



The effect of public exposure and moral beliefs on feelings of shame and guilt

A recommendation by [Chris Chambers](#)  based on peer reviews by [Uriel Haran](#) of the STAGE 2 REPORT:

Yikang Zhang, Fung Chit (Jack) Cheung, Hei Tung (Patrina) Wong, Lok Yee (Noel) Yuen, Hui Ching (Rachel) Sin, Hiu Tung Kristy Chow, Gilad Feldman (2023) Revisiting the role of public exposure and moral beliefs on feelings of shame and guilt: Replication Registered Report of Smith et al. (2002)'s Study 1. OSF, ver. 5, peer-reviewed and recommended by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/J3UE4>

Submitted: 03 February 2023, Recommended: 23 March 2023

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Chambers, C. (2023) The effect of public exposure and moral beliefs on feelings of shame and guilt. *Peer Community in Registered Reports*, 100396. [10.24072/pci.rr.100396](https://doi.org/10.24072/pci.rr.100396)

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Shame and guilt are powerful negative emotions that are notable for their external vs. internal focus: while shame is generally experienced in response to public scrutiny, guilt arises from a self-directed, private evaluation. In a formative study, Smith et al. (2002) asked whether the level of public exposure influenced levels of shame and guilt arising from one's transgressions, and found that, compared to private situations, public exposure was more strongly associated with shame than with guilt. Since then, these findings have had significant implications for theories and applications of moral psychology. In the current study, Zhang et al. (2023) directly replicated Smith et al. (2002) in a large online sample, revisiting two critical questions from Study 1: (a) whether public exposure affects the magnitude of shame and guilt over one's misconduct, and (b) whether stronger moral belief increases guilt and shame over one's misconduct. The results fail to confirm the original conclusions: both public exposure and manipulation of moral beliefs were found to influence shame and guilt, with no reliable evidence that shame was influenced more strongly than guilt. These findings thus constitute a non-replication and offer a challenge to theoretical models that hinge on the separability of shame and guilt as separate constructs. The Stage 2 manuscript was evaluated over one round of in-depth review. Based on detailed responses to the reviewer's comments, the recommender judged that the manuscript met the Stage 2 criteria and awarded a positive recommendation. **URL to the preregistered Stage 1 protocol:** <https://osf.io/j7kt2> **Level of bias control achieved:** Level 6. *No part of the data or evidence that was used to answer the research question was generated until after IPA.* **List of eligible PCI RR-friendly journals:**

- [Experimental Psychology](#)

- [F1000Research](#)
- [Meta-Psychology](#)
- [Peer Community Journal](#)
- [PeerJ](#)
- [Royal Society Open Science](#)
- [Swiss Psychology Open](#)

References:

1. Smith, R. H., Webster, J. M., Parrott, W. G., & Eyre, H. L. (2002). The role of public exposure in moral and nonmoral shame and guilt. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 138-159.

<https://doi.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.83.1.138>

2. Zhang, Y., Cheung, F. C., Wong, H.T., Yuen, L. Y., Sin, H. C., Chow, H. T. & Feldman, G. (2023). Revisiting the role of public exposure and moral beliefs on feelings of shame and guilt: Replication Registered Report of Smith et al. (2002)'s Study 1. Acceptance of Version 5 by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://osf.io/jpx87>

Reviews

Evaluation round #1

DOI or URL of the preprint: <https://osf.io/3uj6d>

Version of the preprint: 3

Authors' reply, 08 March 2023

Revised manuscript: <https://osf.io/jf2nc>

All revised materials uploaded to: <https://osf.io/j3ue4/> , updated manuscript under sub-directory "PCIRR Stage 2\PCIRR-S2 submission following R&R"

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Decision by [Chris Chambers](#) , posted 02 March 2023, validated 02 March 2023

Minor Revision

One of the original Stage 1 reviewers returned to evaluate your Stage 2 submission, and I have decided that we can proceed on the basis of this review and my own reading of the manuscript. The reviewer is broadly positive about your submission while also noting two areas needing attention: whether the exploratory analyses are completely justified, and whether the conclusions are as focused as they should be on the core outcomes. I am interested to see your response to these concerns, but in my own reading, I think addressing the second point may well neutralise the first without needing major changes. I will consider your response/revision at desk, and provided you are able to respond thoroughly, full acceptance should be forthcoming without requiring further in-depth review.

Reviewed by [Uriel Haran](#), 15 February 2023

Are the data able to test the hypotheses?

Certainly. The sample size is large enough, the manipulation check seems to suggest the manipulation worked and everything else is consistent with the original study the current one is replicating.

Are the introduction, rationale and stated hypotheses the same as in Stage 1?

Yes, with the exception of the addition of a passage discussing the difference between shame and guilt in focusing on the self vs. on one's behavior. This discussion was suggested in the review of Stage 1, and I think it improves the paper.

Have the authors adhered precisely to the registered study procedures?

As far as I can tell, yes. There are many exploratory analyses, but they are clearly labeled as such.

Are the unregistered exploratory analyses justified, methodologically sound, and informative?

Not all of them are, in my opinion. For example, the comparison of correlations between shame/guilt reactions and explicit shame/guilt is something I would have moved to an appendix, and in any case would not devote three pages to in the main text. Same for the scenario interactions on pp. 35-36. These results do not teach us anything substantive about the hypotheses or the replicated study.

Are the authors' conclusions justified given the evidence?

Yes. But the conclusions need to be presented more clearly. The key analysis of the replication is the interaction between exposure and emotion. Failing to replicate the result of this analysis from the original paper makes for a failed replication of the entire research. All the numerous other results did replicate but they are not material to the current test. Therefore, the key analysis should be given special emphasis in the presentation of the results and the discussion, so that it stands out from the other replicated findings. Currently, the paper reads more like a series of successful replications (and many, many exploratory analyses), followed by a conclusion that the replication attempt failed, which may surprise less attentive readers.