have put her in a guilty position, and she has also reached the stage of *degh kardan* by stating that she is feeling suffocated. She is using the word suffocation metaphorically to show the depth of her guilt and her suffering.

In sum, the discussion of the language of guilt in Persian also reveals that guilt in Persian culture is viewed differently than in English, and any translation of the word does not fully capture the cultural meanings which are associated with it.

Vicarious/collective shame and guilt

Parallel to the personal experience of shame and guilt, some researchers have attempted to investigate group-based shame and guilt (cf. Lickel, Schmader, Curtis, Scarnier, & Ames, 2005; Tangney et al., 2007). This line of thinking is based on the assumption that interpersonal relationships and membership of a group can partly determine the self, and hence, the wrongdoings of other members of the group can reflect on the self. Tangney et al. (2007) argue that vicarious shame and guilt are the same as personal shame and guilt in many ways, and mention several studies (Swim & Miller, 1999; Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Zebel, Doosjse, & Spears, 2004; Lickel et al., 2005) that associate vicarious guilt with empathy and a tendency to take reparative measures and vicarious shame as a tendency to keep the self away from the elicitor. A useful approach to the understanding of this phenomenon in the context of the Persian diasporic online community is the one by Lickel et al. (2005). They consider two social dimensions in their study of vicarious emotions. One dimension is the sense of "shared identity" that people in a group feel they have and the other is the degree of interdependence with each other. They state that groups that share traits such as "gender, ethnicity, religion, and kinship" (p. 148) may share a higher level of identity as such qualities are vital elements of any person. Since for individuals shared identities are a means of identifying self, then they try to maintain a positive picture of their group identity and avoid a negative group image (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, as cited in Lickel et al., 2005).

Evidence of vicarious shame and guilt were present in the bloggers' writing. There were quite a number of posts and cross-blogging discussions and referencing in which the bloggers wrote about the misrepresentation of their shared Iranian identity. In the context of diaspora, the source of vicarious shame seems to be the way Iranian identity is viewed by the majority of foreigners and their passivity towards changing views about Iranians. This is basically because the bloggers identify themselves as a minority ethnic group with certain cultural and religious norms, and they feel that their shared identity should be maintained in the diaspora. This kind of attitude has caused them "emotional dissonance" where their experience of emotions has collided with their identity. Jansz and Timmers (2002) define emotional dissonance as "a feeling of unease that occurs when an emotion is evaluated as dissonant with respect to one's identity concerns" (p. 84). They maintain that the source of the uneasy feeling is people's emotional experience rather than the sole event that caused it. The significant function of emotional dissonance is that it signals to people that there is a threat to their identity and something has to be done to regulate the emotional experience.

Vicarious shame and guilt and the consequent emotional dissonance have caused the bloggers to do something about their identity presentation in the diaspora. One of their biggest challenge is the

false and perhaps negative shared identity image that they believe Westerners in general and Australians in particular have about Iranians. This has brought about a series of posts and discussions among the bloggers and their audience and the strategies that they employed to defend their collective national identity. For instance, a blogger wrote about her workplace and the way people viewed her:

Iranian? My workplace is like a small family company with a lovely atmosphere. My job is the same as what I used to do in Iran and I think I have been lucky regarding this. One of the surprising things that has caught my attention for a while is the worldwide view of Iranians especially among Australians and others who happen to know nothing about Iranians. They think that we live in severe poverty, cover our face in public, don't go to university, and don't know anything about new technologies.

Believe it or not, during my first days at work my executive's wife who works with us was explaining to me how to use a device called a microwave if I wanted to make coffee for myself. When she was giving me instructions on how to use the microwave, I thanked her and told her that I knew how to use it. She was shocked and asked me if I had seen microwaves before??? I told her that I had seen all the things that are available here, and we have all of them in Iran. Poor woman! She was embarrassed and apologised to me.

Yesterday at lunch I told them that they didn't have snow. I told them that we have a lot of snow in Iran and we always went skiing. Then everyone asked me with surprise if we go skiing in Iran? They asked me if women could do these activities in Iran! It was interesting to me and I explained many things to them, and I promised to bring photos of people's lifestyles, their houses and parties to the company.

You should have seen them today. They could have been knocked over with a feather! They were talking about women's clothes, the beauty of our houses and our ski trips!!! And the surprising thing for me was that the photos just showed usual and simple things such as a normal house and people with simple clothes.

After that my boss told me that he had a different opinion about Iranian culture and women's way of life before I started working there, and he apologised a lot telling me that it's all because of the scenes that they show on TV and analyse everything unidimensionally.

Now I'm wondering if maybe the thing that I showed them about lifestyles in Iran was unidimensional??

The blogger's post can be analysed from several dimensions. In fact, both vicarious shame and guilt are present in her post. In the first part of the post she shows her shame regarding the way people around the world think of Iranians. She feels that her source of self-identification and esteem, which is her Iranian nationality, has been jeopardised by being misrepresented. In the second part of the post she shows guilt and tries to repair the negative stereotypical image of Iranians by informing her colleagues of the quality of life in Iran through a number of photos. This is in line with the empathic and reparative dimension of vicarious guilt in which individuals try to make amends. At the end of the post she feels guilty on a personal level and tries to invite the audience to see what they think of the way she presented Iranian life as she thinks it was unidimensional. This guilt emerges from her only positive presentation of Iranians for she thinks she has given a good picture of life in Iran and she has excluded the negative aspects. Therefore, she wants to know what other members of the group think of her behaviour and if they agree with what she has done.

The above post created a series of discussions in the virtual community and the members shared their opinions with her in different ways. The following is a selection of some of the comments and the way the audience saw her reparative action. Generally, the comments can be divided into three categories. Some commenters supported what the blogger had done since they believed the face (*āberu*) of Iranians should have been preserved outside Iran, some believed that both sides of life

should have been demonstrated, and yet some virtual community members thought that nothing can be done as some Iranians around the world have dishonoured (*āberu rizi kardan*) the national identity:

comment#1
Dear, continue *āberu dāri* (keeping the face), but in reality we all know what kind of thinking is going on behind the technology, and the talented and educated people in Iran….
comment# 2
In my opinion, one of the prophetic missions of the Iranian educated people who want to enter the international arena and experience life with international standards is what you have done. If I were you, I would have done the same and tried to change the Iranian image even on a small scale such as the workplace. Therefore, your behaviour was not unidimensional at all.

Both commenters appreciate the way the blogger has presented the Iranian face in the diaspora. This kind of view is quite customary among many Iranians as *āberu* has special significance in Persian culture. O'Shea (2000) states that for Iranians "*Aberu* [sic], or honour, is a powerful social force. All Iranians measure themselves to a great extent by the honour they accumulate through their actions and social interrelations" (p. 101). The cultural schema of *āberu* in Persian has both physical and moral conceptualisations. The word *āberu* is a combination of *āb* (water) and *ru* (face) and it literally means "water of face" (Sharifian, 2007, p. 36). In Persian culture this may be used metonymically to refer to the general health and wellbeing of individuals or when individuals have sweat on their face because they feel that their honour or social identity has been threatened or damaged, and thus brought them shame and guilt.

The concept of *āberu* is not only an individual trait in Persian but it is also linked to the face of family, relatives, or any other group with which a person identifies. Furthermore, it is not only the behaviour or personality that defines *āberu*; it could be social status, class, financial situation, dress code, appearance, and so forth through which *āberu* can be kept or lost. These layers of *āberu* bring social obligations to many Iranians and make them sustain behaviours that enhance their face and refrain from actions which may endanger their face.

Like many Iranians, the diasporic bloggers think that the West does not have a positive or accurate image of Iran and its culture. They think that the Western media have misrepresented the Iranian national identity. Therefore, they make an effort to uphold their national *āberu* in the eyes of other nations, and that is why the commenters are supportive of the blogger's attempt in demystifying the quality of Iranian life for Australians. In fact, the misrepresentation of Iranians in the world is a subject of discussion among the commenters of the above post and some are even angry and ashamed at how Iranians are presented:

comment# 3
Dear, I myself have heard a lot that, for example, we travel by camels. We had an English co-worker who came here from an Italian company. He told me that he didn't think that Iranian women could drive at all or even had tertiary education.
comment# 4
Unfortunately, this is the view that they have towards us. They are not at fault because, as your boss said, it's a reflection of the Western media. You don't need to go that far to Australia. Just consider Turkey, which is our neighbour. When I went there for the IELTS exam, there was a Turkish guy who was in the IELTS exam with us. He had the same image of Iranian women and life in Iran as your colleagues, and we were able to give him a bit of a more realistic image of Iranians in half an hour.

comment# 5
…Let me tell you [the situation] from France. A couple asked us about Iran when we were on the train. They told me that they had heard that Iran was very dirty and that the streets are full of garbage and lots of people are thieves. I was in shock from their talk for 3 to 4 minutes and it took me a while to explain to them that they were wrong.
comment# 6
In Canada, those people who have little knowledge of Iran have the same limited vision of Iran, and you need to give them a lot of evidence to prove that they are wrong. Alas! What has happened to Iran and its civilisation?
comment# 7
…I think the problem is that these people [Westerners] mix us with Arabs. We don't identify ourselves with Arabs, but it seems that we won't be separated from them anymore….

All the commenters share their shame at the group level and feel bad at how the collective identity of Iranians has been presented around the world. As some commenters state, one of the major sources of misunderstanding for Australians is thinking of Iranians as Arabs. This misunderstanding has caused them to generalise their thinking to all countries in the Middle East, and this is where many Iranians feel the shame of not being recognised by other nations and the guilt of what to do to represent a better identity in the diaspora. Some other commenters talk about the vicarious shame they have experienced by sharing the viewpoint of other nations regarding Iranians, and the reparative measures that they took to reverse their views about Iranians.

All in all, the above discussion of vicarious shame and guilt illustrates the importance of the virtual weblog community (cf. Zare, 2018) for this group of Iranians in the diaspora. It seems that the virtual community has become a community of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) for the bloggers to discuss their in-group identity and the issues surrounding their national identity in the host society.

The language of pride in Persian

Pride in English is considered as a positively valenced moral emotion and some researchers generally see it as the opposite of shame (Goddard, 1996). Mascolo and Fischer (1995) define pride as an emotion which is "generated by appraisals that one is responsible for a socially valued outcome or for being a socially valued person" (p. 66). In contrast, pride in Persian culture has both negative and positive valence and there are different words and expressions that are used to reveal both dimensions in communication. In bilingual dictionaries pride is glossed as "*mobāhāt*" (roughly honour), "*behtarin*" (the best), "*sarbolandi*" (roughly honour; glory), "*fakhr*" (glory; pride), "*efādeh*" (snobbery), "*ghorur*" (conceit), and "*takabbor*" (arrogance). The range of Persian equivalents shows the wide scope of meaning and their usage in the Persian language. Generally, some of the words are used in a positive way while others denote a negative concept. *Mobāhāt*, *behtarin*, and *sarbolandi* are used to talk about positive pride, while *fakhr*, *efādeh*, and *takabbor* are used when the concept of pride becomes a negative trait for individuals. The word *ghorur* has both negative and positive meaning depending on the context of talk.

One meaning that is missing in bilingual dictionaries for the word 'pride' is the Persian word *eftekhār* (honour; pride); however, when the adjective proud is looked up in bilingual dictionaries the adjective form *moftakhar* (honoured; proud) is among the Persian equivalents. *Eftekhār* is one common word which is used by Persian speakers to talk about circumstances where people feel pride as well as honour and glory. The assumption is that when individuals feel pride for certain events, then the pride brings them honour as well. In order to clarify the meaning of *eftekhār* I have taken some examples from some of the weblogs:

Weblog post# 1
Having good friends in life has always been my top priority because I enjoy spending my time with friends more than anything else. During my life I have met some people whose personalities have shaped my life…. When I left Iran I thought I would lose many of my good friends, but when I received a package from some old high school friends I understood that they are always with me no matter where I am. As I know they read my weblog, I want to tell them how proud I am (*eftekhār kardan*) of their friendship. Having dear friends like you, I feel I'm a successful woman. I feel *eftekhār* of your friendship.
Weblog post# 2
After 23 months of living outside the country, I'm happy that I have gained many good experiences. One of them is that each nation has people that they feel *eftekhār* of and people that they feel ashamed of….
Weblog post# 3
When a person is born in a country and grows up in it, then automatically it becomes their native land. That's how you're assigned a nationality and you learn to be proud of that. Before leaving Iran, I didn't care that much about my nationality, which I think is the same for everybody as it is taken for granted. But now that I live in Australia the situation has changed as I see how other people from other countries are proud of their nationalities. This means that I need to show chauvinism toward my country as well, but I can't as everything about Iran is negative here…. I really feel sorry that I'm an Iranian. There isn't much left to have *eftekhār* of.

In the first post the blogger uses *eftekhār* with almost the same meaning as pride in English. She is proud of having friends that have influenced her life in a positive way. However, the context of the second and third posts shows feelings of *eftekhār* not only as pride but also a combination of honour and glory. The second post is based on the phenomenon of an individual's achievement being collectivised to a national level which brings a nation pride, honour, and glory whereas the third post is complaining about being an Iranian since currently some Iranians think that there is no honour or glory left in being an Iranian.

It appears that the blogger's attitude in the third post is one that can be seen among some other Iranians who live outside the country. They try to introduce themselves as Persian or coming from Persia when asked by foreigners since they believe that honour and glory can be maintained in such a way. The reason for using the word "Persian" may be the fact that for some Iranians the word is a manifestation of the Persian Empire and the glory of the Empire in the history of the world. They think that identifying themselves with the history of Persia may detach them from the current representation of Iranians, which is considered a source of shame for some Iranians especially those who live abroad. This kind of identity introduction sometimes causes miscommunication for foreigners as they think Iranian and Persian are two different nationalities. This kind of attitude raises foreigners' curiosity and, as a blogger wrote about it in a post, they try to understand the reason for this:

I was talking on the phone with a friend and she asked me why we say Persian but not Iranian when we introduce ourselves? I answered that I think there are some peculiar reasons. One reason might be the present stupid political issues that governments around the world have caused for us… or maybe they want to look friendlier or they want to remind others of the glorious past of the Persians. Another reason can be that they want to separate themselves from the strict and orthodox Muslims, and they are looking to separate themselves from Arab Muslims insisting that they are not the same, and they want to be introduced separately. Other reasons may be that they want to say that

"we're your friend". We're Persian like the Persian cat which is nice and delicate; or the Persian carpet which is expensive and famous around the world….

In the post the blogger is trying to enumerate several reasons why some Iranians introduce themselves as Persian. Although she explains at the beginning of the post that she was answering a friend's question, her nationalistic view toward Persian culture and identity is quite obvious. In her patriotic account for her friend, she highlights the glory of the Persian Empire, the difference between Iranians and Arabs, Iranians' friendly attitude, and the famous Persian cat and carpet all of which are sources of pride, honour, and glory for Iranians.

The discussion of pride in Persian also reveals the sociocultural differences between Persian and English. The examples in this section illustrated how pride in Persian is used to manifest both positive and negative emotions of pride depending on the context of communication. The discussion of posts and comments also highlighted how the Persian bloggers think of their Persian pride especially on a national level in the host society.

4. Conclusion

This paper was a first attempt in exploring the emotional language that was used by a group of Iranian diasporic bloggers as well as cultural glossing of the Persian words/expressions with regard to self-conscious emotions. It documented the type of language that is used in Persian culture to express certain emotions. It specifically focused on the language of self-conscious emotions in Persian as manifested in the bloggers' posts and comments. By running a cultural analysis of shame, guilt, and pride, the paper sheds light on how these emotions are viewed and constructed in Persian culture. The discussion also depicted Persian culture as a combination of both shame and guilt cultures due to the traditional and religious archaeology of the society. The discussion of shame and guilt also led to vicarious shame and guilt and the way the bloggers had experienced it in the host society. The exploration of the data marked the negative image of Iranian identity held by Westerners as a major source of vicarious shame and guilt for the bloggers. Finally, the discussion reflected on the emotion of pride in Persian culture. The analysis revealed that pride in Persian has both positive and negative valence depending on the context in which it is used. Furthermore, the discussion of pride illustrated some of the reasons why some Iranians expose a dual identity in the diaspora and introduced themselves as "Persian" rather than "Iranian".

While studies of emotion across different cultures and languages have a long history, there is seemingly a shortage of research on Persian culture and emotion, and the way certain emotions such as self-conscious emotions are culturally constructed and manifested through the Persian language. Ergo, this paper may open up new horizons in the linguistic studies of emotion in Persian culture and how they are culturally constructed and manifested through the Persian language. In the same way, the discussion in this paper can be a valuable step in introducing the socio-cultural schemata of certain emotions in Persian culture and hence, adding to cross-cultural studies of emotion. Furthermore, the exploration of certain emotion concepts among a group of Iranian migrants can add to research on diasporic Iranians as an under-researched diasporic entity (Fozi, 2018).

Although this study is a unique and innovative step in uncovering self-conscious emotions in Persian, there are some limitations that need to be addressed. First of all, they data used in this study come from both male and female bloggers and commenters, and gender did not play any role in the discussion and analysis of the emotion concepts. While this will not affect the cultural construction of self-conscious emotions in Persian, it may affect the contents of the posts and comments presented in the weblogs. Further studies can be done taking gender into account.

The second point is related to the source of data and the analysis of the information in this study. As mentioned in the methodology, the data came from the weblog posts and comments which

were published online in a public domain, and was reflected on by the researcher. This limited the discussion to the available discourse among the bloggers. Other studies can focus on self-conscious emotions in Persian using other sources and research tools such as scenarios, interviews, discussion groups, etc. to tap into Persian emotion concepts.

Finally, this study did not take into account factors such as ethnicity, religious orientation, class, age, etc. of the bloggers and commenters into account. Since Iran is a multi-ethnic society with people coming from different backgrounds and orientations, future studies can include such factors in the exploration of emotion in Persian culture.

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