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## Chapter 5

# The expression of guilt by Moroccan adolescents: ethnocentric interpretations by Western teachers and social workers

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### Abstract

Many Belgian teachers who have Moroccan pupils and students in their classes hold the idea that Moroccans do not really have a sense of guilt. The same idea is also expressed in several Dutch and Belgian publications about Moroccan youth. In Moroccan culture, it is argued, shame is the most important form of social control, but it does not lead to the internalization of moral standards. This seems to explain all sorts of educational and behavioral problems of Moroccan youngsters at school and even the high delinquency rate of Moroccan boys who live in Belgian and Dutch cities. In this chapter these views are questioned on the basis of the expression of guilt themes on a projective test by Moroccan youngsters who live in the city of Brussels as well as on the basis of the analysis of cultural and linguistic data. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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Since the 1960s, when many Western European countries opened up their borders because of their need for cheap labor, Moroccans have become among the largest immigrant groups in Belgium. In 1991, 141,660 Moroccans were officially living in Belgium, of which more than half were residing in the capital, Brussels. All have obtained permanent residence status; return migration to Morocco is very rare. In the meantime, although labor immigration has been halted, a relatively young Moroccan population is increasing naturally.

The first generation was mainly of rural origin and only few had received any formal education. They were employed as unskilled workers. A second generation is now reaching adulthood and a third generation is being born. The second-generation immigrants are much less oriented toward the country of the parents' origin; at the same time, however, they do not always succeed in being integrated into European society.

Especially with regard to education and employment many Moroccan youngsters are faced with severe problems. Young male Moroccans are perceived by many social workers and teachers as being more problematic than other immigrants. Additionally, there are signs that Moroccans are meeting more and more discrimination and racism. In any case, where migrants “fit” within Western society has become a big issue in Belgium as well as in many other Western European countries. This has given rise to mass coverage in the press, a continuing political and public debate, and flowering scientific investigation. Society wants to know why certain migrants fail to be integrated, why they pose problems, and what can be done.

Quite a few publications in Dutch give a rather biased view about the way Moroccans come to abide general social and moral standards.<sup>1</sup> They state that Moroccan culture does not lead to the internalization of moral standards and that, therefore, Moroccans do not really have a sense of guilt. Instead, shame is much more developed and is found to be the most important form of social control. Many Dutch and Belgian social workers and teachers hold even more extreme views. In this chapter these views are questioned. The basis for questioning them comes from the expression of guilt themes on a projective test and an analysis of linguistic and cultural data.

Shame and guilt are emotions that regulate social behavior by inducing individuals to conform to certain standards. The two emotions can be situated in the individual self but manifest a concern for others. Theorists show considerable variation in their definitions of shame and guilt and do not always agree about the differences between the two emotions (Tangney & Fischer, 1995). However defined, shame and guilt seem to differ in important ways from culture to culture (Levy & Rosaldo, 1983).

A consensus seems to exist about the following aspects. Shame arises when the standards of proper public presentation are violated; it implies an external sanction. Guilt occurs when the rules imposed through a general ideology or religious system that has been internalized have been broken. Guilt implies harming someone and invites retribution and positive atonement. In the case of shame others are seen as spectators, whereas in the case of guilt they appear as sufferers from one's actions (Levy, 1983; Lebra, 1983). Shame relates to moral transgressions and personal defeats, whereas guilt only has to do with moral transgressions. Shame is directed to the shortcomings of the self, whereas guilt is directed to a negative occurrence for which one is responsible. Shame refers to a passive helpless self; guilt to an active self (Barrett, 1995).

Despite all cultural differences, the existence of guilt and shame as well as a tension between the two emotions is suggested to be universal (Levy, 1983). Even Shweder (1991), who is opposed to the idea of the psychic unity of mankind, does not rule out the possibility of the universal experience of “shame-guilt-terror.”

It is likely that external social control, based on shame, is more important in some cultures and contexts than in others. In the Mediterranean and the Middle East,

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<sup>1</sup> Dutch is the most spoken of the three official languages of Belgium, the others being French and German.

shame, together with the related principle of honor, seems to be a very important notion indeed (Peristiani, 1965; Jamous, 1981; Eickelman, 1989). What follows is a selection of quotations from a few of the anthropologists who have written on Morocco. They state, one more explicitly than the others, that external social control, based on shame, is more important for Moroccans than internal control, based on guilt:

Proper social comportment within this framework is symbolised by the concept of *theshsham*, or *hshumiya*. These terms approximate the English concept of *propriety* . . . . The locus of propriety is not so much the inner moral consciousness of a person as his public comportment with respect to those with whom he has regular face-to-face relations. A person is said to lack propriety when he is caught outside the image which he is expected to project of himself before “significant others” . . . . Among examples of impropriety are acts of adultery, homosexuality, or other illicit exploits, at least if they become publicly known; fighting in the street, being caught in the act of stealing; and various forms of deceit and exploitation. These are considered less as “immoral” than as “improper” acts. It is their public knowledge which is the subject of greatest concern, . . . (Eickelman, 1976, pp. 138–139).

Here, so to speak, he could lower his veil without subjecting himself to shame. (Both honor and shame have been held to be the principal regulators of social life in the Mediterranean world.) (Crapanzano, 1980, p. 13).

Indeed, as I have remarked with respect to the Hamadsha (Crapanzano, 1972, 1973), psychological guilt consequent upon the internalization of standards of moral behavior is not particularly in evidence. Given this “public” locus of propriety, public or semipublic exposure helps to insure reciprocation. (Crapanzano, 1980, p. 78)

One can relate this to Western concepts of guilt and shame, where guilt is internalized self-punishment but shame is imposed on one by others. In Morocco shame (*hshuma*) is the most common means of control of behavior, while very little guilt appeared to occur. A child did not feel “bad” about stealing something because one should not steal, but felt “bad” only if he was caught because then he would be publicly shamed. (Davis, 1982, p. 157).

Some authors who write on Moroccan immigrants in Belgium and the Netherlands seem inspired by these reflections. As the following quotations indicate, they go much further.<sup>2</sup> Moroccan youngsters are not only incapable of internalizing standards and feeling guilt, they also do not find truthfulness and honesty important and are unable to take personal responsibility.

We see that problems arise when youngsters come into contact with the Western legal system. The judge expects that they will recognize their failing, feel sorry, show compassion for their victim, feel guilt, but all these emotions are personal (C + D)

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<sup>2</sup> All quotations were translated from Dutch by the author.

feelings that only originate when one has learnt from experience (D). Even not all Dutch youngsters (C) always recognize these realities. A boy who has been brought up in an A culture will say: “It just happened. I got caught (and he is ashamed). Bad luck. My punishment was fair.” He has expiated and the case is over. About his deed he feels the same as a peasant who is butchering his rabbits. (Those who think I am expressing an evaluation, are not reading my words objectively, but are judging from the perspective of their own D culture) (Eppink, 1990, p. 38). (In the terms of the author A and B are collectivistic cultures such as the Moroccan culture, C and D are individualistic cultures. In A and C cultures the dominant communication code is implicit. This means the content of communication is subordinated to the existing relationship between the people who are communicating. In B and D cultures communication is explicit. Moroccan cultures can be characterized as A and B cultures, Western ones as C and D cultures).

Both (boys and girls) must come of age as soon as possible. But they must not become independent because the child stays under continuous surveillance. Radi says that for this reason the child will not get the possibility to internalize standards. I think he is right, but I also think that this is not necessary in the situation of small peasant community in the homeland (Eppink, 1990, p. 49).

Truthfulness and honesty are not determined objectively but are defined by the group. Honesty is not saying things as they actually are but is presenting your case in a way that your group will not be put to shame. Let me give an example. What is stealing? In our center we have had cases of small foreign children who pilfer. The child is quickly seen as dishonest when it does not confess. A child that has been brought up in an A culture will never admit “honestly” that it stole something. (which does not mean it will not return the object). Sometimes the teachers of the kindergarten tried to discuss the behavior of the child with its parents openly. In this way they make the behavior of the child explicit, which makes the parents lose face and means shame for the family. Not the fact that the child stole something is important; it is the teachers’ task to think up a punishment. But the fact that it is made public means such a shame for the family that the father has to punish his child very severely. We see two conceptions of honesty of which the child is the victim and neither child, parent, nor teacher have learnt anything for the future. In passing we remark that stealing can be seen in a different way by these parents, for instance as: from people who belong to an outgroup you may take things away (because there are no fixed rules about dealing with the outgroup, and in any case the outgroup will also try to deceive you when it gets the opportunity) ... (Eppink, 1990, pp. 69–70).

Feelings of personal responsibility or guilt are learnt in a very early stage in the West; in a collectivistic culture the group bears the responsibility. This also means that people here do not reflect about their own functioning (no explicit communication), which means that it is difficult to show parents their responsibilities. Neither the child holds any responsibilities. When it transgresses, it is corrected. The group, however, has to bear the shame (Eppink, 1990, pp. 70–71).

In an F culture people do not experience guilt because of their unacceptable behavior, but they feel ashamed when this behavior harms the group or tarnishes

their honor. In the competition between honor and justice, honor usually wins. Conscience functions differently in both cultures. When someone from a G culture gets found out lying, people will soon say he is a fibber. For people from an F culture this would be a dangerous interpretation, not to say a misinterpretation. In the Islamic culture theft is a very serious misdemeanor. Thus someone who stole something will deny it at any price because he is ashamed that he will be seen as a bad Muslim and not because he is feeling guilty (Banning, 1994, p. 47). (In the terms of the author F cultures are “finely meshed” non-Western traditional cultures such as the Moroccan one and G cultures are “coarsely meshed” modern Western cultures).

In the case of bad conduct by autochthonous people *guilt* must be emphasized: you ought to feel guilty because you betrayed someone’s confidence. But when dealing with Mediterraneans who behaved wrongly one must emphasize the *disgrace* (damage to the honor of the group or of the person in charge, usually the father), you bring shame upon someone or other (van der Werf, 1994, p. 100).

The high crime-rate of the Moroccan youth in the Netherlands is also sometimes explained in terms of the ascendancy of family-based shame over individual guilt (Eppink, 1992).

The image some Western social workers, therapists, and teachers have formed about Moroccans goes still further. This is clear from a study done in Brussels about the images teachers hold of their migrant students (Hermans, 1992). Indeed many held a very negative view about the moral consciousness of Moroccan youngsters.<sup>3</sup>

A school psychologist: “They possess a sort of social intelligence not one Belgian is up to. How they can negotiate and manipulate! Only a few days ago a Moroccan student was caught red-handed but he succeeded in evoking different hypotheses so in the end we were not certain anymore although we were sure he had done it!”  
 The head mistress of an elementary school: “Moroccan children lie an awful lot. Their parents tell them to be honest and not to lie, though. But I think Moroccan parents do not punish their children because they have stolen or lied, but because they got caught. So they do not teach them not to steal but not to get caught! They are embarrassed when I ask them to come to my office for such things. ‘Look what you have done. Because of your behavior we must come to the head mistress’. They do not like this. Belgians are different. And the thieving that goes on, even among themselves, it is outrageous!”

A secondary school teacher: “They come from such rotten backgrounds... their companions but also their homes.... Last year a group of youngsters operated as follows: two of them stole radios from cars while two others stood watch. A boy from my class bought these radios and sold them in his turn to his father, who worked in a flea market. They live in an awful environment. Not that they find

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<sup>3</sup> The following quotations were translated from Dutch or French by the author.

stealing is normal, but nearly. They are also always fighting. That is their world.”

Interviewer: “But in general parents will condemn stealing!”

The teacher: “I wonder. Does not Islam allow you to steal from unbelievers? The director says that they are taught never to admit they have done something, even if they are caught red-handed.”

A teacher: “It is impossible to work together with the Moroccan social worker of the integration center. They always blame the school if anything goes wrong. Moroccans do not have a sense of guilt. That is a known fact. I have also read it.”

A social worker of a community home: “Only with a very authoritarian approach can you keep Moroccan youngsters under control. As you know they do not have any feelings of guilt, they do not have an internalized conscience.”

In all these quotations it is asserted or implied that Moroccans only comply with norms because of fear for shame or punishment and not on the basis of respect for moral principles that have been internalized or of empathy for other human beings. These kinds of “insights” are often seen as proof of thoroughly knowing Moroccan culture by social workers and therapists. Moroccans (as well as other migrants) are contrasted clearly with Westerners.

Whoever argues that these cultural differences should not be valued shows perhaps his feeling for cultural relativism, but passes over some important consequences of his value judgment. After all, Western society does not take someone seriously who only can be controlled from without, has not internalized any moral standards, and shows no personal responsibility. Moreover, teachers and social workers view, at least implicitly, control based on the internalization of norms as “more developed” than that based on external sanctions, shame or praise. Also Piaget (1965) asserts, on the basis of his child studies, that the small child first develops a “heteronomic” morality and starts to internalize these rules and to develop an autonomous sense of morality only between the age of six and twelve.<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, Moroccans do not “develop” their morality further than Western children of six to twelve years.

It is of course not the first time cultures have been characterized as shame cultures in contrast to “Western guilt cultures.” The most famous instance is probably Ruth Benedict’s (1946) analysis of the Japanese. Despite the pervasiveness of shame in this culture, she was proved wrong. De Vos (1973) discovered a strong sense of guilt among the Japanese and Lebra (1983) even spoke about the primacy of guilt over shame in the Japanese culture. For both De Vos and Lebra the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) was important in revealing the presence of guilt.

### **1. The thematic apperception test (TAT)**

The use of the TAT to investigate the achievement motivation of Moroccan adolescents in Brussels yielded some clear guilt themes. Preliminary results did not

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<sup>4</sup> This point of view is not shared by everyone anymore. (Barrett, 1995, p. 27). Some authors stress that not only guilt but also shame is characterized by internalization (Harder, 1995, p. 373).

support the assumption that Moroccan culture does not lead to the internalization of moral standards and, therefore, Moroccans do not possess a sense of guilt. The TAT data were collected during an anthropological study of the education and integration of second-generation Moroccan adolescents in Brussels during the period 1988–1991 (Hermans, 1992). The study included young men who had succeeded well in their secondary education ( $N = 30$ ) and others who had not succeeded in their education at all ( $N = 40$ ),<sup>5</sup> Their mean age was 20 yr. The test was taken in French, a language in which all 70 young men were fluent.

When the TAT is used as an ethnographic instrument, an application pioneered by George De Vos (1973, 1989a, b), the stories the subjects tell in response to the pictures they are shown are generally not screened for latent and hidden psychodynamic contents or processes as when it is used in clinical work. Rather, their manifest content is codified in a systematic way in order to find out what kind of attitudes, concerns, interests, and interpersonal relations are important in the cultures under consideration. The validity and reliability of the information that has been gathered in this way can be questioned. In addition, the interpretation of the relative and absolute frequencies of themes poses problems, especially when comparing cultures. On the other hand, it can be argued that when a person recounts a story about guilt on the basis of an image that in itself does not display any guilt, one cannot deny that feelings of guilt belong to the emotional repertoire of this person and his or her culture.

The subjects were shown in the following plates:

1. a boy contemplating a violin that lies on a table in front of him,
2. a young woman carrying books while in the background a man is plowing and an older woman is looking on,
3. a person lying face down against a couch; beside him lies a revolver (3BM),
4. a woman clutching the shoulders of a man who seems to turn away,
5. an older woman standing with her back towards a man who is looking downcast (6M),
6. an older man looking at a younger one who is staring sullenly (7BM),
7. four men lying together on a field (9BM),
8. a man burying his head in his arm while in the background a woman is lying on a bed half naked (13MF); and
9. a scantily dressed man clinging to a rope (17MF).

## 2. Discussion of results

Guilt was projected especially on plates 3BM and 13MF. In Tables 1 and 2 an overview is given of the stories in which an explicit guilt or shame theme was expressed. Stories about wrong, criminal, or illicit behavior that is not followed by

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<sup>5</sup> The two groups did not really differ in their expression of shame and guilt and are therefore treated together.

Table 1

Summary of the themes relevant to guilt or shame in the stories in reaction to Plate 3BM ( $N = 70$ )

Theme	<i>N</i>	%
Criminal behavior followed by guilt	6	9
Criminal behavior followed by punishment	6	9
Criminal behavior followed by punishment and guilt	2	3
Guilt because of causing an accident	1	1

Examples of stories in reaction to Plate 3BM.

Criminal behavior followed by guilt: He is lying on his bed. A drug addict perhaps? He has done something, a murder or a theft. He feels remorse for what he has done.

Criminal behavior followed by punishment: A prisoner. He is unhappy in jail. There is not even room to sleep. He committed a crime or a theft.

Criminal behavior followed by punishment and guilt: That could be in prison. He is sleeping on the ground. Time passes by. A revolver? He committed a murder, didn't he? He did something wrong and regrets it. He will have to hide. He will never forget this. He must wipe it out, clean it up. But he will always remember it. Now he is lying there. He regrets what he has done.

Guilt because of causing an accident: He has caused an accident. He injured somebody in the leg. He has arrived home and started to cry. He feels guilty. He blames himself.

a guilt or shame theme are also given. All other themes such as bad luck, illness, rejection, and discord were not considered further. After each table a few typical stories are given.

After reading the stories appended to Tables 1 and 2, it is difficult to maintain the belief that these Moroccan adolescents do not have any sense of guilt. In fact, guilt themes are more prevalent than shame themes in reaction to these two plates.

In the stories about crime, the transgression is usually followed by guilt and punishment. For instance, most of the murder themes give rise to imprisonment and remorse. Even when the killing occurs as an act of vengeance for adultery, in which case it would be (have been) legitimate in traditional Morocco (Hart, 1976; Jamous, 1981), some adolescents still end the tale with remorse and punishment. This is strikingly illustrated in the following interpretation of plate 13MF.

She is dead. It is the wife of that man. He is crying. He loves his wife. They were happy together. I think he killed her. She had an affair with another man. Even we do not kill for this reason. One would repudiate a woman like her. If he has killed her, he will have to go to prison. He will be tried. The judges will decide. In Morocco too, if you've done something wrong, you will have to pay for it.

Illicit sexual behavior, however, does not lead to the expression of many feelings of guilt or shame for these adolescents. In this respect their stories on the TAT differ from those of the Irish youth studied by Scheper-Hughes (1979). According to Naamane-Guessous (1990), however, shame and also forthright guilt about (not only illicit) sex haunt many Moroccan girls and women and constitute a heavy burden on their sexual lives.

Table 2

Summary of the themes relevant to guilt or shame in the stories in reaction to Plate 13MF ( $N = 70$ )

Theme	<i>N</i>	%
Murder followed by guilt	11	16
Illicit sexual relations without further consequences	7	10
Murder followed by punishment from outside	6	9
Murder without further consequences	3	4
Illicit sexual relations followed by shame	2	3
Murder followed by guilt and shame	1	1
Illicit sexual relations followed by guilt	1	1
Illicit sexual relations followed by guilt and shame	1	1

## Examples of stories in reaction to plate 13MF

Murder followed by guilt: That makes me think of a murder. Burying his head in his arm gives me the impression that he regrets what he has done. He is crying. He is completely out of his mind. He is going to turn himself in. It wasn't a murder in cold blood. He must have been enraged.

That woman is dead. And that guy just killed her. He is horror struck. He will turn himself in, I think. He loathes what he has done and he will go to the police.

He strangled his wife. He already regrets it. He was an impulsive man. He strangled her. He found out that she deceived him. He already feels remorse. He committed a stupidity and he is going to add a second one: he will commit suicide.

Murder followed by guilt and shame: Did he kill somebody? He killed a woman. He is embarrassed because of the murder he has just committed. His future does not look bright. He will rack his brains over what he has done. I think that when you kill somebody you won't sleep well.

Murder followed by punishment: That's a man who came home to find his wife in the act of having an affair with another man. He killed her immediately. It wasn't a good marriage and now she even deceived him. He will get caught and be judged. He thought: "I would rather spend the rest of my life in prison than live such a life. The poor fellow had nothing more to lose."

Murder without further consequences: He just kills women. So it is important not to leave any clues. It depends on himself, how he murdered the woman, if he will get caught or not.

Illicit sexual relations followed by guilt: A student who seduced a girl. He made her lose her virginity. He feels bad about it now. But it is also her fault. She shouldn't have gone with him.

Illicit sexual relations followed by shame: That's a chap who just went to bed with his wife! What are you showing me? (Expressing mock indignation and shame). The man is tired; that's the way he carried on. He is the kind of fellow who does nothing else than chase women.

Illicit sexual relations followed by guilt and shame: In a hotel room. The man is not proud of what he has done. He has deceived his wife. Now he's horrified. He sees he did wrong. He feels remorse. He will not start again.

Illicit sexual relations without further consequences: They have just made love. He is already dressed. He is going to leave. Life with his own wife does not please him much. He often has affairs with other women. He is only interested in his own pleasure. Tomorrow he will do the same.

For these adolescents, stories about negative or passive achievement motivation and competence, namely not wanting to or not being able to study (especially plates 1 and 2), were not accompanied with guilt or shame themes. Dedication towards their studies apparently is not seen by these adolescents as a duty towards parents, family or community, as is the case with the Latin American adolescents studied by Suárez-Orozco (1989). This was confirmed by the material from the interviews in this study: not doing well at school was not perceived as being unloyal towards the family.

This did not mean that they did not feel responsible for their achievements at school. They linked educational success and failure first and foremost to themselves. Those adolescents who did well at school mainly reported their own dedication and the stimulation by their parents as reason for their success. In contrast, those who failed blamed in the first place their own lack of commitment and interest. They did not refer to factors relating to language, parents, friends, school, or society to rationalize their failing.<sup>6</sup>

Although doing well at school is not seen as an abstract duty to the family, some parents did appeal to the feelings of guilt of their sons to urge them to study well. They did this by showing how much they suffered because their son was wasting his future. One of the adolescents said:

My father wanted me to become an accountant. I was studying accountancy. It killed him when I failed. He cried. My mother told me: ‘You just don’t care, but look at your father, he is in bed, crying.’

Neither plate 6BM nor 7BM provoked many explicit guilt or shame themes.

Guilt, however, could be inferred from those stories in which a son, after a conflict or argument with his father or mother, began to think better of his course of action. About 20% of the stories on plate 6BM are about a mother who is angry with her son because of his bad conduct. This is often followed by repentance and improvement of the son:

This boy failed in his studies and his mother tells him: ‘If only you would have worked, if only you would have... but you did nothing, you’re an ass.’ Because of his mother, he starts to think and perhaps he will look for a job to help his parents.

In 48 of the 70 stories (69%) in reaction to plate 7BM a father is giving good advice to his son. In 33 cases the son follows this advice, in 15 he does not. But in five of these last cases the son regrets his conduct and repents. Repentance and redress take the form of the son helping and caring for his parents in their old age:

An older person is giving advice to a younger one. But the young one is skeptical. He doesn’t believe a word of it. He does it his own way. He has his own ideas and won’t depart from them. But later on, he will regret that he didn’t listen to his father.

The older one says to the younger one: ‘I did tell you!’ They aren’t pleased. The young one did not follow the advice of his father and now he has to admit that his father was right. He repents and decides to take care of his parents in their old age.

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<sup>6</sup> Of course this does not mean that I think that these factors are not important. Some boys in fact did speak about the role of society. They said that western society left them much too free. Moroccan parents also express this reproach. At the same time teachers say Moroccan parents give their sons too much freedom. So external control is seen as important by both Moroccan parents and Belgian teachers.

### 3. Shame and guilt: an analysis of some cultural and linguistic data

These findings might give the impression that in Moroccan culture guilt is mainly a subconscious phenomenon that only surfaces in projective tests. This consideration prompted an examination of some common Moroccan Arabic concepts and expressions and to reconsider them in terms of shame and guilt.

The word “shame” (*hshumiya*, *heshma*, *hshuma*) is used very much by Moroccans. *Hshumiya* refers to propriety, respect, discretion, and embarrassment. The expression *hshuma`alik* (you ought to be ashamed) is used all the time among Moroccans. It is said to children as well as adults when they do something that is wrong, embarrassing, or inappropriate. *Hshumiya* is defined as only applying to observable behavior and is as such more an external judgment by society of one’s actions than something felt only internally and individually by a person (Davis, 1982; Eickelman, 1976). Shame is indeed pervasive in Moroccan culture.<sup>7</sup>

Conversely, Moroccan Arabic does not, it seems, have a word that can unambiguously be translated as guilt.<sup>8,9</sup> Terms such as *denb* (sin), *ghalta* (fault, mistake), *khta* (to make a mistake), *dlem* (to be unjust to), *lum* (blame, reproach), *tab*, *ndem* (to regret, to feel sorry, to feel remorse), *din* (debt) and their derivatives can designate guilt (in the legal as well as the moral sense) and feelings of guilt. Indirect expressions are also used such as *bqa fiya el hal* (literally, “The situation stayed in me,” meaning “I did something wrong that weighs on my conscience”).

Several concepts imply feelings of guilt, an internalized moral code, personal responsibility, retribution, and atonement. For starters, the notion *haqq* (true, real, correct, just, necessary, obligatory, responsibility, duty) refers to a concept of absolute reality. *Haqq* is deeply moralized. Moroccans condemn lying highly and they are obsessed with its malignity (Geertz, 1979). With relation to stealing, similar considerations exist. This only makes sense in the context of a moral code that is internalized by many people.

‘Aql (reason, control) refers to the capacity of human beings to act rationally and to keep their passions under control. By following God’s word people acquire this ability. This enables them to distinguish good from evil and to have effective social interaction with other human beings. Children become more *m’aqul* (serious, reasonable) by means of maturation and disciplining (Geertz, 1979; Eickelman, 1989). This implies at least some sort of internalization of moral and religious standards.

The concept *niya* (intention) refers to the inner state of a person, to the good-will with which actions are undertaken. Only God knows the intentions of a person directly, but via his words and deeds someone’s intentions can become clear to other

<sup>7</sup> This makes it surprising that the tested subjects did not express more shame themes in their TAT stories.

<sup>8</sup> In Standard Arabic, “feelings of guilt” can be translated as *sh’ur bi dhenb*. But again the primary meaning of *dhenb* is sin.

<sup>9</sup> According to Shweder (1991, p. 242) lexical studies can be misleading. Also Tahitians, for instance, experience guilt but do not have a term to denote it and seldom speak about it.

people (Rosen, 1989). This concept also implies the internalization of a moral code. It is used, for instance, to distinguish inherently good actions from those that are merely done to comply with the expectations of other people.

The concept *mes.uliya* (responsibility) also refers to a general or at least particularistic family-oriented moral code. The notion of remorse (*tuban, ndama*) is not unknown in Moroccan Arabic. However, just as in our own speech it is not easy to distinguish real “perfect” remorse from the sorrow or suffering about the inopportune consequences of actions undertaken.

Most of the above-mentioned concepts relate to Islam. Of course, the notion of a universal moral code is as important in this religion as it is in many others. In this respect ideas such as justice, honesty, solidarity, responsibility, intention, guilt, sin, remorse, repentance, and penitence are crucial.

Finally the expression “*smahli*” (sorry, excuse me, pardon me) is not without reference to guilt. On the one hand, it is very often used as a mere formality. On the other, it is also used to express remorse, to ask for forgiveness, and to make amends.

The presence of guilt in Moroccan culture is obscured by at least two facts. First, in a culture where religion constitutes the dominant system of meaning, much of the thinking and reasoning about familial, social, and political life, but especially about moral matters, is cast in religious terms (i.e., transgression of religious rules and of a punishing God) rather than in terms of guilt as such. Second, the constant reference to shame is probably not without relation to guilt. The gaze of the other turns the offenders’ attention to his inner self. He is forced to look at himself, to take his responsibility and make amends (see also Lebra, 1984).

Thus although on an explicit level shame is much more visible in Moroccan culture than guilt, it is clear that guilt does exist in Moroccan culture. However, guilt partly takes other forms, is differently expressed, and is related to other domains than it is in Western cultures. There are, for instance, indications that it is sometimes imbedded in a particularistic family-oriented morality,<sup>10</sup> that it is more enmeshed with shame and more often expressed in religious terms. In addition, it is less related to sex and school achievement, at least for young men.

Having demonstrated the existence of guilt in Moroccan culture, it is possible, however, that Moroccan youngsters who live in Europe feel and express less guilt than could be expected of them because of their specific situation. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the integration of young Moroccans into Belgian society is not always, to say the least, running smoothly. Discrimination is a reality.

The school achievements of Moroccan youngsters are low and their chances in the labor market are even lower than can be expected on the basis of the state of their

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<sup>10</sup> Feelings of guilt concerning family members, especially the father and the mother, were also evident in another context. In my psychotherapeutic work, extreme guilt, probably underlying the psychosomatic complaints they sought help for, was revealed among Moroccan patients who had not looked after a parent or had not been able to do so due to circumstances. For instance, one woman felt very guilty because she had not helped her sick mother to come to Belgium to have a necessary operation. A man developed extreme feelings of guilt because the children of his first marriage lost their residency rights in Belgium after he had sent them back to Morocco when he married for a second time.

education (Dagevos & Veenman, 1996; Goris, 1997). Young Moroccans who live in the marginalized quarters of the city of Brussels in particular feel that they are discriminated against, that they are targeted by the police, and they are unjustly treated by the authorities (De Rycke & Swyngedouw, 1997). In situations like these, it is not surprising that being aggressive or dishonest towards members of the dominant society does not entail much guilt.

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