



Inappropriate emotions, marginalization, and feeling better

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Abstract

A growing body of work argues that we should reform problematic emotions like anxiety, anger, and shame: doing this will allow us to better harness the contributions that these emotions can make to our agency and wellbeing. But feminist philosophers worry that prescriptions to correct these inappropriate emotions will only further marginalize women, minorities, and other members of subordinated groups. While much in these debates turns on empirical questions about how we can change problematic emotion norms for the better, to date, little has been done by either side to assess how we might do this, much less in ways that are responsive to the feminists' worries. Drawing on research in cognitive science, this paper argues that though the feminists' worries are real, the leading proposals for remedying them are inadequate. It then develops an alternative strategy for reshaping problematic emotion norms—one that's sensitive to the feminists' concerns.

There's been a surge of philosophers singing the praises of the value that negative emotions can have for social and moral life. Of course, these advocates are aware that anger, anxiety, shame, and the like can misfire, sometimes badly. But they insist that we should identify occasions where these emotions are inappropriate (in some sense of that word) so that we can change, quell, cultivate, or otherwise transform them for the better.¹ The upshot of these prescriptions for reform (as I will call them) is optimism about our ability to feel better—feel in ways that contribute to our agency, virtue, and wellbeing.

But this optimism aside, prescriptions for reform raise concerns among feminist philosophers as well as those working on gender, race, and disability more generally

¹ See, for instance, Shoemaker 2018; Kauppinen 2018; Kurth 2018a, 2018b; Nussbaum 2013; Bell 2013; Pettigrove 2012; Mason 2010; Manion 2002; and Kekes 1996. As will become clearer below, there is significant diversity in both the emotions that these advocates for emotional reform discuss and the corrections they call for.

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(e.g., Srinivasan 2018, Thomason 2018, Gotlib 2020). Though there are important differences in these worries, the core issue is this: the charge that one's emotions are inappropriate and so in need of correction not only falls disproportionately on women, minorities, and other members of subordinated groups, but does so in ways that bring about *further* marginalization.

These marginalization worries raise serious issues. And so in the absence of a response to them we should be skeptical of—even reject—both the appeals to correct our inappropriate negative emotions and the associated optimism that advocates project about the role of these emotions for social and moral life. But assessing this disagreement is complicated for two reasons. First, there isn't a univocal sense in which the various prescriptions for reform deem negative emotions to be inappropriate. As a result, we do not have a clear picture of what—*exactly*—the prescriptions for reform are directing us to do. This in turn leaves us without an adequate understanding of the problems that the marginalization worries aim to highlight. Making matters worse, criticisms of prescriptions for reform have been developed largely in isolation of each other and for a wide range of emotions, thus compounding the challenge of specifying the harms that feminists and others are rightly concerned about.

Second, questions about whether and how to transform, quell, or cultivate emotions are—in large part—empirical questions: questions that rely on claims about our ability to shape the emotion norms that undergird our assessments of (in)appropriateness. But some recent exceptions aside (e.g., Archer & Mills 2019; Liebow & Glazer 2019; Kurth 2018a), much of the debate over prescriptions for reform has not considered what cognitive science says about how we might change emotion norms—let alone in ways that are sensitive to the marginalization worries.

In what follows, I argue that we need to substantively rethink how we appraise and respond to the emotions felt by the marginalized members of our communities: not only are our current practices harmful, as the marginalization worries reveal, but we can—and *should*—do better. In making these claims about the need to change how we react to the emotions of others, my principal targets are the members of the dominant groups that make the prescriptions for reform. But because all of us have some tendency to assess and respond to the emotions of others in ways that can be problematic, the lessons of the discussion here also have broader application.

To develop this argument, I move in three steps. The first step is conceptual. I review the prescriptions for reform and the concerns that have been raised about them in order to sharpen our understanding of what's at issue. In brief, the marginalization worries reveal a distinctive unfairness in the norms governing emotions like anger, anxiety, and shame (§ 1). Step two brings a critical eye to recent suggestions for how we might avoid the harms that prescriptions for reform can bring: while these proposals are right to target the emotion norms driving the harms, they neglect what cognitive science tells us about how we can change these problematic norms for the better (§ 2). The final step is constructive. I begin by looking at what empirical work tells us about how norms are acquired, sustained, and revised in the mind in order to both get a deeper understanding of why existing proposals are unlikely to succeed and to shed light on what a better alternative might look like (§ 3). Using these insights, I sketch a new strategy for addressing the problems that the marginalization worries bring to

light, one that takes into account the empirical lessons from step two, but also the conceptual lessons from step one (§ 4).

1 Prescriptions for Reform and the Harms They Bring

Feminist philosophers have long been concerned about the emotion-based harms that are inflicted on members of subordinated groups. But the recent marginalization worries go beyond these. To better understand what's distinctive about these concerns, and to better see what's at issue in debates about prescriptions for reform, some background will be helpful.

We can start with the distinction between emotions, on the one hand, and the norms regarding when and how it is appropriate (in some sense of appropriate) to experience a particular emotion, on the other. Given this distinction, a token emotion episode can be (in)appropriate given the prevailing norms. Moreover, while emotions themselves may not be socially constructed, the prevailing emotion norms—that is, the norms concerning (e.g.) when an emotion is appropriate and how to respond to inappropriate emotions—certainly are.² In the eyes of feminist philosophers, recognizing this is important. If emotion norms are socially constructed, then they will tend to reflect the beliefs and values of the socially and politically dominant group; and for this reason, the beliefs and values of the dominant group will tend to be the ones that shape what individuals feel and how they assess those feelings.³

From this, feminists take two things to follow. First, emoting will often be political. Being perceived as feeling anger (or shame or anxiety or...) opens you to normative assessment. But since the underlying emotion norms will tend to circumscribe power relations between individuals—in particular, the power relations between those who are members of the dominant group and those who are not—the resulting assessments will reflect and work to enforce those relationships. Second, if there are differences in how dominant and subordinate groups tend to express their emotions—or, importantly, even if there are false perceptions of this—then emoting turns out to be not just political, but an avenue leading toward increased marginalization. Here's how Elizabeth Spelman brings these points together. Focusing on anger, she notes that.

while members of subordinate groups are expected to be emotional, indeed to have their emotions run their lives, their anger will not be tolerated: the possibility of their being angry will be excluded by the dominant group's profile of them. ... [A]nything resembling anger is likely to be reduced to hysteria or rage instead. (Spelman 1989: 264; also: Lorde 1997; Cherry 2018)

² Some feminist see emotions as social constructions (e.g., Jaggar 1989; Fricker 1991), though not all do (e.g., Spelman 1989). Constructivism is a controversial theory of emotion and, for our purposes, assessing its merits is not a project we need to take up—for the marginalization worries that follow are largely independent of questions regarding the metaphysics of emotion. For concerns about constructivist accounts, see Kurth 2019.

³ Witness Alison Jaggar: "Whatever our sex, we are likely to feel contempt for women" (1989: 165). Also, Cherry 2018.

But there is a further issue here insofar as calls to change, suppress, or cultivate inappropriate emotions can also *magnify* the marginalization concerns that Spelman and others have identified.⁴ This is where the more recent concerns about prescriptions for reform enter the picture.

To help draw out the range of worries that have been raised, we should first note that talk of emotions as inappropriate or unfitting is systematically ambiguous (D'Arms & Jacobson 2000). For instance, in saying that your anxiety is inappropriate, I could mean at least three things. First, I might mean that it is *imprudent*—e.g., feeling anxiety about your upcoming exam is just going to keep you from doing well. Alternatively, I might mean it's *morally* problematic, as was the Duke of Wellington's anxiety about freeing slaves "before they were civilized" (Debates in Parliament 1833). Finally, in saying your anxiety is unfitting, I might be saying something more *emotion-specific*. Your anxiety about whether you cleaned the kitchen counter is unfitting in this emotion-specific sense because your situation is not as your anxiety presents it to be: you do not face a truly worrisome situation. Because prescriptions for reform sometimes slide between these senses of inappropriate, it's important to fix our language; in what follows, my talk of (un)fitting or (in)appropriate emotions will refer to cases of this last sort; other cases will be referred to as imprudent or immoral where context doesn't make the contrast clear.⁵

Against this backdrop, we can distinguish three broad harms that feminists' marginalization worries draw to the surface. Doing this will clarify what's at issue in these debates. To preview: we will see that problems arise for a wide range of emotions and do so in ways that cannot be resolved just by being careful about the specific sense in which we think a given emotional episode is inappropriate.

Harm 1: Forced into a hard choice. Consider a woman who is angry about the harassment she faces at work. Though her colleague tells her that she is right to be mad, he also insists that she needs to set her anger aside—it will just make things worse. Prescriptions for reform like these are pervasive. We see them made not just in the workplace, but also by philosophers, other academics, and public intellectuals. So, for instance, we have Glen Pettigrove maintaining that "the person who does not grow angry when she is being maligned ... will have less cause for distraction and, on that ground alone, will be better positioned to focus on promoting common goods" (2012: 347; also Nussbaum 2016, 2013). As Pettigrove see it, the person who shows—not anger—but meekness in the face of moral injury will be better off all things considered.

Of course, there's something to this reasoning: if fitting negative emotions like anger, shame, and anxiety can be counterproductive, and if we can get (most of) the

⁴ While the focus has been on negative emotions, Miranda Fricker's discussion of humor (1991: 17) shows that this worry has broader scope.

⁵ There's a complication here that I will note, and then set aside. In these debates, the emotions in question are often presented as essentially *moral emotions* or as having distinctly *moral forms* (e.g., Srinivasan 2018, Shoemaker 2018, Kurth 2015, Manion 2002). In these cases, the distinction between fitting and morally appropriate emotions collapses—though the ambiguity, and so the need to distinguish between fitting/morally appropriate emotions and prudentially appropriate ones, remains. There are, of course, important questions about whether there are—in fact—essentially moral emotions and how to cleave the moral versions in a principled manner. But those are issues for another time.

benefits at a lower cost, then why shouldn't we reform our emotions? What's the harm in calling for change? In response, Amia Srinivasan explains that in cases like these, the target of the prescription for reform is forced to make a difficult choice: in being told to quell her emotion, she must choose between following the reasons that tell for expressing her anger (her emotion *is* fitting) and following the reasons that tell for acting prudentially (expressing anger here could make the situation worse). The choice is difficult because whatever she decides, she must go against some of the reasons she has.

Moreover, though Srinivasan's focus is the anger of subordinated individuals, the worry she raises carries over to other negative emotions like shame and anxiety—for here too we find similar calls to replace fitting, but imprudent, emotions with something more productive.⁶ In all these cases, the “conflict is not merely psychically painful; it is a genuine normative conflict, a conflict involving competing and significant goods that often feel incomparable” (Srinivasan 2018: 133; also, Lorde 1997; Collins 1990; Cherry 2018; McRae 2018; Archer & Mills 2019). This, in short, is the harm that comes when prescriptions for reform force marginalized individuals to choose between values they hold deeply.

Harm 2: Targeting. Turn now to the second harm that prescriptions for reform can bring. In contrast to the above case where the emotion was fitting but imprudent, this second harm concerns emotions that are (or are thought to be) unfitting. Consider an example. A disfigured man is ashamed of his looks. Though his shame is unfitting (there's nothing shameful about his injury), labeling his feelings inappropriate—and so in need of change—will now (inadvertently) incline those critical of him to look for further faults and deficiencies (e.g., speculations that he probably did something to deserve the injury). Thus, we have a situation where someone who is already marginalized will now tend to become the target of further criticism.⁷ Moreover, and as this example suggests, these further criticisms will often have nothing to do with the targeted person's inappropriate emotion. The initial criticism, in a sense, *spreads*—inflicting others' perceptions of the person's character more generally.

In one way, this is surprising; but, in another, it's not. Shame's connections to character assessment are well-known: those who are ashamed of their wrongs and failings are typically seen as more (morally) admirable than those who feel no shame (e.g., Kekes 1996, Calhoun 2004, Thomason 2018). But situations like the above (where marginalized individuals are targeted) are importantly different in two ways: the shame is deemed *inappropriate*, and it's felt by someone with *subordinated status*. This combination then brings, not a positive character assessment, but rather the *targeting* that spreads the initial assessment of deficiency. In short, these harms are driven by the underlying emotion norms: the norms concerning the appropriateness of shame are intertwined with norms that guide our responses to inappropriate instances of the emotion. Moreover, in cases of inappropriate shame felt by marginalized indi-

⁶ Ketes (1996) and Tangney (1995) recommend replacing shame with guilt; Kurth (2018a: 188) discusses the suggestion that anxiety be replaced with curiosity.

⁷ See Calhoun 2004 and Thomason 2018 for versions of this worry that are substantiated by, e.g., the autobiographical accounts of individuals who have experienced this type of targeting. Also see Harbin 2016 for a similar discussion and defense of the targeting experienced when a marginalized individual experiences inappropriate anxiety.

viduals, these norms counsel harsher, more character encompassing consequences. In this regard, shame is not unique. As the earlier observations from Spelman reveal, the norms for anger are similarly structured, calling for harsher treatment of the already marginalized. In the same vein, Ami Harbin notes that, given the prevailing norms, the anxieties and disorientations felt by subordinated individuals are “more likely to be seen as their own fault” (2016: 155).

Harm 3: Discounted agency. Turning to an example of the final harm, consider a woman who tends to be anxious and who has recently started having reasonable worries about her career. Seeing her current bout of anxiety, her boss condescendingly tells her that she needs to work on being less anxious and asks why women like her are so easily worried about trivial matters. In saying this, the boss communicates something negative to the woman, though what exactly is communicated, and why it’s harmful, can vary. There are two main possibilities.

First, as the result of her boss’s comments, the woman suffers an affront to her *epistemic* standing—what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls testimonial injustice. Her boss dismisses her legitimate worries on the basis of her gender, and in so doing undermines her status as a knower—in his eyes, her concerns are of no concern.⁸ Second, in telling the woman to get over her anxiety, the boss undermines her *moral* standing: his directive implies not just that she is worse off because of her anxieties (a claim about her wellbeing), but that if she doesn’t take action to address these episodes, it will reflect badly on her as a person (a moral claim) (Gotlib 2020). Here the harm is akin to what philosophers of disability are concerned with in debates about, e.g., cochlear implants and face transplants. We undermine a person’s moral standing when we deem those who don’t act to correct their disabilities to be deficient: they’re not doing what they ought to do as a self-respecting, autonomous individuals (Christiansen & Leigh 2002; Freeman & Abou Laoudé 2007). Moreover, as with the first two harms, the damage done to an individual’s (epistemic, moral) standing that we see here results from emotion norms that take the combination of the assessment of a person’s emotion as inappropriate and that person’s subordinate status to sanction a distinctive response—in this case, the discounting of the person’s agency.

What general insights can we draw from the emerging picture of the harms that prescriptions for reform can bring? Two lessons are particularly relevant for our purposes.

(1) We get some clarity on what unifies the trio of feminist worries. Each of these harms results from directives that are *unfair*, though there are important differences in the underlying sources of the unfairness. More specifically, the prescriptions for reform are unfair because they’re shaped by emotion norms sanctioning harsher treatment on the basis of one’s subordinated status. Thus, the unfairness of the hard choice harm stems from emotion norms that disregard the importance that marginalized individuals place in expressing their emotions. The unfairness of the targeting harm comes from norms that mark the inappropriate emotions of marginalized indi-

⁸ As we will see below (§ 4), these affronts to one’s epistemic standing (and the harms from prescriptions for reform more generally) can be magnified in situations where the targets of the prescriptions lack the conceptual resources to identify or understand the harm done. This is what Fricker (2007) calls hermeneutical injustice.

viduals as indicative of a more deeply damaged character. And, finally, the unfairness of affronts to one's standing results from norms that discount the epistemic or moral agency of marginalized individuals who express inappropriate emotions.

But these differences aside, we also find a deeper set of affinities. First, the unfairness we see results from structural features. Specifically, the underlying *emotion norms* embed assumptions that reflect prevailing social views about gender, race, and the like. Second, these structural problems are exacerbated by ignorance, even indifference (Mills 2007, Spelman 2007): our emotion norms, the assumptions they embed, and their effects on us are all things that we are—at best—only vaguely aware of (more on this in § 3); and since these norms reflect our social mores, even if we do recognize that, say, we treat angry men differently than angry women, we may not see this as a problem.

(2) The harms here are pervasive, more so than we likely realize. Prescriptions for reform are made by folk and philosophers alike. While much of the attention has focused on prescriptions regarding anger and shame, we've seen that calls to reform anxiety are likely just as problematic, if not more so. After all, anxiety (but not anger or shame) is an emotion with well-known connections to pathologies (e.g., social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder). So it seems particularly susceptible to affronts to one's moral standing of the sort noted above.

2 Assessing Existing Remedies

Given both the significant harms that prescriptions for reform can bring, and the fact that their effects can be magnified, various remedies have been proposed. Looking at these will not only help us see what they get right—namely, targeting the problematic emotion norms that underlie prescriptions for reform—but also reveal their limitations. In brief, each of the proposals makes psychological assumptions that lack empirical support. Getting clearer on these limitations will allow us to develop (in § 4) better responses to the harms that the marginalization worries pick out.

Proposal 1: Burden shifting. The first strategy aims to turn the tables on the unfairness brought by prescriptions for reform. Its starting place is the observation that since those making the prescriptions are the ones doing the harm, they're the ones who need to change their ways.

In the literature, this proposal has been made in response to marginalization worries associated with the first type of harm—those resulting from calls to quell counterproductive emotions (e.g., Archer & Mills 2019; Liebow & Glazer 2019). It begins by noting that, since controlling one's emotions is hard work, these prescriptions for reform demand that the already marginalized take on further burdens. Not only is this unfair, but it overlooks the role that those doing the prescribing have in making expressions of these emotions counterproductive. For instance, an African-American's anger at being slighted is counterproductive in large part because of the “emotional fragility” of members of the dominant group (typically, white individuals).⁹ But if that's the problem, then the solution “will be that white people will get better

⁹ The term “emotional fragility” comes from Liebow & Glazer 2019.

at emotion regulation so that victims of racial oppression are no longer saddled with the task of regulating their appropriate emotions to placate white people” (Archer & Mills 2019: § 5.2; also Liebow & Glazer 2019: 14–15).

Moreover, advocates of the burden shifting strategy typically offer concrete, empirically-informed proposals about what the emotionally fragile should do to better regulate their emotions. So, for instance, Nabina Liebow and Trip Glazer maintain that those prone to fragility should engage in emotion regulation strategies like perspective-taking and reappraisal. When, say, confronted by an African-American’s anger at being slighted, they should “consid[er] how an impartial bystander would assess the situation” (Liebow & Glazer 2019: 16) or try to reappraise the situation as a learning opportunity—they aren’t being challenged, but rather given “an opportunity for self-improvement” (17).

There’s much that is right in this proposal: it matches the responsibility for redress to the harm done and research shows that, generally speaking, the regulation strategies proposed are effective in moderating unproductive emotional responses (e.g., Sheppes & Gross 2012). However, in the present context there’s reason to doubt both the proposal’s scope and effectiveness.

First, consider scope. To the extent that the burden shifting proposal is effective, it’s so as a tool for affecting change in the emotions of the (fragile) prescribers of reform. But while we’ve seen that there’s a place for such interventions in the counterproductive cases, the needed fulcrum for change appears to be missing when the problem concerns cases that involve being targeted or that bring affronts to the standing of marginalized individuals: after all, in these situations, there’s no obvious emotional response in those prescribing reform that’s akin to the fragility that we find in the counterproductive cases.¹⁰

Second, there’s reason to question whether the proposed emotion regulation strategies will work even in cases that involve emotional fragility. For starters, while reappraisal is generally effective, research indicates that it’s most effective in response to low-intensity emotional responses, not the high-intensity situations characteristic of emotional fragility (Sheppes & Gross 2012).¹¹ More troublingly, some studies suggest that when reappraisal is used for high-intensity emotional episodes, it can *exacerbate* the issues that it’s meant to address (Sheppes & Meiran 2007).

But setting aside specific concerns about reappraisal, there’s reason to question the effectiveness of the burden shifting strategy in general. To see why, first recall that the strategy calls on the perpetrators of the unfairness (white individuals or whomever) to change their ways. In so doing, it relies on them having—and sustaining—a motivation to change even when doing so will be difficult or unpleasant.¹² However, that presumption runs counter to deep features of human psychology. As research on

¹⁰ Of course having narrow scope is not, in itself, a problem for the burden shifting proposal. Rather, the observation that it does not generalize is a reflection of the largely siloed manner in which discussions of marginalization worries have taken place in the literature. Thus, it points to the need for a comprehensive examination of the sort developed here.

¹¹ Advocates of the burden shifting approach acknowledge the intensity of fragility cases: Liebow and Glazer, for instance, note that “white fragility can trigger *strong feelings* of anger, frustration, disgust, guilt, aggression, loathing, or hostility” (Liebow & Glazer 2019: 3, emphasis added).

¹² Madva (2017: 157) is explicit about this. Also see Liebow & Glazer 2019 and Moskowitz 2010.

a wide range of issues—from diversity training to collective action problems to the challenges of addressing climate change—makes plain, people resist doing things that they find unpleasant, whose payoffs are diffuse or temporally distant, and where their responsibility for the harm is opaque (e.g., Dobbin & Kalev 2018; Gardiner 2011; Thaler & Sunstein 2009).

Of course, some will be motivated to engage in practices that will enhance their capacity for emotion regulation. But it's much less clear whether they will be able to *sustain* this. For starters, and as we will see in greater detail below, even those who are both motivated to change and have had some success in doing this will still tend to revert to their old ways in the face of stress, distractions, and the like (Huebner 2016; Crockett 2013; Schwabe & Wolf 2013). Moreover, while surmounting these motivational challenges is possible, we're likely to only see limited improvements. After all, effectively deploying individualistic emotion regulation strategies like reappraisal and perspective-taking is a complex skill. But developing expertise of this sort is not a matter of just learning a couple of tricks (e.g., doing some perspective-taking exercises). Rather, it's a process underwritten by what John Doris (2021) calls the lotta-little principle: complex skill acquisition requires bringing together a wide range of capabilities, each one of which makes only a small contribution to one's overall competence. Thus, the success we see from individual initiative will be hard won: small improvements may come to many, but significant change will be rare.

So while the burden shifting proposal is right that properly allocating burdens means that the emotionally fragile must do more, it fails to appreciate the severe limitations that psychology places on our ability to substantively change our ways.

Proposal 2: Make emoting less costly. The lessons learned from looking at the burden shifting proposal suggest that we'd do better to consider strategies with broader application and that rely less on an individual's ability to sustain motivations for change. The second proposal can be viewed as aiming to do this. In contrast to the burden shifting proposal, the principal target of the second strategy is not (at least not in the first place) the dominant members of society that cause the harms, but rather the practice itself. In particular, it calls on us to revise our existing emotion norms to make expressing inappropriate emotions more acceptable. This shift in focus from individuals to norms is significant insofar as it means that this less costly proposal (as I will call it) is likely better positioned to avoid the problems of the burden shifting strategy.

Turning to details, first consider Amia Srinivasan's version of the proposal. She focuses on anger, arguing that in order to make it easier for marginalized individuals to express inappropriate anger (understood here as anger that is counterproductive), we must correct the emotion norms that make those emotional expressions so costly. Specifically, "we should make anger less counterproductive by dissolving the false dichotomy between anger and reason" (2018: 142). Martha Nussbaum makes a similar suggestion with regard to shame. As we saw in the above discussion of harm 2 (§ 1), the tendency for individuals who experience inappropriate shame to become targets for further criticism can be magnified when the shame is experienced by a member of a marginalized group. Focusing on the shame and targeting that individuals with disabilities experience, Nussbaum locates the problem in beliefs that conflate *normative assessments* of individuals as disabled with *factual judgments* about their

statistically atypical capacities: it's because our emotion norms rest on this conflation that they sanction treating individuals with atypical capacities as disabled. Given this, Nussbaum maintains that the starting place for any norm reform must be a kind of perspective taking where we "recognize[e] that we all have many impairments, and that life includes not only 'normal' needs but also periods, more or less prolonged, of unusual and asymmetrical dependency" (2004: 312).

What Srinivasan and Nussbaum's proposals share is the call to revise or replace harmful emotion norms.¹³ Moreover, as we'll see below (§ 4), a version of this move has promise as a strategy for addressing the marginalization worries. However, like the burden shifting proposal, the effectiveness of Srinivasan and Nussbaum's specific proposals is challenged by what cognitive science tells us about the psychology of norms—how norms function within the human mind. In particular, this work indicates that the functional role that a given norm has in shaping one's decisions and actions will turn on things like the way it was acquired and how it is engaged. Moreover, the functional role that a norm comes to have also affects our ability to change it for the better (Kelly, forthcoming; Davidson & Kelly 2020; Huebner 2016).

Now here's why this matters. The less costly proposal directs us to change problematic emotion norms by way of replacing them with other norms. But not only do the norms that the strategy points to have distinct functional roles, but those roles make it unlikely that the recommendations of the less costly proposal will succeed. For instance, in Srinivasan's example, we're to follow a norm that directs us to dissolve the false belief that anger is opposed to reason in order to secure revisions to a norm stating that angry women should quell their anger. But these two norms are acquired and engaged in different ways. The former is a norm we chose to adopt and deploy through a process of reflective endorsement (what I'll call an *avowed* norm). By contrast, the latter is a norm that we acquire passively as part of enculturation and deploy automatically (an *internalized* norm). And that's the rub—for cognitive science suggests not only that avowed and internalized norms have distinct functional roles, but also that there's little reason to think avowed norms can affect change in internalized ones, as the less costly strategy presumes.

Since the specifics regarding how avowed and internalized norms function will be important for the positive suggestions to come, we'll discuss them in detail below (§ 3). For now, an analogy will illustrate the basic issue.

Norms for conversational distance prescribe rules for how far individuals should stand from one another when talking. While these norms display a fair amount of cultural variation, there are also central commonalities (e.g., less distance signals that conversants have a more intimate relationship).¹⁴ Typically, norms for conversational distance are norms that we've internalized: we don't acquire them through explicit instruction, but rather passively as part of our general enculturation; and once

¹³ It's worth noting that neither Srinivasan nor Nussbaum's main focus is on developing a strategy for correcting emotion norms—Srinivasan's core aim is to articulate the harm done by certain prescriptions for reform; Nussbaum's focus is on changing laws and legal practices. Given this, they (understandably) say comparatively little about their less costly proposals.

¹⁴ Gibbard (1990: 69–70) introduces the example of conversational distance in the context of his discussion of differences in the ways that norms can be acquired (and so function to guide behavior). The discussion of fashion norms in Kurth 2013 offers another example.

acquired, we engage these norms automatically (and unconsciously) as we strike up conversations with others. But the conversational norms that we follow in a given situation can also (though less frequently) be the product of the conscious deliberation characteristic of avowal. This might happen, for instance, when we visit another country and notice that their norms call for less distance or when the office gossip reveals that we're "the creepy close talker." Yet as is familiar, consciously deciding to implement—that is, deciding to avow—a new norm will be effortful. We will need to work to remember to deploy the alternative norm, and as a result, our success is likely to be spotty (e.g., when stressed or distracted, even the reform-minded close talker will likely find himself reverting to the old "lean in" norms he's internalized).

While this is just a toy example, it serves to highlight the central problem—namely, that there are important differences in how the norms that shape our behaviors are acquired, sustained, and engaged. These differences, in turn, help us see why using avowed norms to change internalized ones—as the less costly strategy proposes—is unlikely to be very successful: the functional profiles just don't match up in the right sorts of ways. To say this, of course, is not to say that we're powerless to change the norms we've internalized—and highlighting our ability to change internalized norms is the insight of the less costly proposal. However, the force of the conversational distance example lies in drawing out that identifying more effective strategies for revising norms will require having a better understanding of how norms are acquired, maintained, and engaged. So let's turn to some details.

3 Internalizing and Avowing Norms: Functional Roles and Asymmetries

What we've learned so far suggests that in order to address the harms that prescriptions for reform can bring, we need to change the underlying emotion norms. But the above discussion also suggests that, in general, norms can play very different roles in our decision making. So making progress in addressing the harms highlighted by the marginalization worries requires getting a better understanding of the psychology of norms. While there is much to say regarding how norms come to shape how we think, act, and feel, for present purposes, we can narrow our focus to just the internalizing and avowing of norms introduced above.¹⁵

(3.1) *Internalizing norms.* As illustrated by the conversational distance example, we internalize norms through a process that is largely automatic and passive. Through individual experience, observation, social learning, and the like we pick up on the social norms undergirding the actions of those around us.¹⁶ Moreover, since these norms are acquired passively, and not through explicit instruction, our access to them is largely opaque. Moving from the acquisition of norms to following them,

¹⁵ Gibbard 1990 introduces the distinction between internalizing and avowing norms. See Kelly, forthcoming for an insightful elaboration as well as Davidson & Kelly 2020, Huebner 2016, and Crocket 2013.

¹⁶ Our ability to pick up on norms governing behavior appears to start happening very early—and quickly—in our development. For instance, infants as young as 12 months demonstrate the ability to adopt a specific 'role' (e.g., the collector of the toys) after seeing another person play the role just once (Ross & Lollis 1987).

we find that, once acquired, the operation and maintenance of internalized norms is largely routinized in the following, three-fold sense (Kelly, forthcoming). First, we follow internalized norms through subpersonal, associative processes. As such, they typically shape our behavior in a manner that is automatic, implicit, and often disengaged from our conscious choices. For instance, through socialization, we come to associate different relationships (family, friends, strangers) with different degrees of intimacy and norms of proximity; as a result, we tend to automatically position ourselves in accord with those norms when engaging in conversation. The second way in which internalized norms are routinized concerns their motivational profile. Internalized norms are intrinsically motivating: not only do we find following them to be rewarding—a feeling of doing as one should—but we find violating them aversive—the feeling that we’ve erred.¹⁷ For instance, we may feel uneasy when violating a conversational distance norm while on vacation and we may feel this unease even when it’s only later that we realize we were standing too close (and they constantly retreating). Finally, internalized norms are routinized in the sense that they represent our default mode of operation. As we saw in the initial example (§ 2), although we can act contrary to the norms we’ve internalized, doing so is an effortful, deliberate process. Moreover, we’re more likely to revert to acting in accordance with the norms we’ve internalized as stress, time pressure, and cognitive load increase (Huebner 2016; Crocket 2013; Schwarbe & Wolf 2013).

Taken together, we can extract a larger lesson from this trio of features—namely that internalized norms will tend to be self-reinforcing not only in the sense that they are automatically engaged and intrinsically motivating but also in the sense that we find deviating from them unpleasant.

(3.2) *Avowed norms.* In contrast with internalized norms, the norms that we avow are acquired through a process of conscious reflection and deliberate choice: they are rules that we decide to impose on ourselves. As such, the associated motivation that we have to follow them is not automatic, as it is with internalized norms. Rather, our motivation with regard to avowed norms is more akin to what comes with forming an intention: the strength of our commitment is a function of things like the value that we place in what the norm concerns, our willpower, the details of the situation we’re in, and the robustness of our executive control capacities (e.g., our attentional resources, available working memory, ability to inhibit impulses) (Kelly, forthcoming; Sripada 2014). Again, we see all this in the example of conversational distance norms. Though you’ve consciously decided to match your talking distance to the distinctive conversational distance norms of the country you’re visiting, you might still find yourself reverting to your familiar, internalized norms when you become stressed after your bumbling attempts to speak the language.

(3.3) *Why all this matters.* With this sketch of internalized and avowed norms in hand, we’re better able to see why their distinctive functional profiles complicate norm revision of the sort suggested by the less costly proposal (§ 2). In particular, our ability to use avowed norms to change internalized ones faces three obstacles—epistemic, motivational, and structural. Moreover, since understanding these challenges

¹⁷ For discussion of feelings of doing as one should and should not, see Sripada & Stich 2007; Theriault et al. 2021; Kurth 2015, 2016; and Kelly, forthcoming.

will be crucial for understanding how we can more effectively change problematic, internalized norms, we should take a closer look at each.

Epistemically, correcting norm-driven behavior is facilitated by an understanding not just of what we're doing, but of what the norms we're following are. But since the internalized norms that influence our thoughts and actions are passively acquired and automatically engaged (§ 3.1), our access to them will be third-personal: their content is not something we have privileged, introspective access to. Rather, it's something we must distill from (e.g.) observations of our own behavior or input from others (Kelly, forthcoming). Moreover, and this will be relevant below, the epistemic challenges that the opacity of internalized norms present are exacerbated to the extent that we lack the vocabulary, self-awareness, or understanding needed to identify and articulate the details of the norms we've internalized.¹⁸

More troubling are the *motivational* asymmetries. As we've seen, internalized norms are self-reinforcing in the sense that they're not just automatically engaged and intrinsically motivating, but also directives that we find it unpleasant to deviate from (§ 3.1). By contrast, our motivation to act in accordance with avowed norms is effortful and tenuous in the sense that we tend to revert to internalized routines in the face of stress and distractions (§ 3.2). The upshot, then, is that when it comes to driving behavior, avowed norms will tend to be (on their own) motivationally outgunned.

To be clear, the point here is not that internalized norms cannot be overridden—we know they can be (e.g., Moskowitz et al. 1999). Rather, work in cognitive science points to two conclusions about how norms with different functional roles interact to drive behavior. First, in the face of conflicting directives from norms we've internalized and norms we've avowed, what we end up doing is determined (at least in part) by decision making systems that aggregate these outputted motivational signals, selecting whatever action is weightiest (Huebner 2016; Crocket 2013, Huys et al. 2012). However, and this is the second point, internalized norms seldom work in isolation, but instead tend to be located within overlapping networks of (internalized) social norms—many of which will typically be engaged in a given decision. This means that in many cases the directive of a single avowed norm will tend to lose out when it competes with the combined signals coming from these sets of internalized norms (Huebner 2016).¹⁹

Finally, there are *structural* impediments of a “cart before the horse” type. More specifically, when we are looking at an internalized norm, we are looking at a form of cognition that is (largely) driven by *backward looking* associative mechanisms:

¹⁸ Though the point in the text is a general one, the issue is likely to be particularly pronounced with regard to emotions. As Alison Jaggar (1989) notes, the prevailing (and so typically internalized, recall § 1 above) emotion norms counsel men to *ignore* their emotions, often with the result that they have a stunted understanding of what they feel and how these feelings affect their thoughts and actions. This opacity is also a central theme in Fricker's (2008) discussion of hermeneutical injustice.

¹⁹ By way of an illustrative analogy, consider implicit bias: multiple overlapping and internalized norms about how to interact with members of a particular minority can be engaged by the various associations salient in a given situation. The combined effect that having this set of norms engaged will have for one's behavior will tend to be stronger than what we would have if just one of the norms was engaged (Blair et al. 2002); so, other things equal, these sets of overlapping internalized norms will tend to bring biased behavior and they will tend to do so even if the individual also avows a norm directing her to act in an unbiased way when interacting with members of that group (Huebner 2016; Kelly, forthcoming).

mechanisms that encode and revise information principally from predictions and errors driven by what's statistically normal in the (social) environment. But this means that it will be difficult for the *forward looking* prescriptions of the norms one avows to get a grip on the mechanisms (and so norms) that they're trying to change (Huebner 2016): avowing a norm with the aim of changing what is statistically normal will be an effort that, on its own, has little ability to counter the operation of internalized norms that are shaped by what is statistically normal.

Taking stock, we're now better positioned to understand how human psychology complicates the less costly proposal's strategy for revising problematic emotion norms. But we also know that, while difficult, we *can* change internalized norms—even deeply entrenched ones. So the real question, then, asks how we should seek to change problematic emotion norms given what we've learned about how norms—and norm revision—function (§§ 3.1–3.2). On this front, two initiatives look promising: efforts to improve our understanding of our emotions and their effects on us, and a move to give greater place to structural remedies (over individualistic interventions) in our efforts to change emotion norms for the better. The next section gives these suggestions some substance.

4 Feeling Better: A Roadmap for Reforming Emotion Norms

To see how the above pair of initiatives—improved emotion understanding and greater use of structural remedies—might help us address the harms that prescriptions for reform can bring, it will be helpful to have an example of successful norm revision to draw on. So in what follows, we will begin by considering the transformation in the norms concerning violence against women that has occurred over the last 30–40 years. This will provide insight into how we might formulate better strategies for revising the problematic emotion norms that we've been looking at—strategies that avoid the epistemological, motivational, and structural challenges we just uncovered. The end result will a modest optimism about our ability to change problematic emotion norms for the better.

(4.1) *Developing a model for change.* While there's still much to do to combat violence against women (VAW), some real progress has been made. For instance, in just ten years (1999–2010), the percentage of Europeans who think violence against women should probably *not* be a crime fell by 60% (from 30 to 12%) and the percentage who deem VAW to *always* be punishable rose dramatically—from 63 to 86% (Eurobarometer 2010). Moreover, as political scientists like S. Laural Weldon, Elizabeth Friedman, and Mala Htun have documented, much of this success has resulted from efforts to understand—and change—the social norms that foster ideals of male dominance and that sanction violence toward women. And since violence against women is often driven by anger, looking here provides a model where the revisions were made, in part, to the emotion norms that sanctioned treating women violently (MacKinnon 1983; Akyüz & Sayan-Cengiz 2016).²⁰

²⁰ Two points. First, though male anger is an undeniable driver of violence, VAW is a complex problem with multiple causes. See Htun & Weldon 2012: 549–550 for discussion. Second, one might worry that

Turning to some details, empirical work on VAW indicates that the progress resulted from the development of conceptual tools and institutional structures that promoted greater understanding of, and advocacy against, social norms that have sanctioned violence toward women. We see, for instance, that prior to the reform what now falls under the umbrella of “violence against women”—e.g., domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking, honor killings, genital mutilation—was largely viewed as an unrelated set of issues. The term “violence against women” is something that was explicitly introduced by activists in order to draw together the wide range of acts where women were harmed (Weldon 2006). This was significant. Prior to this point, advocacy for women largely consisted in a disjointed set of independent groups struggling to give voice to their particular causes. Thus, the introduction of this term brought benefit of strength in numbers.

Moreover, the introduction of the label “violence against women” also facilitated the development of conceptual frameworks that allowed women’s organizations to specify and label problematic norms, draw critical scrutiny to them, and develop models of what better norms would look like (Raymond et al. 2014; Htun & Weldon 2012). This, in turn, facilitated the use of protests, speak-outs, and larger discussions to raise awareness of problems and challenge those who, say, didn’t take rape seriously. The aim—and the result—of all this was a progressive weakening of the prevailing norms permitting VAW.

Equally important, though, was the fact that these critical efforts were paired with work to promote alternate norms (Raymond et al. 2014; Htun & Weldon 2012). Here too the starting place was the conceptual frameworks that helped women’s groups identify, refine, and formulate rationales for the new norms. With these frameworks in hand, the project of inculcating new norms came by way of multiple routes (recall, the lotta-little principle from § 2): public education campaigns, the engagement of influencers, online activism, and more (Flood 2002-03; Dimitrov 2008). Additionally, these efforts were facilitated by the use of institutionally coordinated support networks. For instance, Raymond and colleagues note that these networks

provide[d] critical protection against the sanctions applied to those violating old norms before new norms have taken hold. ... [I]ndividual norm violators are vulnerable to being ostracized, ridiculed, or even subjected to violence by members of the larger group seeking to punish inappropriate behavior and enforce conformity. (207)

With this as backdrop, several lessons emerge. First, we can now see how the techniques used to change norms sanctioning VAW differ from the strategies for revising problematic emotion norms that we find in the burden shifting and less costly proposals (§ 2). In contrast to what’s implied by these proposals, the initiatives of the VAW

the norms at issue in VAW are too different from the problematic emotion norms we’ve been looking at to offer much insight—in particular, the former concern norms governing the anger of members of the *dominant* group, while the latter concern norms regarding (e.g.) the anger of *subordinated* individuals. While the relevance of the VAW norms will become apparent below, here we can note that in both cases we are looking at ways to change internalized norms that tend to bring harm and abuse (thanks to an anonymous referee for encouraging me to be clearer on this point).

campaign made more substantive use of epistemic and structural resources, and did so in ways that promoted change in the thoughts and actions of all parties: devising new language and conceptual resources to help frame what's at issue; identifying particular norms to target and specifying alternatives to replace them with; mobilizing multi-faceted and institutionally coordinated implementation programs.

Second, building on the above lessons regarding how norms are acquired and sustained, we also get a sense for why the techniques of the advocates' campaign against VAW were likely to have been effective in changing deeply internalized norms condoning violence. In particular, we can now see how the tools of the anti-VAW campaign served to address to the epistemic, motivational, and structural barriers to changing internalized norms that we identified in § 3. First, the "violence against women" label brought new conceptual resources that helped advocates address epistemic limitations—they were now better equipped to identify and challenge the problematic norms undergirding the violence. Second, we've seen that internalized norms are hard to substantively revise both because they're self-reinforcing and because they typically have more weight as inputs into our action-selection systems. But notice that through the anti-VAW campaign, proponents have been able to use protests, targeted campaigns, and robust support networks in order to—at least locally—shift what behaviors are statistically normal. As such, they have been able to counter structural challenges by, for instance, co-opting the (typically backward-looking) mechanisms that would otherwise sustained norms sanctioning violence. Similarly, by making use of influencers and well-crafted education campaigns, women's groups have been able to leverage existing desires (e.g., to be like media or sports stars) in ways that can alter the motivational calculus in favor of acting in accordance with the new norms.

Stepping back, we see that the success of the anti-VAW campaign resulted, at least in part, from its ability to use epistemic and structural mechanisms to address the challenges inherent in efforts to change internalized norms. Thus we have a model that should carry over, allowing us to develop better strategies for addressing the harms that prescriptions for reform can bring.

(4.2) *Applying the model.* As a first step toward seeing how the VAW model might be extended, recall that the anti-VAW campaign benefited from the introduction of language and associated conceptual resources that brought unity to a previously disparate set of issues. Recall as well that the situation with regard to the marginalization worries is similar—it's *also* constituted by a set of loosely connected concerns that have largely been developed independently of one another and for a range of different emotions (§ 1). This suggests that similar gains could be secured through unification. More specifically, we might introduce "emotional persecution" as the umbrella label that could serve as an analog to "violence against women." In brief, *emotional persecution* is a term we can use to capture the various ways in which prescriptions for reform end up harming marginalized individuals by treating them unfairly: forcing them to make difficult choices, targeting them, and undermining their (epistemic or moral) agency.

However, as the VAW case makes plain, having a unifying label is only part of the battle. Effectively changing internalized emotion norms also demands that we have the conceptual resources needed for both understanding the emotion norms that need

to be changed and developing the institutional structures that can help those new norms take hold. Fortunately, we've already started making progress on these tasks in two ways.

The first contribution comes from the work that feminist philosophers and those working in race, gender, and disability studies have already done to *identify the problematic emotion norms* (§ 1). For instance, there's the work of Spelman, Lorde, and others that points to norms dictating that the inappropriate emotions of marginalized individuals be suppressed. We also have Gotlib and Fricker highlighting norms calling for inappropriate anxiety to be fixed lest it (further) undermine a marginalized individual's agency; and the work of Calhoun and Thomason draws our attention to norms that promote the targeting of marginalized individuals who experience inappropriate shame.

The second contribution comes from what we find in social emotional learning (SEL) curricula; it provides insight on how we might *develop institutional structures* that can help us inculcate better emotion norms. Briefly, SEL curricula aim to develop foundational skills including the ability to understand and manage emotions, engage empathetically with others, set and achieve goals, maintain positive relationships with others, and make responsible decisions (Weissberg et al. 2015). What all this amounts to on the ground depends on the group that the curriculum is designed for (e.g., kindergarteners, middle schoolers, adults). But to give this some substance, the emotional competence portion of the curriculum focuses on things like: developing emotion vocabulary, learning to recognize internal and external cues for particular emotions, distinguishing between aspects of an emotional episode (e.g., the feeling vs. the behavior it generates), identifying appropriate and inappropriate emotion behaviors, and engaging various emotion regulation and self-control techniques.

While SEL programs have been shown to be effective in promoting a range of positive life skills for children, adolescents, and adults (Durlak et al. 2015), what's most relevant for our purposes are findings suggesting that they help individuals *internalize better emotion norms*. For instance, a large-scale meta-study of school-based SEL initiatives run by Joseph Durlak and colleagues (2011) showed that these programs are associated with improvements in core emotional competencies like: (i) identifying and understanding emotions, (ii) having pro-social beliefs about violence, helping others, and social justice, (iii) controlling anger and getting along with others, and (iv) lessened aggression and bullying.²¹ In fact, Durlak et al. found similar results when their analysis was restricted to look just at SEL interventions that used either a randomized control or longitudinal study design.

The Durlak findings are significant for three reasons. First, the fact that the meta-study's conclusions were supported by both randomized control and longitudinal studies is evidence that the SEL interventions played a *causal role* in bringing about improvements in emotional competencies. Second, these findings also suggest that by proactively structuring the learning environment, we get tools that can help students *internalize* better emotion norms. Because the SEL curriculum is embedded within standard educational programing, and because much of it makes use of indirect edu-

²¹ We get further confirmation from a second large-scale meta-study looking at SEL programing in after-school settings (Durlak et al. 2010). Also see: Yeager 2017 and Allen et al. 2020.

cational methods (e.g., role modeling, the use of peer-support networks), it has the marks of a strategy aimed at helping individuals internalize emotion norms. Finally, Durlak and colleagues found that SEL programing improved emotional competence across *all* the age groups studied (students between the ages of 5 and 18)—a result that suggests the SEL curriculum is effective not only in helping young students internalize good emotion norms from the start, but also in helping older students correct the problematic emotion norms they may have already acquired.

As we did above (§ 4.1), it's worth noting how the techniques of SEL programs differ from what we find in the burden shifting and less costly strategies we looked at earlier (§ 2). To begin, recall that a central issue with the burden shifting strategy was that, in calling for those responsible for the harms to change their ways, the strategy was demanding that these individuals do things they may not want to do or might find difficult to (consistently) do. By contrast, the SEL program cuts against these challenges in two ways. First, it is typically part of early childhood education (it's often built into kindergarten classes, even pre-schools); so rather than being a strategy that seeks to just rewire norms that have already been internalized, it's positioned to equip individuals with more appropriate emotion norms from the very beginning.²² Second, since the SEL curriculum is embedded within standard educational programing, it's not only less dependent on individuals having and sustaining a motivation to change, but can also make use of the peer buy-in and support that can come from a classroom environment. Thus, in comparison to the burden shifting strategy, SEL-based strategies differ in the very ways that are likely to make them more effective in changing problematic emotion norms.

Turn now to the contrast with the less costly proposal. Here we see (as we did with the anti-VAW campaign) that the SEL curriculum brings tools that are likely to be better at addressing the epistemic, motivational, and structural challenges that confront efforts to change internalized norms (§ 3). For starters, we've see that the curriculum brings conceptual tools and vocabulary aimed at helping individuals identify problematic emotions so that they can engage better ones (Durlak et al. 2011, 2015). Moving from the epistemic to the structural and motivational challenges, notice that SEL programing makes use of techniques like the modeling of good emotion norms in supportive environments that (as in the case of the anti-VAW efforts) are aimed at changing, at least locally, what's statistically normal. This then suggests that (again, like with the efforts or the anti-VAW) we have tools that can be effective in correcting backward-looking mechanisms of norm reinforcement. Similarly, the use of role modeling and peer-support networks can also be sources of additional motivation (in much the way that the anti-VAW campaign made similar use of sports stars and other influencers). So in these ways, we get a proposal that appears better positioned to change problematic internalized emotions norms.

To better see what all this might amount to, we can conclude with an example of what an SEL program for countering the harms of prescriptions of reform might look like. So consider the harm that an anxious individual experiences when she does

²² Of note, successful SEL programs have also been developed for adults, providing more evidence that the relevance of the curriculum is broader than just getting children and adolescents off on the right foot. See, e.g., Conley 2015; Espelage et al. 2020.

not respond to calls to get over her anxiety. As we saw in § 1, harms of this sort are driven by the combination of a lack of emotional understanding and emotion norms that prescribe a punitive stance toward the inappropriately anxious. A suitably crafted SEL intervention would, thus, aim here. It might, for instance, engage programming to raise awareness about anxiety and its value (e.g., that it's an emotion concerned with problematic uncertainty; that it can be a sign of an admirable emotional attunement). This deeper understanding of anxiety could then provide a conceptual framework for further initiatives aimed at inculcating better emotion norms (e.g., norms dictating that anxious individuals should be seen as sources of insight about threatened values). Moreover, by relying on institutional mechanisms (e.g., roll modeling, peer support networks), efforts like these would be better able to circumvent the troubles faced by the more individualistically-oriented strategies of the burden shifting and less costly proposals (§ 2).

All told, what we see in the work of feminists and the success of the SEL curriculum licenses modest optimism that the success of the anti-VAW campaign can be replicated to help correct the problems that prescriptions for reform can bring. The proposal here does not, of course, amount to a magical cure. Rather, it represents a promising strategy that, with further study, should add to the resources we have for combatting problematic emotion norms.

5 Conclusion

Bringing this discussion to a close, here's what we've learned. The marginalization worries reveal that prescriptions for reform can do real harm. This is because our emotion norms are often unfair: they embed assumptions that subject marginalized individuals to different standards of assessment, and that single them out for harsher treatment when their feelings are deemed inappropriate. But we've also seen that work in cognitive science points us to a variety of strategies we can employ to address this emotional persecution. This includes not just the existing burden shifting and less costly techniques, but also the lessons learned from our look to the VAW and SEL initiatives. The upshot, then, is that we can—and should—reform our emotion norms so that they employ fairer standards of assessment, and engage more equitable responses to problematic instances of emotions like anxiety, anger, and shame. With better norms for feeling, we can feel better.²³

²³ The impetus for this paper lies in a set of worries that Anna Gotlib raised during the Author Meets Critics session held on my book, *The Anxious Mind*, at the 2020 APA Central Meeting. Many thanks to her for inspiring the paper and thanks as well to Dan Kelly (another Critic at the APA session) for some hints as to where a solution to these worries might be found. In writing this paper, I have benefited from a grant from the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award at Western Michigan University, as well as the work of two graduate research assistants: Marshall Peterson and Olivia Moskot. Many thanks to them as well as to two anonymous referees for very valuable feedback and to Juliette Vazard, Heidi Maibom, and Maria Waggoner for their helpful input on the manuscript.

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