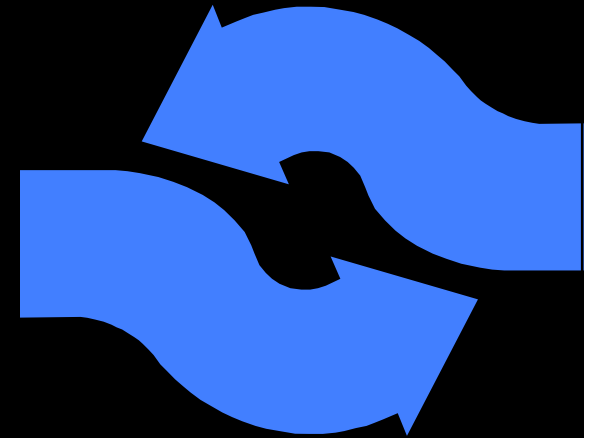


Emotion and relation alignment

Brian Parkinson
Oxford University

June 2004



Outline

- ◆ Social referencing
- ◆ Embarrassment
- ◆ Anger
- ◆ Guilt
- ◆ Interpersonal factors in emotion

The visual cliff

(Gibson & Walk, 1960)



Social referencing I

(Sorce, Emde, Campos & Klinnert, 1985)

- ◆ One-year-old infants were placed facing their mothers, but at the opposite side of a visual cliff (a 30 cm drop covered by plexiglass)
- ◆ They were instructed to show different emotion expressions as the infants approached the visual cliff
- ◆ 14 out of 19 one-year-old infants crossed the visual cliff if their mother was smiling
- ◆ No infant crossed the visual cliff if their mother showed a “fear” face

Social referencing II

(Sorce, Emde, Campos & Klinnert, 1985)

- ◆ The social referencing situation may be seen as a paradigm of how emotion serves to align or configure relations between actors and objects, and/or other actors
- ◆ According to Sorce et al., the mother's emotion presentation communicates an appraisal of the visual cliff to the infant
- ◆ Correspondingly, the infant's appraisal of, and emotional stance towards, the situation is shaped by the mother's communication (*social appraisal*, Manstead & Fischer, 2001)

Nature of relational activity

- ◆ Sorce et al imply that a facial position sends an intact, one-shot message about appraisal of a separate object to another person
- ◆ However, in many emotional situations, the communication is bidirectional rather than one-way (e.g., the infant may be tentatively communicating “aren’t I brave?”)
- ◆ Further, the two parties may both be actively engaged with the same object or person (in similar or conflicting ways) and may be communicating not about the object itself but about the other’s relation to that object.
- ◆ Their respective relations are not aligned in a single move, but in a real-time process of on-line negotiation (infant and mother jointly formulate a dynamic attitude towards the mutually experienced situation)

Embarrassment

Keltner and Buswell (1997) distinguish two theories about embarrassment's interpersonal causes:

- ◆ ***Awkward social interaction:***
Interruption in the orderly performance of public behaviour
- ◆ ***Negative social evaluation:***
Anticipation of disapproval from others following transgression of social rules

In either case, embarrassment also conveys an evaluation of one's own performance to others, allowing a distancing from implications that might otherwise be even more negative.

Embarrassment and communication

(Leary, Landel, & Patton, 1996)

- ◆ Participants recorded a rendition of the song “feelings” (or simply listened to a recording of it)
- ◆ Participants either rated or did not rate their emotional response
- ◆ The experimenter either looked at or did not look at the emotion ratings
- ◆ If embarrassment depends on the need to communicate discomfort, then it should persist until the other person receives the message

Embarrassment and communication

(Leary, Landel, & Patton, 1996)



Other embarrassing situations

(e.g., Sabini, Siepmann, Stein, & Meyerowitz, 2000)

- ◆ Being praised in public
- ◆ Being stared at
(especially by strangers)
- ◆ Being singled out

The minimal condition for embarrassment may be unwanted attention from others rather than negative social evaluation as such

Embarrassment's most basic function may be to deflect attention rather than to communicate appraisal

Coy smiles in early infancy

(Reddy, 2000)

- ◆ Reddy (2000) videotaped five 2-3 month-old infants while they interacted with their mother, the experimenter, or while they were held in front of a mirror.
- ◆ “Coy smiles” were coded when there was a withdrawal of visual attention (eyes, head or both averted) occurring before the smile’s peak (there were also often arm and hand movements towards the face).
- ◆ These smiles consistently occurred after sustained attentional contact with others (or the self in the mirror)

Infant 2 (girl, 11 weeks, 6 days) interacting with Self in mirror, carried by mother



Intent gaze to self; brows raised.



Smile starts; cheek raise.



Smile widens, eyes and head turned up and left.



Smile widest; eyes and head further averted

Infant 3 (boy, 12 weeks, 1 day) interacting with Mother



Pleasant gaze to Mother.



Smile begins.



Smile widens; eyes shut.



Smile wider; head turned into chair; eyes shut.

Infant 4 (boy, 12 weeks) interacting with Mother



Intent gaze to Mother.



Smile begins.



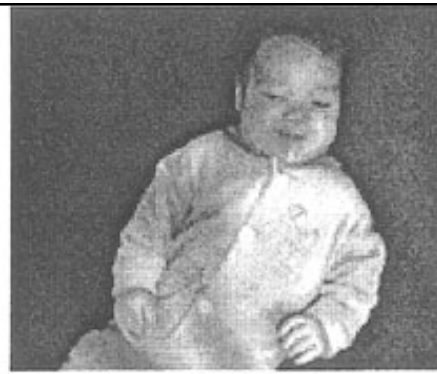
Smile widens; arm rises.



Gaze still to Mother; smile still wide; slight head turn.



Sober gaze to Mother.



Smile begins; head tilts.



Smile wider; arms rise up.



Head, eyes and body turned.

- ◆ These smiles were spontaneously labeled as “bashful,” “shy,” “coy,” or “embarrassed” by a majority of adults who were shown the videotapes (Draghi-Lorenz, Reddy, & Costall, 2001).
- ◆ They may therefore provide a developmental precursor for the more culturally articulated adult emotion of “embarrassment.”
- ◆ Further, the subsequent articulation of this response may not wholly supersede the more basic version (adults may continue to become embarrassed on exposure to undue attention).

Anger and associated appraisals

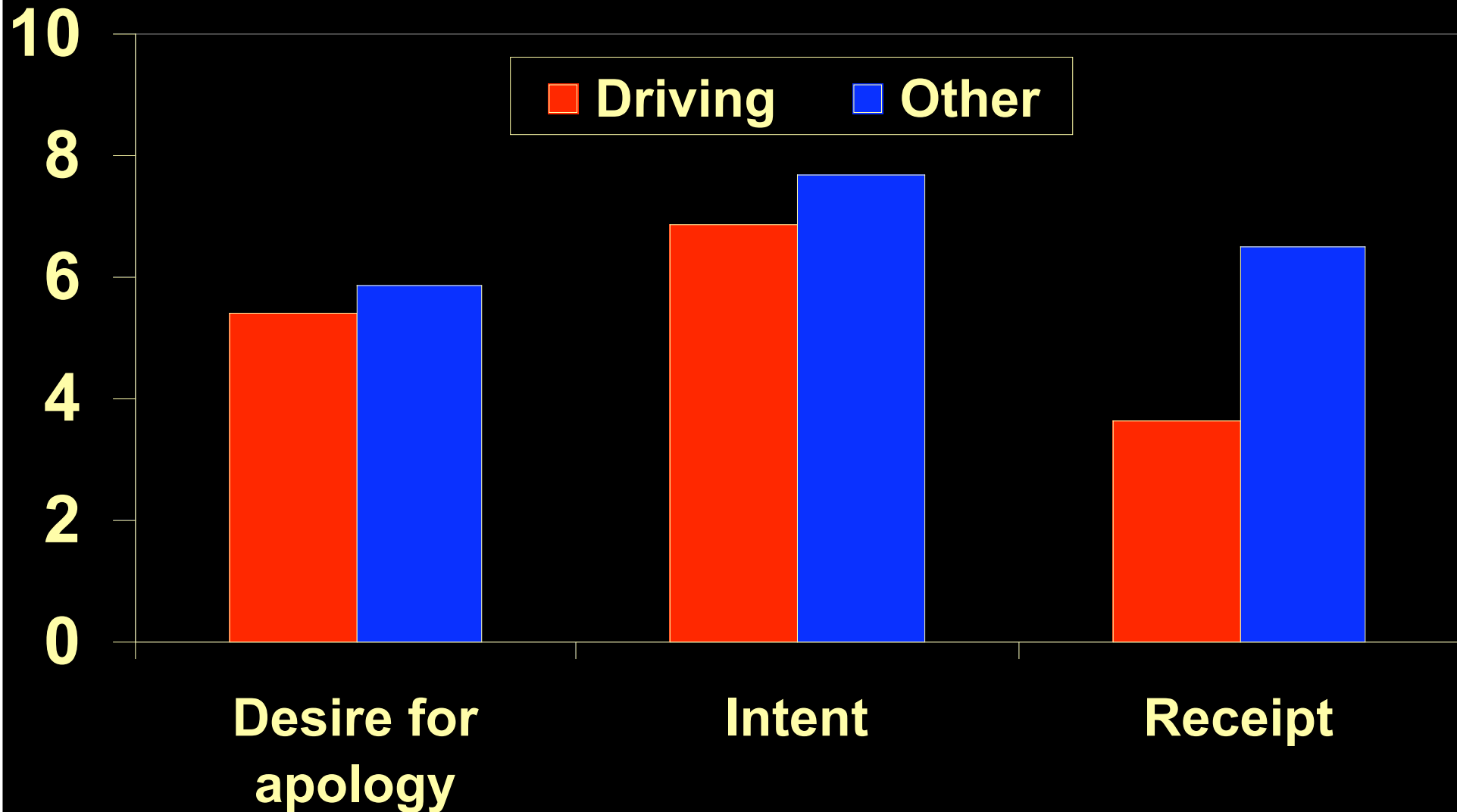
- ◆ Many appraisal theories consider anger to be a response to an appraisal of other-blame (e.g., Lazarus, 1991)
- ◆ There is debate about whether genuine “anger” can be elicited also by lower-level appraisals relating to goal blockage (e.g., Frijda, 1993; Parkinson, 1999)
- ◆ The communicative function of anger may be to blame others for something
- ◆ Its more basic practical function may be to struggle against obstacles (which may be social obstacles)

Anger while driving

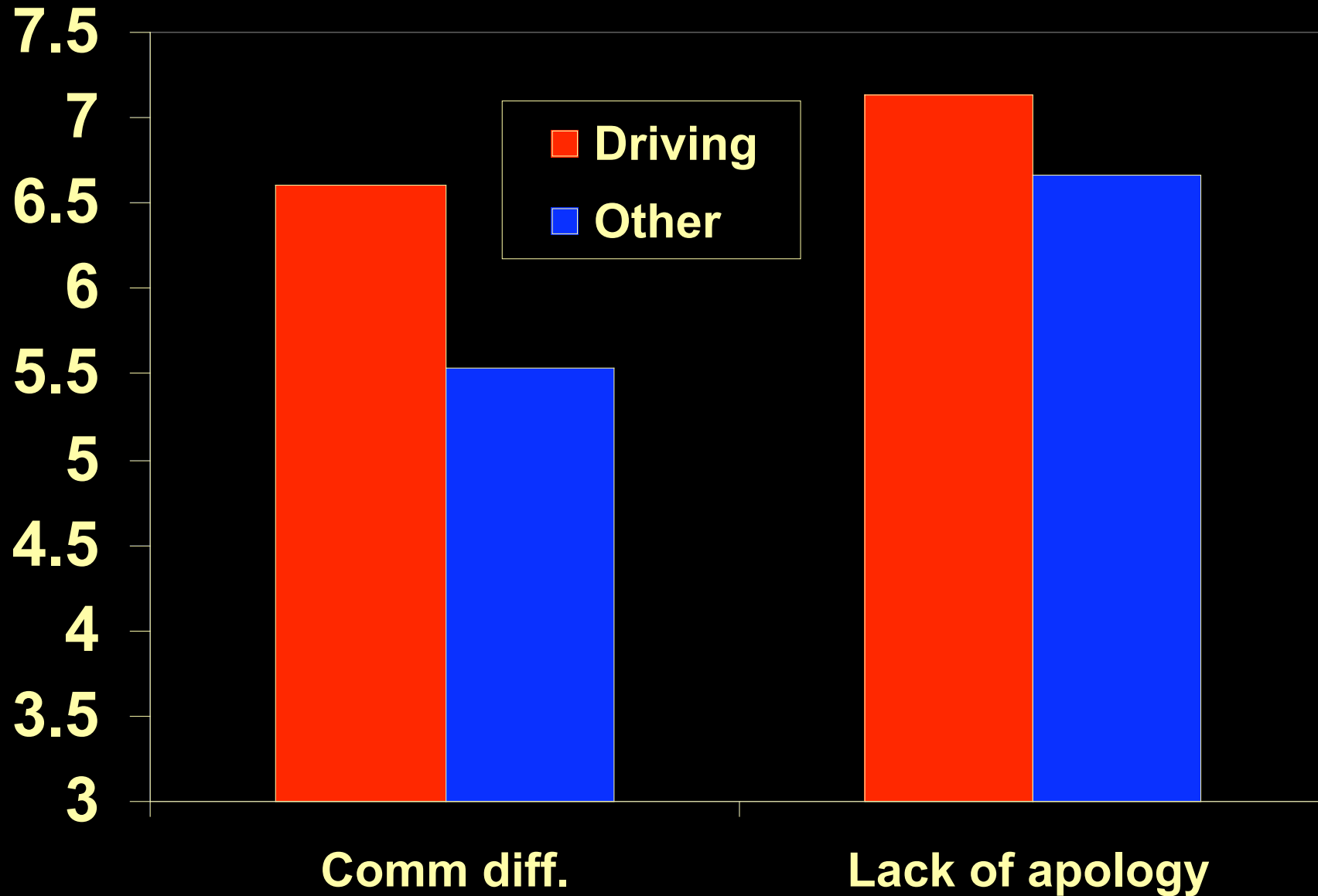
- ◆ If one of the functions of anger is to communicate blame (in order to solicit an apology), then people should intensify their anger when their message doesn't appear to be getting across.
- ◆ For example, the greater interpersonal distances (and physical barriers) between drivers compared to interactants in face-to-face situations means that:
 - a) message transmission requires more pronounced displays
 - b) any acknowledgement or apology from the other driver is less likely to get through
- ◆ For both these reasons, we might anticipate driving to be a common occasion for intense anger (Parkinson, 2001)

Ratings of communicative factors for everyday and driving anger

(Parkinson, 2001)



Reported causes of everyday and driving anger



Communicative and practical factors

- ◆ Communicative factors contributed to the prediction of anger intensity in driving and non-driving situations even after controlling for all measured appraisals
- ◆ However, the communicative function of anger likely derives from its developmentally prior role in deflecting obstacles
- ◆ Anger may start out as a struggle against resistance, but develop into a social influence strategy because caregivers in many cultures tend to help when they see infants struggling (cf. Vygotsky, 1985)
- ◆ Later still, children start to learn cultural prescriptions and theories about anger, and how to use anger strategically

Anger in infants

Arm restraint: 5-month-old infants show “angry” faces, make “negative vocalizations” and struggle when their arms are held firmly (e.g., Camras et al, 1992). In younger infants, gaze is directed at the adult’s arm or hand that is preventing movement. In older infants, it is directed at the adult’s face.

Guilt and associated appraisals

- ◆ According to many appraisal theories, guilt depends on blaming oneself for something bad that has happened
- ◆ However, the developmental origins of this emotion may lie in less articulated responses to blame from close others (e.g. Barrett, 1995)
- ◆ Guilt may serve to repair relationships after interpersonal blaming incidents

Guilt without self-blame

A participant in Parkinson's (1999) study described an event that had led to "unreasonable guilt" in the following terms:

"My friend had a go at me over something she accused me of telling someone else that should have remained confidential. I hadn't said anything."

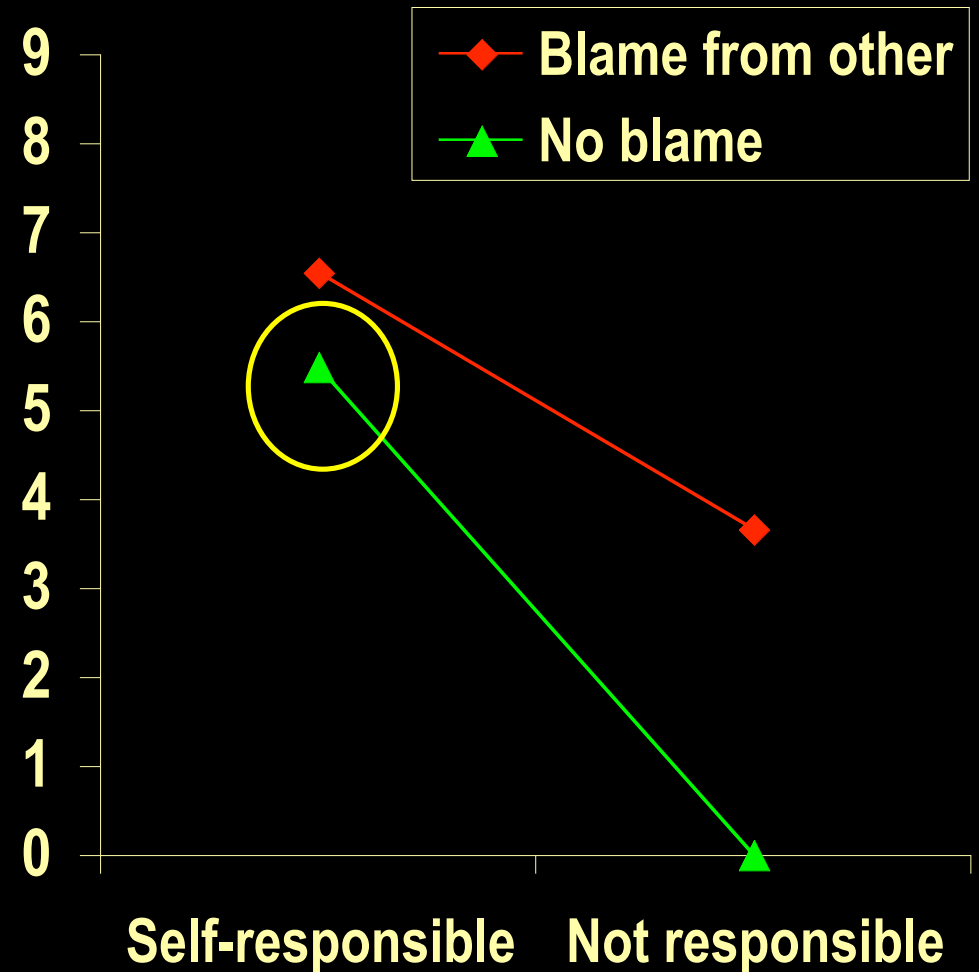
“Emotional reactions to the misfortunes of others”

- ◆ Participants recalled four separate incidents in which someone close to them had suffered which varied according to whether or not the participants blamed themselves and whether or not another person blamed them
- ◆ No reference was made to guilt in the instructions (to minimize experimental demand)
- ◆ Participants rated emotions, appraisals, relational motivations.

Private blame



Anticipated blame

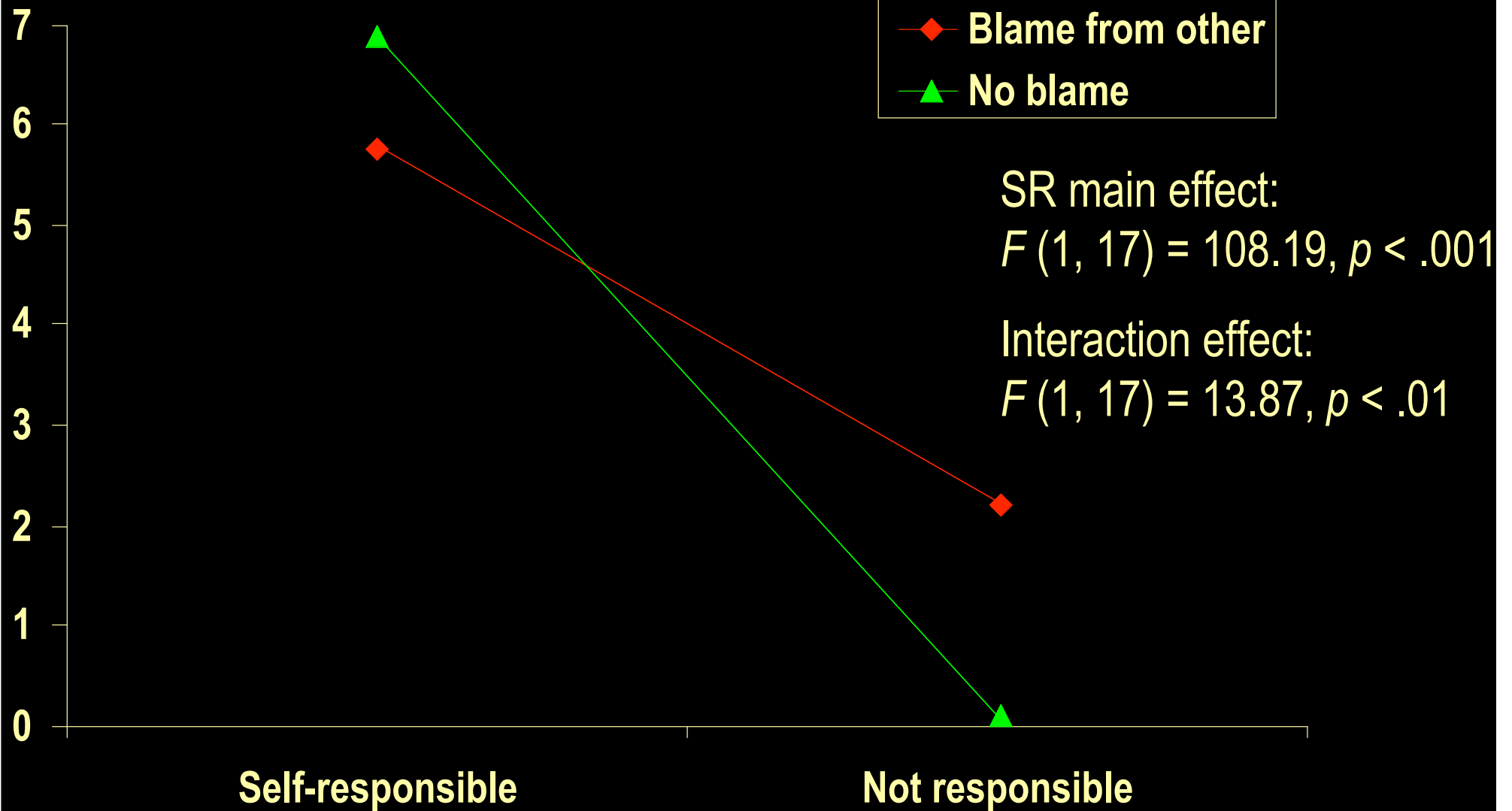


Main effects of blame and self-responsibility for both DVs, $p < .001$.
Interaction effect for anticipated blame: $F(1, 17) = 5.32, p < .05$

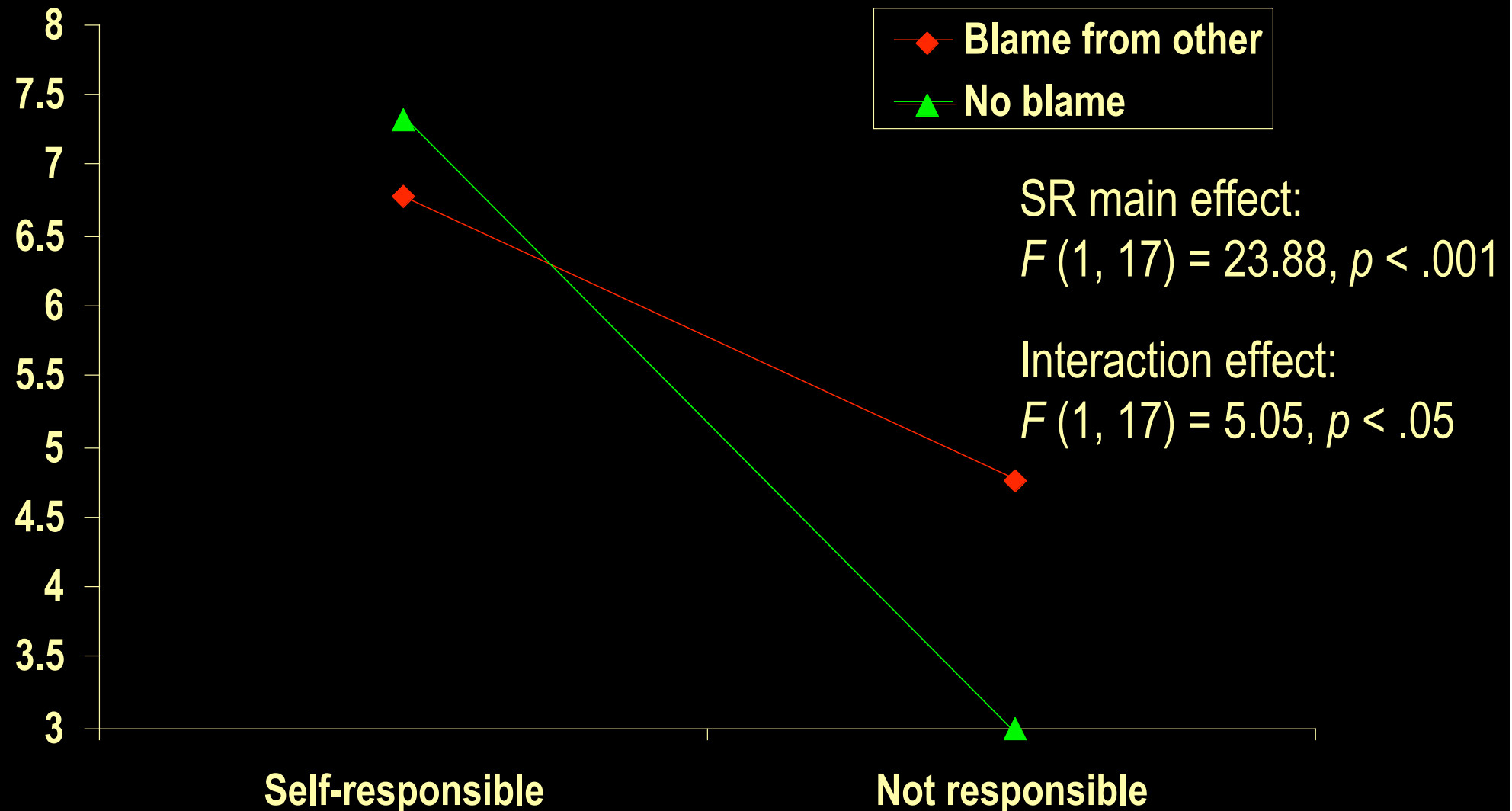
Guilt in the absence of personal responsibility?

- ◆ My brother confessed to me how he felt our parents were more proud of me than him ... He felt very upset and bad about his own recent failings -- being kicked out of Uni. I had never been aware he felt that way.
(guilt = 9, self-accountability = 0)
- ◆ My sister's camera was dropped on the floor and the expensive lens was broken. I was passing it to her at the time. She dropped it but blamed it on me
(guilt = 9, self-accountability = 2).

Guilt ratings



Relationship repair: “Make amends”



Main results

- ◆ Situations involving greater personal responsibility were associated with significantly more guilt in accordance with appraisal theory's predictions
- ◆ Situations involving blame from others but no personal responsibility were also associated with guilt (and motives for relationship repair)
- ◆ Relationship repair was associated with guilt even after controlling for self-blame

Two modes of guilt?

- ◆ ***Pragmatic guilt:*** Guilt is a way of maintaining close relationships when threatened by withdrawal of positive attention (characterized by non-articulated “appraisals”)
- ◆ ***Culturally articulated guilt:*** Guilt in response to internalized values under appropriate circumstances of self-blame (characterized by articulated “appraisals” and a more explicit recognition that it is appropriate to feel guilty).

Interpersonal factors in emotion

- ◆ ***Intrinsically interpersonal emotions***: Many emotions start out as interpersonally oriented (i.e., their intentional object is another person, e.g., attachment-related affect, jealousy, embarrassment etc).
- ◆ ***Pragmatic emotions***: Even if the primary function of relational activity is practical, others' (culturally relative) reactions shape its developing meaning (cf. Vygotsky, 1978).
- ◆ ***Strategic emotions***: Because hypercognized emotions are subjected to culturally supplied representations, they may be used explicitly to convey relational meanings.