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GUILT AND SHAME:

DOES EMOTION AFFECT EXPRESSIVE RELUCTANCE

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ABSTRACT

Shame and guilt are distinct responses to wrongdoings that often lead individuals to feel distressed or upset. It has been shown that shame is linked to aggression, psychopathology, and poor relationships. Guilt, on the other hand, tends to be a protective factor for many of these issues. For this study, we examined shame and guilt's relationship with expressive reluctance. Expressive reluctance is a term that connotes the extent of an individual's unwillingness to express the emotions they are feeling in a social setting. Our participants, mothers (ages 35-58; *N*=49) and adolescents (ages 12-13; *N*=46), reported two written narratives: one experience of feeling guilt and one experience of feeling shame. Following this, participants were asked to rate specific emotions they might have felt when their experience occurred. The coded emotions expressed in each narrative were compared to the rated emotion scales to evaluate the expressive reluctance score for each participant. Because shame might cause individuals to want to hide what they are feeling, it was expected that when participants narrate shame, they will express less emotion than when they narrate guilt. Our hypothesis stated that shame narratives will have higher levels of expressive reluctance than their guilt counterpart. Results found no significant difference between the amount of emotion

expressed in shame or guilt narratives. However, results also showed a moderately significant correlation between expressive reluctance scores for guilt and shame within participants which supports the theory that expressive reluctance may be an individual difference evident across different situations. Future directions include investigating the relationship between well-being and expressive reluctance as well as its relationship with age and gender.

INTRODUCTION

While guilt and shame might seem like interchangeable synonyms for one emotion, they are two distinct emotions with different characteristics and outcomes. The two emotions are often considered similar because they both arise from negative experiences and commonly lead individuals to feel distressed. Brene Brown explained that guilt is, "I *did* something bad," and shame is, "I *am* something bad" (Brown, 2006). This differentiator is crucial for understanding the repercussions and associations of shame and guilt. Though distinct, shame and guilt are both members of a group of emotions—also including embarrassment and pride—that theorists have labeled "self-conscious" emotions (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). Shame and guilt both derive from an individual reflecting on themselves (Tangney et al., 2013). Each of these emotions occurs when an individual evaluates themselves and determines how their morals, standards, and goals are affected by what they've experienced. This individual could be evaluating themself positively or negatively.

Not only are shame and guilt self-conscious emotions, but they have also been labeled as "moral emotions" because these emotions commonly arise in situations where moral judgment is required and also because these emotions may have an effect on moral behavior. Guilt and shame drive individuals to do things they might not do otherwise—like apologize or change behavior. These two emotions impact the way humans behave individually and socially (Tangney et al., 2013).

Expressive reluctance is a term that connotes the extent of an individual's unwillingness to express the emotions they are feeling in a social setting (Sullivan et al., 2010). Each individual person's level of expressive reluctance is different—people low in expressive reluctance are more willing to share their emotions, and those high in expressive reluctance don't like to express their emotions as much for a multitude of reasons including past experiences, societal expectations, or cultural differences. While expressive reluctance is often studied in terms of people—those more or less prone to expressive reluctance, expressive reluctance might also vary as a function of the situation, perhaps especially the specific emotion people are feeling. This study aims to learn more about expressive reluctance and its relationship to distinct self-conscious emotions. Do levels of expressive reluctance vary between emotions—like shame and guilt—as they do between people? Because shame involves individuals feeling poorly about themselves, we predict that individuals may want to hide how they are feeling, resulting in higher expressive reluctance. Guilt, however, involves individuals feeling bad about a specific action which means they are more likely to want to make amends. One way of doing this is by expressing guilt openly. Differences in emotion predict differences in the level of emotion expressed. This study aims to measure and compare levels of expressive reluctance by analyzing narratives that our participants— mothers and adolescents—have written about a time they experienced guilt and a separate time when they experienced shame.

Shame and Guilt

Though shame and guilt are both moral self-reflective emotions, they are quite different. Research suggests that shame is a more maladaptive emotion than guilt. Shame is correlated with low self-esteem, distress, irritability, and aggression (Velotti, Garofalo, Bottazzi, & Caretti, 2017; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher & Gramzow, 1992; Stuewig, Tangney, Heigel, Harty, & McCloskey, 2010). A study conducted in 2016 asked undergraduate students to report a time they had wronged another individual and the levels of shame or guilt they felt in that experience. The study used a self-reported questionnaire and found that those who felt higher levels of guilt were more likely to understand that they had committed wrongdoing; this, however, led them to punishing but forgiving themselves. Importantly, they were also more likely to not excuse themselves of blame. Conversely, those who felt shame were less likely to forgive themself, and they were more likely to punish themself while also excusing themself from blame (Griffin et al., 2016). Although this may seem contradictory, researchers explain that people might be doing both because they do not really believe that they are free from blame, but are trying to convince others (and possibly even themselves) that their behavior should be excused (Griffin et al., 2016). Not only does shame have negative effects regarding behavior, but it has also been found that shame-proneness is strongly and positively correlated with psychopathology, whereas guilt was only slightly positively correlated (Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992). Shame has been found to correlate with disorders such as

depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Muris, 2015). Many of these are examples of internalized behavior—negative behaviors that are directed toward the self rather than others. Guilt, like shame, can be maladaptive and lead to disorders like those mentioned, but research has found that guilt is often only maladaptive when it is ruminative or when shame is also felt (Tangney & Tracy, 2012).

Many studies have found that guilt is a more adaptive emotion that can lead to reparative behavior, perspective-taking, and the desire to solve conflicts within relationships (Silfver, 2007; Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Covert, Tangney, Maddux, & Heleno, 2003). This is especially true in the realm of interpersonal conflict. One study has found that undergraduate students who are more prone to feeling shame, relative to guilt, are more likely to have problematic relationships. This is possibly because those prone to shame have a more difficult time developing and implementing solutions for problems in relationships. The same study found that the undergraduate students prone to guilt, on average, thought of better quality solutions and had a greater desire to solve conflicts (Covert et al., 2003).

Expressive Reluctance and Emotion Regulation

Research has shown that the way individuals regulate their emotions has implications for well-being, social relationships, and physical health (Gross & John, 2003; Gross, 1998). One study researched two distinct ways individuals might regulate their emotions. The first was reappraisal. Reappraisal is a type of

emotional regulation that involves reframing how a situation or problem looks in order to change or eliminate the emotions that might have been elicited. The second type of emotional regulation strategy was suppression which involves not expressing emotions even though they might be felt (Gross, 1998). The study was conducted with college students who were asked to think about how they regulate their emotions. These regulation strategies were measured with a self-reported emotion regulation questionnaire. It was found that participants who showed emotional suppression expressed less positive emotion and experienced greater negative emotion, and those who reappraised their emotions expressed more positive emotion and less negative emotion (Gross & John, 2003). Because shame pertains to an individual feeling bad about themself, we predict that those asked to narrate an experience of shame will be more likely to utilize an emotional regulation strategy similar to suppression. Those experiencing shame might feel like they want to hide and not express the shame and everything that comes along with it. When an individual feels guilt, they are more inclined to make amends, try to understand the perspective of the person they wronged, and come up with a solution. These characteristics lead us to believe that those experiencing guilt may express their emotions more willingly.

Studies have shown that, among women, a relationship between emotion suppression and shame-proneness exists (Nyström & Mikkelsen, 2013; Velotti et al., 2017). It has been suggested that women who are more prone to shame are more likely to adopt maladaptive emotion regulation studies like suppression (Velotti et al., 2017). Some researchers have even suggested that these women

might do this in order to protect themselves from the harmful feelings of shame (Elison, Garaffalo, & Velotti, 2014).

Effects of Age and Gender

Even as a newborn, every human expresses emotion, although the capacity to regulate one's emotional expression changes with age (Izard et al., 1980). It has even been found that children as young as four can begin to regulate their emotional expression (Lewis, Sullivan, & Vasen, 1987). That being said, the understanding of complex emotions still takes time to develop.

The participants in the current study are in two age groups: adolescents and adults. Both of these groups should understand the basics of emotion. Because of this, there should not be a large discrepancy in guilt and shame expressed by adults and adolescents. Consequently, the different age groups in the sample are included to show the general differences between shame and guilt and not to test age differences.

The Current Study

This study aims to determine if expressive reluctance is higher when people are feeling shame, compared to when they are feeling guilt. Because shame is a more maladaptive emotion, it might cause individuals to want to hide their emotions and experience; we expect expressive reluctance to be higher in shame narratives than in guilt narratives. In order to operationalize expressive reluctance, comparisons will be made between what emotions participants

voluntarily include in a narrative and what they say afterward when they are directly questioned about different emotions they may have felt in that experience.

METHODS

Participants

The participants in this study were initially recruited for a separate study investigating how adolescents talk with mothers and friends about anger experiences. In the initial study, each participant had a conversation with both their mother and a peer. If the conversation with the mother took place first, afterwards, the mother would then fill out a questionnaire including measures for the current study. If the conversation with the peer took place first, afterwards the peer would fill out the questionnaire. To ensure the original study and current study were separate and did not affect each other, the order of interviews was randomized.

The sample initially consisted of 108 individuals—54 adolescents (53.7% female) aged 12-14 with a mean age of 12.87 (SD = 0.65) and 54 adult women ranging in age from 35 to 58 years old (M = 43.11; SD = 5.52). However, after we removed participants who did not provide either one or both narratives, the sample included 95 participants; 49 adult women and 46 adolescents. Because of the nature of the original study, our adult sample is all women—mothers.

The participants were recruited in Salt Lake City, Utah through fliers, facebook ads, and word of mouth. For taking part in the study, participants were

compensated $50 per person. The sample was mostly White; 89.32% of participants identified as White only, 2.11% identified as Biracial, and 3.16% identified as nonwhite; one participant each identified as Pacific Islander, American Indian, and African American.

Measures and Procedures

In a lab at the University of Utah, each participant completed a number of standardized questionnaires, as well as an assessment of shame and guilt experiences that is the primary focus of this study. Participants also completed individual scales unrelated to the present study. While there were many measures and questions asked that were not relevant to the current study—like conflict avoidance level, the Big Five personality test, need for closure scale, etc.—there were two tasks that were relevant to the current study.

In those tasks, every participant was first asked to provide a written narrative in response to the following prompt:

> Sometimes we feel both guilty and also ashamed about things that we did or didn't do. Other times we feel mostly guilty or mostly ashamed. Guilty usually means feeling badly about something you did, and ashamed usually means feeling that other people are going to disapprove of you or dislike you. Please pick a time when you felt (mostly guilty/mostly ashamed). Write everything you remember about that time. Write everything that happened, what you thought about it, how you felt about it, and what it meant to you.

Participants were not given any guidelines regarding how long their narrative should be. Furthermore, there were no questions that asked about how long ago or at what age the event occurred. After they wrote their story, they were asked to think about how they felt at that time and rate the extent to which they experienced seven emotions (mad, scared, unhappy, guilty, sad, ashamed, anxious) on a Likert-type scale from 1 (didn't feel that emotion at all) to 7 (the most intense they've ever felt that emotion; Likert, 1932). Following this, they were asked to write another narrative about a time they felt shame with the same prompt as above. They then rated the same emotions again while thinking about their shame experience.

Narrative Coding

A coding team consisting of myself and two other Research Assistants coded each narrative. The RAs were taught the coding scheme by me and practiced coding a few narratives to ensure they understood the scheme—RAs were told to only code for emotions that were explicitly expressed. Each narrative was coded separately by two people. Every narrative was coded by me, and each RA coded a different half of the dataset. The narratives were coded for the presence of eight separate emotions: mad, scared, unhappy, guilty, sad, ashamed, anxious, and embarrassed. For each emotion category, a '0' or '1' was assigned. A '0' was assigned when that emotion was not expressed in the narrative. A '1' was assigned when that emotion was explicitly expressed. To ensure coder reliability (see reliability scores below), the two RAs and I met

weekly to discuss any questions and to make sure everyone had the same understanding of the coding scheme.

Although the original questionnaire did not ask about embarrassment, we felt that it was appropriate to code because many participants expressed it explicitly and because embarrassment is closely related to shame and guilt, but distinct enough that we felt it was important to code. Along with those eight emotions, there was also a category identified as 'unspecified negative.' This emotion category was created for when an individual expresses feeling a vague, negative emotion like 'awful,' or 'horrible.' While it is not a discrete emotion, researchers felt it was important to address when an individual felt and, more importantly, expressed an emotion. Because these two emotion categories—embarrassment and unspecified negative—were not included in the rated scale section, they are not included in the expressive reluctance score. However, they do tell us important information about how individuals felt when they were experiencing guilt and shame. Both the coded narratives and the rated emotion sections will be analyzed separately to see if they are expressed more in guilt or shame narratives.

Reliability scores for each emotion were tested using the intraclass correlation coefficient kappa across both shame and guilt narratives for 0/1 scoring. With 218 items, the interrater reliability for "mad" was found to be Kappa=.819, $p<.001$. For "scared" Kappa=.838, $p<.001$, for "guilt" Kappa=.917, $p<.001$, for "sad" Kappa=.917, $p<.001$, for "ashamed" Kappa=.894, $p<.001$, for "anxious" Kappa=.908, $p<.001$, for "embarrassed" Kappa=.898, $p<.001$, for the

"unspecified negative" category Kappa=.739, $p<.001$. Disagreements between the two coders were resolved via discussion and a consensus version of the coding was used for the primary analyses.

Interpreting the Rated Emotion Section

In order to create a score for expressive reluctance, the rated emotion scores were dummy coded. A "0" was assigned when participants chose 1 on the scale meaning they did not feel that emotion at all, and a "1" was assigned when participants chose 2-7 on the scale meaning they felt that emotion at least a little bit. While a dichotomous scoring approach for this section is not ideal, it was necessary in order to create a score for expressive reluctance. As mentioned in more depth in the following section, the narratives were coded as well for the presence (1) or absence (0) of each emotion. To create the expressive reluctance score for each individual emotion, the narrative values were subtracted from the rated emotion values. This leaves each emotion with an expressive reluctance score of "0", "1", or "-1". A score of "0" means that either the emotion was not expressed in the narrative and rated scale, or it means that the emotion was expressed in both locations. A score of "1" means that the participant did not express the emotion in their narrative, but said they felt that emotion on the rated Likert scale. This event signifies expressive reluctance. A score of "-1" indicates that an emotion was expressed in the narrative, but not expressed when the participant was asked about it on the rated section. This occasion should be rare but would indicate the opposite of expressive reluctance—a phenomenon that

could be termed “narrative exaggeration.” Each participant’s total score was calculated by adding each individual emotion expressive reluctance score (anger, fear, unhappiness, guilt, sadness, shame, and anxiety) together where a higher score represents a higher presence of expressive reluctance.

RESULTS

Emotions Felt During Shame and Guilt Experiences

To better understand the emotions felt and expressed in the narratives and rated emotion section, some preliminary analysis was conducted. The first study was a paired-sample *t*-test. This test compared the rated emotion scores from the questionnaire as a function of whether the ratings concerned the guilt experience or the shame experience. By doing this, we were able to see if shame and guilt experiences elicited different emotions and what those emotions were. For mothers, anger and shame were felt more commonly in shame experiences than in guilt experiences. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between shame and guilt experiences in the frequency or intensity of any other emotion (fear, unhappiness, guilt, sadness, and anxiety) for mothers (see Table 1a). For adolescents, shame was felt more often and more intensely in shame experiences and guilt was felt more often and more intensely in guilt experiences (see Table 1b). This is expected because participants were asked to differentiate between

Table 1a. Mothers' rated emotion scores for guilt and shame experiences.

	Type of Narrative	*M*	*SD*	*t*(49)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Anger	Guilt	2.5306	1.905	-2.401	.020	-.343
	Shame	3.2245	1.874			
Anxiety	Guilt	3.3265	1.571	-1.852	.070	-.265
	Shame	3.3265	1.807			
Fear	Guilt	2.1837	1.495	-1.683	.099	-.240
	Shame	2.6939	1.981			
Guilt	Guilt	4.5306	1.309	1.950	.057	.279
	Shame	4.0000	1.969			
Sadness	Guilt	3.5918	1.593	-1.000	.322	-.143
	Shame	3.8980	1.960			
Shame	Guilt	3.4898	1.622	-4.066	<.001	-.581
	Shame	4.6122	1.789			
Unhappiness	Guilt	3.7347	1.455	-1.951	.057	-.279
	Shame	4.2245	1.863			

Note: Larger numbers indicate a stronger rated presence of an emotion. Participants were asked to rate how intensely they felt that emotion on a scale from 1 (did not feel that emotion at all) to 7 (the most intensely they had ever felt that emotion).

Table 1b. Adolescents' rated emotion scores for guilt and shame experiences.

	Type of Narrative	*M*	*SD*	*t*(46)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Anger	Guilt	2.7174	1.682	1.637	.109	.241
	Shame	2.3913	1.498			
Anxiety	Guilt	2.5652	1.573	-0.454	.652	-.067
	Shame	2.6739	1.752			
Fear	Guilt	2.6739	1.739	-0.358	.722	-.053
	Shame	2.7826	1.725			
Guilt	Guilt	5.0000	1.506	5.675	<.001	.837
	Shame	3.3261	2.066			
Sadness	Guilt	3.1739	1.717	0.247	.806	.036
	Shame	3.1087	1.816			
Shame	Guilt	3.8913	1.792	-2.508	.016	-.370
	Shame	4.6087	1.706			
Unhappiness	Guilt	3.8478	1.429	1.304	.199	.192
	Shame	3.5870	1.733			

Note: Larger numbers indicate a stronger rated presence of an emotion. Participants were asked to rate how intensely they felt that emotion on a scale from 1 (did not feel that emotion at all) to 7 (the most intensely they had ever felt that emotion).

times when they felt guilt and shame. This also shows that all participants, both mothers and adolescents, were responsive to the instructions given. It is intriguing, however, that there is no significant difference in the level of guilt expressed by mothers in their shame and guilt experiences. Likely, this means that when mother participants experienced shame, they were also experiencing guilt, but mothers were able to report on guilt experiences that did not involve also feeling shame.

Expression of Shame and Guilt

We next compared the expression of emotions between the shame and guilt narratives for all participants (see Table 2). A paired-sample *t*-test showed that guilt, shame, and embarrassment had significant differences in the number of times they were expressed in shame and guilt narratives. As expected, guilt was expressed more often in the guilt narratives while shame and embarrassment were expressed more often in shame narratives. As mentioned before, the differences in shame and guilt are expected and indicate that participants followed the prompt instructions. However, the finding that embarrassment being felt more often in shame experiences suggests something interesting about the differences between shame and guilt.

Table 2. Frequency of emotions expressed in the guilt and shame narratives by mothers.

	Type of Narrative	*M*	*SD*	*t*(93)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Anger	Guilt	0.1474	0.356	0.178	.859	-.074
	Shame	0.1383	0.347			
Anxiety	Guilt	0.0213	0.246	-0.575	.566	-.059
	Shame	0.1064	0.281			
Embarrassment	Guilt	0.0213	0.145	-2.365	.020	-.244
	Shame	0.1064	0.310			
Fear	Guilt	0.0213	0.145	-1.422	.158	-.147
	Shame	0.0638	0.246			
Guilt	Guilt	0.5426	0.501	7.810	<.001	.806
	Shame	0.0745	0.264			
Sadness	Guilt	0.0319	0.177	-0.376	.708	-.039
	Shame	0.0426	0.203			
Shame	Guilt	0.0213	0.145	-10.730	<.001	-1.107
	Shame	0.5745	0.497			
Unspecified Negative	Guilt	0.3936	0.491	-0.293	.770	-.030
	Shame	0.4149	0.495			

Note: A higher score indicates that emotion was expressed more frequently. Unhappiness was excluded from this table because no participant expressed explicit unhappiness in any narrative.

Expressive Reluctance of Shame and Guilt

Recall that the central hypothesis of this study is that when participants narrate shame experiences, they will score higher on expressive reluctance than when narrating guilt experiences. To test this hypothesis, multiple paired-sample *t*-tests were conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in expressive reluctance scores between shame and guilt experiences. The test compared the overall expressive reluctance scores (across all emotions for which participants made ratings) between shame and guilt stories for both mothers and adolescents. For mothers (see Table 3a), there was no significant difference between the overall expressive reluctance means for shame (M=4.91, SD=1.50) and guilt (M=5.04, SD=1.06). We found this to be true for the adolescent population (see Table 3b) as well (for shame: M=4.43, SD=1.88; for guilt: M=4.95, SD=1.45). It is also important to note that a higher score indicates more instances of expressive reluctance.

Expressive reluctance scores were calculated for separate emotions in order to determine if guilt or shame experiences result in expressive reluctance for specific emotions. For each emotion, the mean expressive reluctance score from guilt narratives was compared to the expressive reluctance scores from the shame narratives. The only emotions that had a significant difference in scores between the two narratives were shame and guilt for mothers and shame for adolescents. For mothers, in guilt narratives, guilt was expressed more often (M=0.37 in guilt narrative, M=0.82 in shame narrative), and for shame narratives, shame was expressed more often (M=0.43 in shame narrative,

Table 3a. Overall expressive reluctance score between guilt and shame experiences as well as individual emotion expressive reluctance scores for mothers.

	Type of Narrative	*M*	*SD*	*t*(48)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Overall Expressive Reluctance	Guilt	5.0408	1.055	0.612	.543	.087
	Shame	4.9082	1.500			
Anger	Guilt	0.5918	0.441	-1.420	.162	-.203
	Shame	0.6837	0.417			
Anxiety	Guilt	0.7143	0.456	0.000	1.00	.000
	Shame	0.7143	0.500			
Fear	Guilt	0.5714	0.500	0.942	.351	.135
	Shame	0.4898	0.505			
Guilt	Guilt	0.3673	0.487	-4.854	<.001	-.693
	Shame	0.8163	0.391			
Sadness	Guilt	0.8980	0.306	0.573	.569	.082
	Shame	0.8571	0.354			
Shame	Guilt	0.9184	0.277	5.894	<.001	.842
	Shame	0.4286	0.500			
Unhappiness	Guilt	0.9796	0.143	1.353	.182	.193
	Shame	0.9184	0.277			

Note: Larger numbers indicate a higher frequency of expressive reluctance. Recall that a participant was counted as feeling an emotion if they rated anywhere from 2-7 on the rated emotion scale. This would account for the fact that many of these emotion categories indicate that a large majority of participants felt that emotion.

Table 3b. Overall expressive reluctance score between guilt and shame experiences for adolescents as well as individual emotion expressive reluctance scores for adolescents.

	Type of Narrative	*M*	*SD*	*t*(44)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Overall Expressive Reluctance	Guilt	4.9457	1.450	1.935	.059	.288
	Shame	4.4333	1.876			
Anger	Guilt	0.6413	0.467	0.489	.627	.072
	Shame	0.6087	0.458			
Anxiety	Guilt	0.6087	0.493	-0.240	.811	-.036
	Shame	0.6444	0.570			
Fear	Guilt	0.5870	0.498	-0.216	.830	-.032
	Shame	0.6222	0.535			
Guilt	Guilt	0.5000	0.506	-1.000	.323	-.149
	Shame	0.6222	0.490			
Sadness	Guilt	0.7826	0.417	1.530	.133	.228
	Shame	0.6667	0.477			
Shame	Guilt	0.8696	0.341	5.184	<.001	.773
	Shame	0.3778	0.535			
Unhappiness	Guilt	0.9565	0.206	1.138	.261	.170
	Shame	0.8889	0.318			

Note: Larger numbers indicate a higher frequency of expressive reluctance.

M=0.92 in guilt narrative). For adolescents, shame was expressed more in shame narratives (*M*=0.38 in shame narrative, *M*=0.87 in guilt narrative). While the differences are significant, they were expected and not meaningful. Shame was less likely to be expressed in guilt narratives because participants were being asked about guilt; inversely, guilt was less likely to be expressed in shame narratives because they were being specifically asked about shame. Participants were asked to differentiate between their guilt and shame experiences, and this is what is represented in these significant differences between guilt and shame. These results do not support our hypothesis that shame experiences would elicit more expressive reluctance than guilt experiences.

Age Differences

This study includes participants representing two different age groups as well as two different social roles. Because the experiences of mothers and adolescents can vary so much, we decided to test differences between the two groups. Because the primary goal of this study was not to investigate the relationship between age and expressive reluctance, an exploratory unpaired *t*-test was conducted. The mean guilt experience expressive reluctance scores for mothers and adolescents were compared to see if age significantly affected expressive reluctance scores. For guilt narratives, there was no significant difference between the scores for mothers and adolescents, $t(92)=0.37$, $p=.715$. Similarly, expressive reluctance scores between mothers and adolescents from the shame narratives were compared. Again, this comparison was found to not be

significant, $t(92)=1.36$, p=.177. These results tell us that age is not significantly related to expressive reluctance scores.

Are Participants Consistent in Expressive Reluctance Across Guilt and Shame? An Exploratory Correlational Analysis

Because we found that the frequency of expressive reluctance does not vary depending on the emotion that is being felt, we wanted to perform one more analysis to help us determine if expressive reluctance scores vary depending on individual differences rather than emotional differences. For both mothers and adolescents, we conducted a correlation analysis between the overall expressive reluctance scores for the guilt experience and the shame experience. For mothers, there was a moderate and statistically significant correlation between their overall guilt and shame expressive reluctance scores, $t(47)=.34$, $p=.019$. This was also true for the adolescent population, $t(43)=.31$, $p=.036$. These results suggest that our approach to measuring expressive reluctance, while not revealing emotion-based differences in reluctance, did likely capture some within-individual differences related to expressive reluctance.

DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to determine whether and how expressive reluctance varies depending on what primary emotion is being felt; for this study, we specifically compared guilt and shame. We predicted that those

who were experiencing shame would have higher levels of expressive reluctance than those who were experiencing guilt because shame and emotional suppression have been previously shown to have an association (Nyström & Mikkelsen, 2013; Velotti et al., 2017). However, this hypothesis was not supported by the data derived from these narratives. There was no significant difference in the way individuals expressed their emotions when they were narrating shame versus when they were narrating guilt. In other words, narrating guilt or shame did not predict any difference in the amount of emotion an individual expressed. This was true for both our mother sample and our adolescent sample. Furthermore, the dichotomous scoring method we used in this study is not sensitive to the amount of a specific emotion being expressed or felt; emotions were either expressed/felt or not expressed/not felt. However, we did find a moderate significant correlation between the expressive reluctance scores for shame and guilt. This indicates that consistent individual differences might be correlated with expressive reluctance scores across emotions.

It is also important to note that the score used to measure expressive reluctance in this study has never been tested before. It was developed by myself for this study. The measure used is novel and introduces a way to capture expressive reluctance in a way that moves from a self-reported questionnaire to a more observable and behaviorally based method. In order to measure expressive reluctance reliably, it is imperative to know what emotions are being expressed while also knowing what emotions have been felt—this can be difficult because the participant may not remember exactly what they felt. The discrepancy

between these two is what expressive reluctance is. While the current study's method of measuring expressive reluctance is examining this discrepancy, we don't know if it is the best possible measurement. This prevents the construct of expressive reluctance from being as valid as it could be.

Furthermore, in this study, emotions in the narratives and rated emotion section were measured as either expressed/felt or not expressed/felt. A better measure might include the intensity of emotion. For example, in the rated emotion section, those who rated their intensity of anger as a 2 were grouped with those who rated their intensity of anger as a 7. Of course, the individual who felt more angry is more likely to express that they felt anger than the individual who felt less angry. This could potentially make the measure used in this study less valid. That being said, the data used in this study were collected from a separate study that was not concerned with measuring expressive reluctance.

Although there was no significant difference in the scores of expressive reluctance between guilt and shame, we examined the narratives and rated emotion scales for differences in how specific emotions differed across experiences of shame and guilt. When examining the written narratives from all participants, we discovered that embarrassment was expressed significantly more often in cases when shame was felt than when guilt was felt. Because embarrassment was only expressed in narratives, it is impossible for us to know the difference in the intensity of embarrassment felt in either guilt or shame experiences. Furthermore, when analyzing the specific rated emotion scales, we

found that, only in mothers, anger was reported significantly more in shame experiences than in guilt experiences—indicating that anger and shame have a stronger correlation than anger and guilt. While mothers did feel significantly more anger during shame experiences than in guilt experiences, it was not by much. Anger and shame are commonly associated with each other (Lutwak et al., 2001; Wright, Gudjonsson, & Young, 2008), so it is not unusual to find that anger and shame are significantly related in this sample. Furthermore, shame and embarrassment are closely related emotions that can be felt simultaneously. Studies have found that while shame is associated more with anger, disgust, and regret, embarrassment is associated with more trivial feelings like awkwardness and foolishness (Tangney et al., 1996). It is not unlikely that many participants in our sample experienced embarrassment along with shame in the stories that they shared with us, and some made that clear by expressing this emotion.

In this study, we did not expect any large differences between the adult and adolescent sample, but one important distinction is that only mothers felt a significant amount of anger in their shame experiences. Because adolescents did not present this pattern, it is possible that it is developed through time or experience—suggesting a developmental shift in the experience of shame. Although we did not find any significant differences between expressive reluctance scores between mothers and adolescents, further analyzing the age differences of expressive reluctance would be an important and interesting future study.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has a few important limitations to address. First and foremost, the data used in this study were collected from participants recruited for another research purpose. The original study examined adolescent and mother interactions, so the participant pool for the current study was only mothers and adolescents. Furthermore, the participants in this study were mostly white. This limits generalizability greatly because the sample is not representative of a more diverse population. A more representative sample would include individuals of many different ages and races. It is very possible that adult men (none of which were included in the sample) would have a different experience with guilt, shame, and expressive reluctance as well. For example, one study, in particular, found a relationship between emotion suppression and shame-proneness only in adult women (Velotti et al., 2016).

Future studies in this field should further examine how and if expressive reluctance varies based on emotion. While we were able to study guilt and shame, there are many other different emotions and experiences that could affect expressive reluctance (i.e. individual, sex, or cultural differences, how the data were reported, etc.). For example, previous research has found that higher shame and guilt levels were reported among females (Velotti et al., 2017). Specifically, these females were found to have high levels of body shame. That being said, it has also been found that emotional suppression is higher among males (Velotti et al., 2017). Examining sex differences in a future study could be very fruitful.

More broadly, it would be very interesting to see how expressive reluctance affects well-being. Our initial hypothesis suggests that expressive reluctance might negatively impact wellbeing, but there are no data in the current study that can adequately address this question. We do know, however, that emotion regulation strategies can affect overall wellbeing.

Although our hypothesis that expressive reluctance varies depending on what emotion is being narrated was not supported, our study did show that both our mother and adolescent samples can differentiate experiences when they felt guilt from experiences when they felt shame. In our sample, we also found that shame experiences elicited feelings of embarrassment for everyone and feelings of anger for mothers. This study supports the current theories that guilt and shame are two distinct emotions with potentially different implications.

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