

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SELF-CONSCIOUS EMOTIONS  
IN SERVICE ENCOUNTERS

by

MARIA SUSANA JARAMILLO ECHEVERRI

THOMAS L. BAKER, COMMITTEE CHAIR  
CHRISTINE RINGLER, COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR  
CLAY M. VOORHEES  
SEBASTIAN FORKMANN  
DANIEL BACHRACH

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Marketing  
in the Graduate School of  
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2020

Copyright Maria Susana Jaramillo Echeverri 2020  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to understand the nature of and role that customers' embarrassment and guilt play in service encounters and evaluations. In *Essay 1*, I study the commonalities between and distinctiveness of each of these emotions, by identifying their antecedents and testing customers' perceptions of these emotions as unique emotional states. This dissertation also represents the first exploratory effort to understand how service employees and service organizations can help customers to deal with their embarrassment and guilt, and transform an uncomfortable situation into a positive service experience. In *Essay 2*, this dissertation tests how consumers' self-attributed service failures (one of the customers' guilt and embarrassment antecedents), influence their satisfaction and likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth. I also examine embarrassment and guilt as mediators of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes.

This dissertation provides evidence that both embarrassment and guilt are emotions commonly experienced by consumers in service encounters. Individuals can differentiate them and provide different narratives aligned to the theoretical description of each emotion. Furthermore, consumers believe service employees' actions can worsen or lessen the discomfort typical of embarrassing or guilt-evoking situations. Finally, this dissertation demonstrates that the embarrassment and guilt generated by customers' self-attributed service failures impact service outcomes, and demonstrates how the presence of other customers as well the customers' behavioral inconsistency, can moderate these effects.

## **DEDICATION**

Esta disertación está dedicada a mis padres, Martha y Bernardo, quienes me enseñaron a volar.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<i>a</i>	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
<i>p</i>	Probability associated with significance value
<i>t</i>	Computed value of t test
>	More than
<	Less than
=	Equal to
<i>N</i>	Number of subjects
<i>M</i>	Mean
<i>F</i>	The F-statistic test if the variances of two populations are equal
<i>SD</i>	Standard deviation
<i>SE</i>	Standard error
$\eta^2$	Eta square is a measure of effect size (% of variance explained)
<i>d</i>	Cohen's d is a measure of effect size (difference in standard deviation units)
%	Percentage
<i>b</i>	Beta coefficient
<i>H</i>	Hypothesis
MTurk	Amazon's Mechanical Turk
<i>CI</i>	Confidence interval
<i>R</i>	Pearson product-moment correlation

<i>CIT</i>	Critical Incident Technique
<i>TIU</i>	Theories-in-Use
<i>SIT</i>	Social Impact Theory
<i>CAT</i>	Cognitive Appraisal Theory
<i>CDT</i>	Cognitive Dissonance Theory
<i>SB</i>	Customers' self-blame
<i>BI</i>	Customers' behavioral inconsistency

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In this section, I would like to thank the people that not only help me during this research journey but those that support me during all my Ph.D. program:

**Tom.** Thank you for your patience, understanding, and support during all these years. Not only you allowed me to be part of this program, but you also helped me to go through this process successfully. Thank you for your encouragement, guidance, and trust. I am very grateful to have you as my advisor.

**Christine.** Your help and support during this dissertation have been crucial to its successful completion. Your feedback and your precision and attention to details, has enriched this research experience, beyond any classrooms. Thank you!

**My committee members** Clay, Sebastian, and Dan. Thank you for your ideas, opinions, and recommendations. Your insights were critical in the configuration, development, and improvement of this research. Your feedback enhanced the quality of the dissertation.

**Fareed.** There are no words to thank you for all you have done for me. Thank you for believing in me more than myself. For supporting me and help me to face the many challenges I have encounter during this process.

**My family.** Quiero agradecer especialmente mi familia por su apoyo incondicional. A mis padres, Bernardo y Martha, quienes a me enseñaron la resiliencia y constancia necesaria para perseguir mis sueños.

También quiero agradecer a Ángela, Beatriz, Cruzana, Maria Eugenia, Lucia y Ricardo, pues en diferentes momentos de mi vida cada uno de ustedes cumplieron un papel crítico en mi crecimiento personal y profesional. Sin su apoyo, no podría haber alcanzado esta meta.

**My friends.** I want to thank my friends Diana, Margaret, Camilo and Sandra, who made me part of their family and provided me support, comfort, and encouragement during all these years. Also, I want to thank my International Family from the Saturday Gatherings; you guys are one of the best things ever happen to me. Mainly, I want to thank Dr. Ken Hinton for being a godparent for Fareed and me. Last but not least, I want to thank Kris Lindsay-Hall, who, more than a colleague, it has been a true friend and supporter since day 1.

**My colleagues.** It is not a secret that the Ph.D. journey has ups and downs, and we face a lot of challenges during this process. However, I want to thank my colleagues for helping me to go through the difficult times and celebrate my accomplishments; you gave me the strength to not give up. Yi, Hyeyoon, Miracle, Kim, Alex, Brett, Ben, Ross and Dave, Thank you!

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xiv
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION.....	1
CONTRIBUTION OF THE DISSERTATION .....	4
ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION.....	5
CHAPTER 2. ESSAY 1: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SELF-CONSCIOUS EMOTIONS IN SERVICE ENCOUNTERS.....	7
ABSTRACT.....	7
INTRODUCTION .....	8
CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.....	9
A Definition of Emotion .....	9
Self-Conscious Emotions.....	11
Differentiating Guilt, Shame, and Embarrassment .....	12
Negative Self-Conscious Emotions in Service Encounters .....	17

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES .....	24
STUDY 1: CAN PARTICIPANTS DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN EMOTIONS? .....	25
STUDY 2: COLLECTING THE INCIDENTS .....	29
Method and Procedure .....	29
Model: Summary of Categorization of Antecedents and Service Employee Behaviors .....	36
STUDY 2A: GUILT AND EMBARRASMENT ANTECEDENTS .....	37
Customer Incidents Classification: Major Groups.....	37
Customer Incidents Classification: Categories within Major Groups (Antecedents of Guilt).....	39
Customer Incidents Classification: Categories within Major Groups (Antecedents of Embarrassment).....	47
STUDY 2B: VALIDATION OF GUILT AND EMBARRASMENT ANTECEDENTS.....	53
Validation of Guilt Antecedents .....	53
Validation of Embarrassment Antecedents.....	55
STUDY 2C: CATEGORIZATION OF EMPLOYEE BEHAVIORS .....	56
Employee Intervention Incidents Classification: Major Groups .....	56
Service Employees' Behaviors Classification: Categories within Major Groups (Guilt) .....	57
Service Employees' Behaviors Classification: Categories within Major Groups (Embarrassment) .....	62
GENERAL DISCUSSION .....	67
Implications for Research .....	67
Implications for Managers .....	69
Limitations and Directions.....	71

REFERENCES .....	74
CHAPTER 3. ESSAY 2: IT IS MY FAULT! THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF GUILT AND EMBARRASSMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMERS' SELF-ATTRIBUTED FAILURES AND SERVICE OUTCOMES .....	82
ABSTRACT.....	82
INTRODUCTION .....	83
CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.....	87
Types of Emotions and Customers' Failures Attribution .....	88
HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT .....	91
The Effects of Self-Attributed Failures on Service Outcomes .....	91
The Mediational Effect of Guilt and Embarrassment.....	92
The Moderating Effect of Others Presence.....	95
The Moderating Effect of Behavioral Inconsistency .....	96
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES.....	98
Study 1 .....	98
Study 2 .....	111
Study 3 .....	128
GENERAL DISCUSSION .....	140
Theoretical Contribution.....	142
Practical Implications.....	142
Directions for Future Research .....	143
Limitations .....	146
REFERENCES .....	148
CHAPTER 4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS.....	155

CONCLUSIONS.....	155
Essay 1 Implications .....	156
Essay 2 Implications .....	156
APPENDIX.....	158
APPENDIX 2A: GUILT ANTECEDENTS CODEBOOK .....	158
APPENDIX 2B: EMBARRASSMENT ANTECEDENTS CODEBOOK .....	161
APPENDIX 2C: CRITICAL BEHAVIORS THAT AFFECT GUILT CODEBOOK...	163
APPENDIX 2D: CRITICAL BEHAVIORS THAT AFFECT EMBARRASSMENT CODEBOOK.....	167
APPENDIX 3A: SCENARIOS STUDY 1 .....	170
APPENDIX 3B: SCALES .....	171
APPENDIX 3C: SCENARIOS PRE-TEST STUDY 2 .....	172
APPENDIX 3D: SCENARIOS STUDY 2 .....	173
APPENDIX: IRB APPROVAL.....	175

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1. Summary of Differences among Negative Self-Conscious Emotions .....	16
Table 2-2. Selected Research in Consumption and Service Settings.....	18
Table 2-3. Selected Research in Embarrassment.....	20
Table 2-4. Selected Research in Guilt.....	22
Table 2-5. Selected Research in Shame .....	23
Table 2-6. Embarrassment and Guilt scenarios .....	26
Table 2-7. Summary of Scenarios Evaluation .....	28
Table 2-8. Summary of Cases.....	33
Table 2-9. Interjudge Agreement.....	36
Table 2-10. Summary of Incidents per Major Categories.....	39
Table 2-11. Guilt Antecedents .....	40
Table 2-12. Embarrassment Antecedents .....	48
Table 2-13. Validation of Guilt.....	54
Table 2-14. Validation of Embarrassment .....	55
Table 2-15. Summary of Critical Service Employees' Behaviors per Major Categories.....	57
Table 2-16. Service Employees' Behaviors that Impact Guilt .....	61
Table 2-17. Service Employees' Behaviors that Impact Embarrassment.....	66
Table 3-1. Mediation Results of Guilt (Study 1) .....	106
Table 3-2. Mediation Results of Embarrassment (Study 1).....	107
Table 3-3. Mediation Results of Parallel Mediation (Study 1).....	108
Table 3-4. Mediation Results of Shame (Study 1).....	110

Table 3-5. Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Guilt; Study: 2) .....	121
Table 3-6. Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Embarrassment; Study: 2).....	124
Table 3-7. Mediation Results of Parallel Mediation (Study 2).....	126
Table 3-8. Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Guilt; Study: 3) .....	135
Table 3-9. Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Embarrassment; Study: 3).....	136
Table 3-10. Mediation Results of Parallel Mediation (Study 3).....	138

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1. Model Essay 2 .....	6
Figure 2-1. Model Essay 1 .....	37
Figure 3-1. Proposed Model .....	87
Figure 3-2. Procedure Study 2 .....	115
Figure 3-3. Interaction Plot (Guilt) .....	119
Figure 3-4. Interaction Plot (Embarrassment) .....	120

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION**

Individuals regularly evaluate their environment to identify potential threats and opportunities. These situational assessments trigger emotions, such as fear, anger, joy, guilt, and happiness, among others. Emotions fulfill an adaptive function as they prompt behaviors that lead to responses to environmental circumstances (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). This permeates all areas of daily life, including behavior as consumers. For example, if you are walking on a dark street you may experience fear and in response walk faster. Or if you have a negative experience with a server in a restaurant you may feel anger and complain.

Emotions can be categorized based on a self-other scale (C. A. Smith and Ellsworth (1985). In regards to negative emotions, individuals experience sadness and fear if they attribute an event to situational factors (emotions triggered by situations), whereas they experience disgust, anger and contempt when the causes of events are attributed to others (emotions triggered by others). Guilt and shame are elicited when individuals attribute an event to themselves (self-blame emotions). These categories can be translated to consumption settings. For example, emotions triggered by others emerge when a customer attributes an event to the firm, emotions triggered by situations emerge when customers attribute an event to situational factors (e.g., the weather), and self-blame emotions emerge when customers attribute failure to themselves (Oliver, 1993).

The emotional states that can be experienced in consumption settings are called consumption emotions (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). Some of the most studied consumption emotions are regret (Inman & Zeelenberg, 2002; Tsiros & Mittal, 2000; Zeelenberg, Inman, & Pieters, 2001), disappointment (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999; Zeelenberg, van Dijk, & Manstead, 1998) and anger (McColl-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith, & Brady, 2009; Patterson, McColl-Kennedy, Smith, & Lu, 2009), all of which are negative affective states that impact customers' satisfaction. Research in consumption settings has primarily focused on emotions triggered by other individuals / subjects (i.e., regret, disappointment and anger, among others). A similar pattern has emerged in the services' field, with the majority of research that includes emotions focused on affective states elicited by others or by situations (e.g., anger, disappointment). In light of the active role played by customers in service encounters, it is surprising that relatively little research has sought to deepen understanding of emotions caused by customers' self-attributions of service failure.

Within the context of adverse events where customers make self-attributions regarding the cause of the failure, theory suggests they may experience shame, guilt or embarrassment, otherwise referred to as *self-conscious emotions*. For example, when a customer is having a bad day and treats a service employee poorly, the customer may experience guilt following the encounter. According to Tangney and Tracy (2012), what makes self-conscious emotions different from non-self-conscious emotions, is that the former involve self-reflection and self-evaluation. Guilt, for example, occurs when customers blame themselves for a specific behavior that provokes an incident (e.g., I have the money, but I *did not tip the server*; H.B. Lewis, 1971). Shame arises when customers blame themselves for a personal characteristic that provokes an incident (e.g., *I did not have money to tip the server*; Tracy & Robins, 2004). And

embarrassment happens when customers feel they did not portray the desired image (identity) to others (e.g., *I forgot to tip the server, my friends think I am stingy*; Klass, 1990).

When it comes to service encounters, guilt can explain a number of service issues including the service recovery paradox (Cheng, Chang, Chuang, & Liao, 2015), and the negative feelings experienced by a customer unable to purchase a product from a service employee with whom the customer feels connected (Dahl, Honea, & Manchanda, 2005). Further, in a service context, guilt has been shown to be a catalyst driving customers to engage in gratitude-base behaviors (Palmatier, Jarvis, Bechkoff, & Kardes, 2009), and a mediator of the relationship between levels of co-creation in service recovery and satisfaction (Heidenreich, Wittkowski, Handrich, & Falk, 2015). The coping mechanisms used by customers in the face of ambivalent emotions (i.e., guilt and pride) has seen research attention, as have the relationships between these emotions with service satisfaction (Lunardo & Saintives, 2018), and service employees responses to customers' guilt (Pounders, Moulard, & Babin, 2018).

Shame has seen less attention within the context of service encounters, although research suggests that customers do experience shame in service settings. For example, Roos (1999) reported that shame is among customers' most commonly experienced emotions after switching service providers. Likewise, Tronvoll (2011) reported that 27% of customers have experienced shame following a service failure. Further, Mattila and Wirtz (2004) reported that trait proneness to shame has a negative impact on complaint channel preferences. On the other side of the transaction, salespersons also commonly experience shame, which can have a negative impact on sales performance (Bagozzi, 2006; Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2002), there may be cultural variations in how salespeople experience and react to shame (Bagozzi, Verbeke, and Gavino Jr (2003).

Finally, although embarrassment is among the most frequently studied self-conscious emotions in consumption settings, little research has explored embarrassment in service employees-customers interactions. Among the few studies focused on embarrassment, Grace (2007) recognized this dearth of research in the services field, and using critical incident techniques, identified events with the potential to trigger customer embarrassment in service encounters. Similarly, Grace (2009) reported that when service employees' prompt embarrassment, this can negatively impact customers' repatronage intentions. Wu and Mattila (2013) also identified sources of customers' embarrassment, and reported key relationships with group size, familiarity with fellow customers and locus. It is important to note that this dissertation focus primarily on guilt and embarrassment, since previous research has indicated that these emotions are more prone to be felt by customers, while shame is more likely to be experienced by service employees.

### **CONTRIBUTION OF THE DISSERTATION**

I seek to make a number of important contributions with this dissertation. Firstly, this research contributes to the field of services and consumption emotions. Although guilt, shame and embarrassment have seen attention in relation to product consumption, advertisement, and salesperson emotions, little research has explored triggers of self-conscious emotions in service encounters. Secondly, this is among the first studies to focus on the impact of customers' self-blame of service failures on satisfaction and word-of-mouth. Thirdly, this dissertation also is among the first studies to focus on guilt and embarrassment as explanatory mechanisms of the effect of customers' self-blame on services' outcomes. Finally, this is also among the first studies to develop recommendations relating to service employees' reactions to customers' self-attributions of blame for service failures.

To meet the proposed contributions, *Essay 1* focuses on the identification and categorization of service-centric events with the potential to trigger customers' guilt and embarrassment. The narratives collected and analyzed from *Essay 1* identified guilt as an essential emotion most likely to occur when customers *do* something that affects the service encounter (i.e., misdeed), while embarrassment tends to occur when customers *present a wrong image* of themselves to others that interferes with the service (i.e., mishaps). These relationships directly influenced the conceptual development of *Essay 2*. With the second essay, I contribute to the existing literature by studying guilt and embarrassment as explanations of the relationship between customers' self-attributed service failures and service outcomes.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is divided into four sections. The first is the introduction, which provides a broad overview of the topic and concepts addressed in the dissertation, as well as expected managerial and theoretical contributions. The second and third sections correspond to Essays 1 and 2. The fourth and last section presents an overview of the contribution of these essays.

*Essay One* focuses on two issues. The first is the antecedents of guilt and embarrassment in service interactions, and the second are the types of behaviors customers expect service employees to engage in to cope with these emotions. To achieve this goal, customers were asked to share stories about service encounters that elicited guilt or embarrassment, and to think about the behaviors from frontline employee that would have made the experience more positive or negative.

*Essay two* focuses on the role of guilt and embarrassment in explaining the impact of self-attributed service failures on service outcomes (i.e., service satisfaction and word-of-mouth).

Guilt was proposed as a mediating factor when customers' blame themselves for a service failure caused by their misdeeds, due in part to guilt being the emotion aroused when individuals feel that they have done something affecting others negatively (Tangney, 1991, 1995). In contrast embarrassment was suggested as the mediator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes, when customers' attributed service failures were caused by their mishaps. In this essay I also proposed that the effect of customers' self-attributed service failures on embarrassment is moderated by the perceived presence of others, while customers' behavioral inconsistency is proposed as a moderator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and guilt (See Figure 1-1).

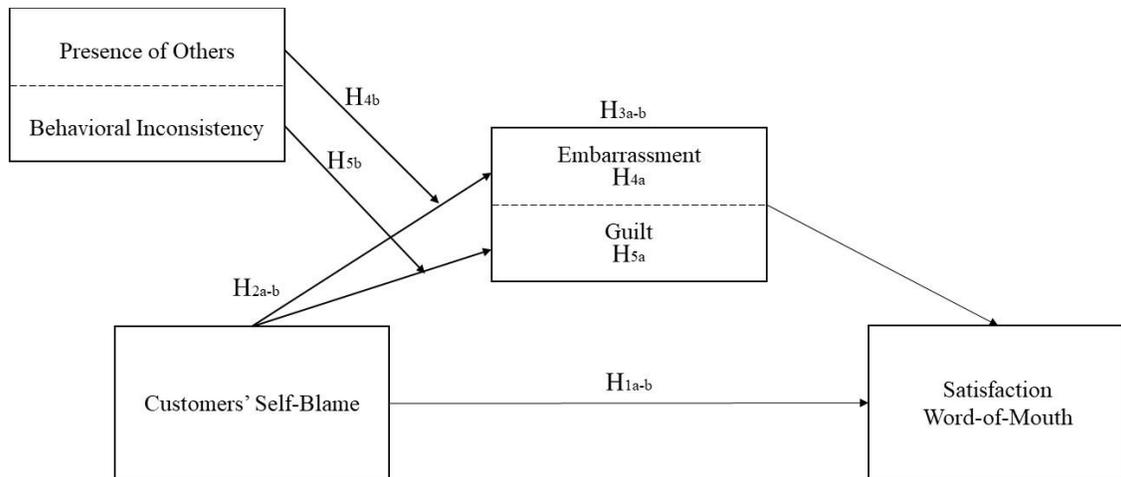


Figure 1-1.  
Model Essay 2

**CHAPTER 2. ESSAY 1: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SELF-CONSCIOUS  
EMOTIONS IN SERVICE ENCOUNTERS**

**ABSTRACT**

In this research, a critical incident technique will be used to collect information about the episodes where customers experience guilt and embarrassment in service encounters settings. Using a grounded theory method, events will be categorized based on customers' attributions of the cause of the emotion (customer behavior, interactive behavior, service employee, and bystanders). Also, perceived positive and negative behaviors that can be used by service employees to reduce or increase customers' guilt, or embarrassment. This research is expected to deepen understanding of negative emotions in service encounters.

*Keywords:* self-attributed service failures, guilt, embarrassment, self-conscious emotions.

## INTRODUCTION

Service failures, defined as occurring when customers' expectations do not match the service delivered (Oliver, 1977, 1980, 1981), are inevitable. Accordingly, a wealth of research has focused on understanding the source of service failures (e.g., Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990), as well as strategies service providers might use to overcome these failures (Hoffman, Kelley, & Chung, 2003; Hoffman, Kelley, & Rotalsky, 1995; Kelley, Hoffman, & Davis, 1993). These researchers also suggest that when a service failure occurs customers tend to make attributions regarding the cause of the incident, and most often end up attributing failures to the service firm, and its frontline employees. However, while customers also may make self-attributions for the failure (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda, 2005; Choi & Mattila, 2008; Hui & Toffoli, 2002), the vast majority of research in service failures has focused on firm/service employee attributions (Van Vaerenbergh, Orsingher, Vermeir, & Larivière, 2014).

Regardless of the attribution focus, after a failure customers are likely to have an emotional reaction. While a range of emotions are possible, self-attributed failures tend to result in customers experiencing guilt and embarrassment (Weiner, 2000). These emotions, categorized as self-conscious emotions, are elicited when individuals believe their behaviors/self are being evaluated by others (Tangney, 1999).

Guilt is defined "an individual's unpleasant emotional state associated with possible objections to his or her actions, inaction, circumstances, or intentions" (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). Embarrassment has been described as an internal emotion that appears when people do not feel capable of delivering an ideal self-presentation (Klass, 1990). Guilt and embarrassment differ in that they trigger specific coping responses (Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). I argue that when self-attributions are made following service failures, service

employees must identify the type of emotion a customer is experiencing and respond appropriately.

As detailed below, the overall goals of this essay are to: (1) provide an overview of the literature on negative self-conscious emotions in consumption settings, (2) via qualitative research, explore the nature of the events that can trigger customers' guilt and embarrassment in service encounters, and (3) provide an initial examination of how consumers believe service employees should respond when customers experience guilt and embarrassment. These goals are addressed using a multi-method approach.

This research makes two main contributions. First, it identifies antecedents of customers' guilt and embarrassment in service settings. Second, this is one of the first attempts to collect, identify and categorize service employees' behaviors that can help customers to reduce the discomfort created by guilt or embarrassment in a service encounter.

## **CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND**

This section has been structured into five parts. The first presents an overview of the concept of emotion. The second introduces the notion of self-conscious emotions. The third defines each of the negative self-conscious emotions, comparing guilt and shame, and embarrassment and shame. Finally, a brief summary of how these emotions have been studied in service settings is offered.

### **A Definition of Emotion**

There is little consensus regarding what constitutes an emotion. I use the definition suggested by Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981, p. 355), an "emotion is a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural-hormonal systems, which can (a) give rise to affective experiences such as feelings of arousal, pleasure/displeasure;

(b) generate cognitive processes such as emotionally relevant perceptual effects, appraisals, labeling processes; (c) activate widespread physiological adjustments to the arousing conditions; and (d) lead to behavior that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-directed, and adaptive”.

According to appraisal theory (Lazarus (1991) emotions emerge from subjective evaluations of events. As described by Biggs, Brough, and Drummond (2017); Lazarus (1991); Lazarus and Folkman (1984), appraisal theory posits that when an incident occurs, individuals engage in an initial appraisal of the situation, and assess the negative or positive effect of the event on their well-being. Once a determination is made regarding the consequences of the event, an appraisal is made to determine if appropriate resources are available to respond to the event. Appraisal theory also posits that emotions result from an appraisal of processes, such that an event categorized as positive will trigger emotions such as joy and happiness, while an incident classified as negative may evoke emotions such as fear and anger (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Weiner, 2000; Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). Importantly, specific emotions activate specific behaviors, for example, anger catalyzes aggressive behaviors, while anxiety triggers the need for hiding and flight (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004).

As regards the basic emotions some discrepancies have been identified. Izard (1977) proposed: interest, joy, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame, and guilt, while Plutchik (2001) offered that there are eight primary emotions, disgust and trust, fear and anger, joy and sadness, and anticipation and surprise. Based on facial expressions, Ekman and Keltner (1997) theorized seven basic emotions, sadness, fear, disgust, happiness, surprise, anger, and contempt. Ekman and Cordaro (2011) agreed that are seven basic emotions, and argued that other emotions can be added to this list, such as, guilt, shame, embarrassment, envy and compassion, among others.

Guilt, shame, and embarrassment are elicited after individuals evaluate the negative consequences of their own actions. Tracy and Robins (2004) posited that researchers have concentrated on the so-called basic emotions because they can be easily identified by non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions). One of the primary challenges associated with understanding self-conscious emotions is that to be able to understand their characteristics, researchers must rely on self-reports – they are not revealed by facial expressions. These emotions also are difficult to manipulate in the lab because participants need to feel that they have catalyzed a transgression, or that their global self is being judged. According to Tracy and Robins (2004), these challenges should not stop researchers from working to understand these emotional states.

The next section of this paper provides an overview of guilt, shame, and embarrassment; emotions grouped under the label of ‘self-conscious’ emotions.

### **Self-Conscious Emotions**

Self-conscious emotions, unlike emotions that are evoked more spontaneously (e.g., fear, happiness), generally emerge after individuals do a more careful evaluation of the self-impact of positive and negative events (M. Lewis, 2008; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007; Tangney & Tracy, 2012). This conscious assessment occurs when people attribute the failure or success of events to themselves (Weiner, 1985, 2000). For example, when a person spills a drink at a restaurant, he may take blame for the incident, and at the same time assess how others may evaluate or judge the action. Self-conscious emotions appear as a response to self-reflection and self-evaluation of behaviors and identity (Tangney & Tracy, 2012).

Another way to differentiate between self-conscious and non-self-conscious emotions is to appreciate how emotions can be transformed when people make self-reflections about their behaviors and identity (Tangney & Tracy, 2012). For example, imagine you get angry at a

service employee because he brought you something other than what you thought you ordered, but you later realize you had, in fact, ordered the wrong thing. In this case, the anger aroused when the failure was attributed to the server can be *transmuted to guilt* when the customer realizes his anger was a bad reaction. Tracy and Robins (2004) maintained that, unlike other emotional states, for individuals to experience self-conscious emotions, they need to be able to create a stable and desirable image of themselves to be capable of paying attention to it, judge and evaluate their self-image. This self-evaluation is what explains how an adverse event can evoke self-conscious emotions.

### **Differentiating Guilt, Shame, and Embarrassment**

In this section I present a brief overview of each one of the emotions, guilt, shame, and embarrassment. Owing to their similarities, each one of them is discussed in relation to another.

**Guilt and Shame.** It is almost impossible to talk about guilt without talking about shame. Both are self-conscious emotions, and contribute to a unique group referred to as moral emotions (Tangney et al., 2007). Guilt and shame are moral emotions because they result from situations where individuals feel they have incurred moral or social transgressions. Since both emotions are elicited by similar situations, there has been a long debate regarding what differentiates them (Tangney, 1995). It had been initially suggested their differences could be attributed to the public or private nature of the transgression, where shame is the emotion experienced when a misbehavior is not noticed by others, while guilt is felt when the behavior has an audience. However, this depiction has lost favor, as research indicates that people can experience guilt and shame, with or without an audience (Tangney et al., 1996). Moreover, Keltner (1996), and Tracy and Robins (2006), reported that it is not possible to differentiate between these emotions based on situational factors. Even if certain events are more likely to evoke specific emotions, there are

situations where people experience guilt, but also shame and embarrassment. This suggests that people can experience these three emotions under similar circumstances.

Tangney (1991, 1995) argued that empathy may play a key role in distinguishing these emotions. According to Tangney (1991, 1995) when people feel guilty, it is because they feel they have committed a transgression that has harmed others (e.g., upsetting them or disturbing them). Tangney (1991, 1995) also posited that when people consider the impact of their behaviors this reflects empathy, which can elicit guilt, and promote actions aimed to remedy the situation. When it comes to shame, there is no such empathy, because the focus of evaluation is the self, and the harm is more internal and difficult to repair, which provokes the desire to escape or hide.

One of the most widely accepted distinctions between guilt and shame was outlined by H. B. Lewis (1971), who argued that the difference lies in the object of others' disapproval. Shame is elicited when one feels she is being or may be judged (i.e., I am a bad person), while guilt occurs when one's actions are being or may be scrutinized (i.e., I did something wrong). Lewis (1971) also argued that these emotions trigger different behaviors. When people feel shame, it is more likely that they seek to hide or escape, whereas when people experience guilt, they ruminate about what they have done wrong and ways to undo their actions.

**Shame and Embarrassment.** Some researchers have described embarrassment as a component of, or another form of, shame (Izard, 1977; Kaufman, 1996), because when these emotions are experienced, what it is being scrutinized is the self. This experience can be compared to guilt, which is experienced when actions are the focus of evaluation. However, researchers have argued that shame and embarrassment are distinct, and when individuals suffer embarrassment it is not the self being judged, but the way they present themselves to the public (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

Embarrassment has been defined as the emotion felt when individuals are incapable of delivering a desired image of themselves (Klass, 1990). Compared to guilt and shame, embarrassment is the least “harmful” or “intense” of the negative self-conscious emotions (Zahavi, 2010). Unlike guilt and shame, the transgressions that elicit embarrassment typically do not have a strong moral element (Tangney et al., 1996). According to Sabini and Silver (1997), the events that trigger shame are related to character and personal faults, while people experiencing shame will feel imperfect and despicable. In contrast, feelings of embarrassment are elicited by the way personal identity is transmitted to others (Sabini & Silver, 1997; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Researchers initially posited that embarrassment is usually related to minor transgressions (Kristjánsson, 2010), and can be triggered by the fact that a person is the center of unwanted attention (M. Lewis, 2008). Miller (1992) revealed that individuals experience embarrassment when they behave awkwardly, are unlucky, or forgetful. Moreover, Miller (1996) argued that embarrassment antecedents are events that can be considered funny, innocent, and/or happen unexpectedly. Miller and Tangney (1994) determined that embarrassment triggered behaviors include smiling and joking, while emotions like shame, are associated with disgust and self-anger.

In summary, the commonality among the three negative self-conscious emotions is the real or imaginary belief that a part of oneself is being evaluated or scrutinized; their actions (e.g., guilt), their character (e.g., shame) or the way they present themselves in public (e.g., embarrassment). For the purpose of this manuscript, guilt is defined as “an individuals’ unpleasant emotional state associated with possible objections to his or her actions, inactions, circumstances, or intentions” (Baumeister et al., 1994, p. 245). Shame is defined as “a consequence of a failure evaluation relative to the standards when the persona makes a global

evaluation of the self' (M. Lewis, 1995, p. 75), and embarrassment is defined as an emotional state triggered when there is a deficiency in the way people present themselves to others (Klass, 1990). A brief summary of the differences between the self-conscious emotions is presented below in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1.  
*Summary of Differences among Negative Self-Conscious Emotions*

	<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Guilt</b>	<b>Embarrassment</b>	<b>Shame</b>
<b>Attribution of the event</b>	Tracy and Robins (2004)	Attributed to unstable, specific aspects of the self	Requires appraisals of identity-goal relevance and incongruence regarding a public identity, and attributions to internal causes	Attributed to stable, global aspects of the self
	Weiner (2000); Tracy and Robins (2004)	Attributed to internal, controllable and unstable causes	Attributed to internal, uncontrollable or controllable and stable or unstable causes	Attributed to internal, uncontrollable and stable causes
<b>Type of transgression</b>	Tangney (2003); (Keltner & Buswell, 1997); Kristjánsson (2010)	Moral transgression	Minor violation of norms	Moral transgression
	Sabini and Silver (1997); R. H. Smith, Webster, Parrott, and Eyre (2002)	People are totally responsible for the transgression (e.g., they did or did not do something)	People are not necessarily responsible for the transgression, and usually, it does not indicate real personal flaws of the individuals.	People are not necessarily responsible for the transgression, and usually indicate individuals' flaws of character, inadequacies, or lack of competence.
<b>Object of evaluation</b>	H. B. Lewis (1971); Tracy and Robins (2004)	The specific behavior	The public self	The global self
<b>Effect on self-esteem</b>	Babcock (1988); Buss (2001); Zahavi (2010)	Minor impact	Minor impact	Major impact

	Buss (1980); Tangney and Dearing (2002)	Uncorrelated to self-esteem	Temporary loss of self-esteem	High enduring loss of self- esteem
<b>Feelings and behaviors related to the emotion</b>	Batson (1987); Baumeister et al. (1994);	Altruism Empathy Apologizing	Blushing Smiling Giggling	Anger Depression Regret
	Buss (1980); Tangney and Dearing (2002)	Amending Correcting Undoing	Feeling foolish Feeling silly	Desire to Scape/ Disappear Self-defense behaviors

In the next section, I present an overview of how self-conscious emotions have been studied in service encounters settings.

### **Negative Self-Conscious Emotions in Service Encounters**

While guilt, shame, and embarrassment have been studied in general consumption settings, the role of these emotions in *service encounter* settings has seen relatively less attention. Initial research related to emotions in marketing (e.g., advertisement, products, services) tended to focus on understanding the effect of emotions on key customer outcomes, including satisfaction, repurchase behaviors or willingness to buy (e.g., Liljander & Strandvik, 1997; Mano & Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 1993; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). This pattern has evolved over the years, and growing research has focused on the role of specific emotions in consumption settings and specific decision-making processes (So et al., 2015).

Service research has tended to focus on a single self-conscious emotion, or two or more as part of a large list of affective states (See Table 2-2). This research is summarized in Table 2-2 to Table 2-5, divided by the type of negative self-conscious emotion (i.e., guilt, shame or embarrassment), the number of emotions evaluated (i.e., only one emotion, or the self-conscious emotions was part of a group of emotions), the settings (i.e., service encounter, retail space, product), the self-conscious emotions that were part of the research, the authors of the paper/work (i.e., researchers) and a brief description of the paper topic.

Table 2-2.  
*Selected Research in Consumption and Service Settings*

<b>More Than One Self-Conscious Emotion</b>				
<b>Emotions Measured</b>	<b>Settings</b>	<b>Self-Conscious Emotions</b>	<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Multiple	Product	Guilt and Shame	Westbrook and Oliver (1991)	Five groups of emotional responses to products were identified. Guilt and shame were part of the angry/upset group.
Multiple	Product/Service	Guilt and Shame	Oliver (1993)	The researchers included the effect of customers' perceived attribution of the source of satisfaction/dissatisfaction on their emotional responses and overall satisfaction. Guilt and shame were identified as the emotions elicited by customers' internal attributions.
Multiple	Product	Guilt and Shame	Mano and Oliver (1993)	Guilt and shame as a part of the emotional responses elicited by high and low involvement products.
Multiple	Services	Shame and Embarrassment	Verbeke and Bagozzi (2002)	Shame can be experienced by salespeople and have a negative effect on their performance.
Multiple	Services	Shame and Embarrassment	Bagozzi (2006)	The researchers identified shame and embarrassment as emotions that experienced by salespeople, and developed a scale to measure them.
Multiple	Services	Guilt, Shame and Embarrassment	Svaeri, Svensson, Slåtten, and Edvardsson (2011)	The researchers showed that customers' negative emotions experienced in service settings can be divided in three groups, namely, self (customer is to blame), other (firm/employees are to blame) and situational (external factors are to blame). They called the model SOS.
Single	Services	Guilt and Pride	Lunardo and Saintives (2018)	Customers' coping mechanisms when they experience guilt and pride and the effects on satisfaction.

Oliver (1993) was among the first to include guilt and shame in the measurement of negative emotions. This focus was reiterated by service researchers including Dubé and Menon (2000), Svaeri et al. (2011), and Tronvoll (2011). These researchers focused on negative self-conscious emotions, and recognized that not all negative emotions have the same impact on

service evaluations. They proposed that self-conscious emotions aroused by customers' self-attributed failures may have less negative impact on overall service evaluations (Dubé & Menon, 2000).

Of the three self-conscious emotions, the most frequently studied is embarrassment (See Table 2-3). Embarrassment has often been studied in relation to products that make customers feel uncomfortable, not only by using them, but also by simply talking about them or having knowledge of them, such as hearing aids (Iacobucci, Calder, Malthouse, & Duhachek, 2003), impotence medicine (Frost, 1996) or condoms (Dahl, Manchanda, & Argo, 2001). With regard to embarrassment in service encounters, Grace (2007) categorized events with potential to trigger this emotion, as well as coping mechanisms used in these situations. Grace (2009) also found that when customers experience an embarrassing event, it negatively impacts repurchase behaviors. The perceived presence of others also can impact how customers experience embarrassment, such that embarrassment is more intense in larger groups and among familiar companions (Wu & Mattila, 2013).

Table 2-3.  
*Selected Research in Embarrassment*

<b>Specific emotion: Embarrassment</b>				
<b>Emotions Measured</b>	<b>Settings</b>	<b>Self-Conscious Emotions</b>	<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Single	Product	Embarrassment	Wilson and West (1981)	Explain the nature of embarrassing products, which are called by the researchers as the unmentionables.
Single	Retail	Embarrassment	Bonnici, Campbell, Fredenberger, and Hunnicutt (1996)	Embarrassment is elicited when customers use coupons.
Single	Product	Embarrassment	Frost (1996)	Presented the case of a company that is trying to create marketing strategies to reduce the embarrassment that produces to consult and buy a product that seeks to help people with impotence.
Single	Product	Embarrassment	Dahl et al. (2001)	When customers are buying an embarrassing product, the perceived social presence of others and the unfamiliarity with the product increases customers' embarrassment.
Single	Product	Embarrassment	Iacobucci et al. (2003)	People with hearing loss are resistant to use hearing aids. Embarrassment is one of the explanations for these behaviors.
Single	Services	Embarrassment	Grace (2007, 2009)	The researcher described the antecedents of customers' embarrassment and tested the negative consequences in satisfaction with the service.
Single	Retail	Embarrassment	Brumbaugh and Rosa (2009)	Researchers found that when customers perceived that service employees discriminate them and judge them, they experience high levels of embarrassment and lower levels of confidence that reduce their likelihood of using coupons.
Single	Services	Embarrassment	Wu and Mattila (2013)	The research identified the sources of customers' embarrassment and the role of group size, familiarity with companions and locus.
Single	Services	Embarrassment	Krishna, Herd, and Aydinoglu (2019)	A comprehensive review of the study of embarrassment in consumption settings.

Guilt has also been identified as among the emotions people experience during consumption (Oliver, 1993; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). Although Dahl, Honea, and Manchanda (2003) classified the most common situations that elicit guilt, and the behaviors displayed by customers in response to these events, to our knowledge, there is no clear classification of events in service encounters. Guilt has been framed primarily as a mediator explaining customer behavior in service encounters (See Table 2-4). For example, Cheng et al. (2015) tested guilt as a possible explanation for the service recovery paradox, while Heidenreich et al. (2015) reported that customers' participation in service recovery processes can impact customers' satisfaction, and this effect can be explained by guilt. More recent research suggests affective commitment can explain the positive impact of guilt on repurchase behaviors for customers who have a close relationship with service employees (Pounders et al. (2018). When service employees enhance customers' violation, this can increase guilt, but can also have a negative effect on repurchase behaviors.

Table 2-4.  
*Selected Research in Guilt*

<b>Specific emotion: Guilt</b>				
<b>Emotions Measured</b>	<b>Settings</b>	<b>Self-Conscious Emotions</b>	<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Multiple	Services	Guilt	Liljander and Strandvik (1997)	The researchers investigated the effect of customer's emotions and satisfaction with a public service. Guilt was part of the negative emotions tested.
Multiple	Services	Guilt	(Dubé & Menon, 2000)	Research propositions about how specific emotions will impact satisfaction. It is proposed that negative emotions attributed to sources different than the provider will have a positive effect on satisfaction.
Single	General Consumption	Guilt	Dahl et al. (2003)	Identified situations that elicit guilt in general consumption settings.
Multiple	Services	Guilt	Krampf, Ueltschy, and d'Amico (2003)	Researchers evaluate the effect of affect and cognition on customers' satisfaction. Guilt was part of a set of negative emotions evaluated.
Multiple	Services	Guilt	White and Yu (2005)	Investigate the effect of emotions on customer complaining behaviors. Guilt was included in a set of negative emotions.
Single	Retail	Guilt	Dahl et al. (2005)	Customers experience higher levels of guilt when they do not buy products from a frontline employee which whom they feel highly connected. Guilty customers seek for reparative behaviors.
Single	Services	Guilt	Palmatier et al. (2009)	Guilt as a motivator of gratitude-base behaviors.
Single	Services	Guilt	Cheng et al. (2015)	Guilt as an explanation of the service recovery paradox
Single	Services	Guilt	Heidenreich et al. (2015)	Guilt as a mediator between levels of co-creation in service recovery and satisfaction
Single	Services	Guilt	Pounders et al. (2018)	Salespersons reaction to guilty customers based on the strength of their relationship

Shame is the least studied of the three negative self-conscious emotions (See Table 2-5). Shame has been recognized as an emotion felt by customers when they switch providers (Roos, 1999), and can be experienced when customers blame themselves for service failure, something

that reduces a customers' likelihood of complaining (Tronvoll, 2011). Shame has been studied in frontline employees (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2002), and can have a negative effect on performance. This relationship may be culturally bound, as shame may be higher among salespeople from collectivist cultures (Bagozzi et al., 2003).

Table 2-5.  
*Selected Research in Shame*

<b>Specific emotion: Shame</b>				
<b>Emotions Measured</b>	<b>Settings</b>	<b>Self-Conscious Emotions</b>	<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Multiple	Services	Shame	Roos (1999)	Shame is identified as an emotion experienced when customers switch providers.
Single	Services	Shame	Bagozzi et al. (2003)	Researchers found that there are differences in the levels of shame experienced by salespersons from different cultures (individualist vs. collectivism).
Single	Services	Shame	Mattila and Wirtz (2004)	Shame as a trait impacts customers' choice of interactive channels to complaint
Multiple	Services	Shame	Tronvoll (2011)	Shame is recognized as an emotion elicited after a service failure occurs. Researchers found that does not prompt complaining behaviors.

Despite increasing interest in the role of negative self-conscious emotions in service encounters, there are clear gaps in the literature. First, research has focused primarily on the events that elicit self-conscious emotions in general consumption settings (e.g., Dahl et al., 2003) leaving questions as to how this translates into service contexts. Second, while there have been limited efforts to categorize events that trigger negative self-conscious emotions in service encounters (e.g., Grace, 2007), to date research has yet to explore how service employees “should” react to negative self-conscious emotions. I seek to fill these gaps by: (1) categorizing events that trigger guilt and embarrassment in service encounters, and (2) classifying the

behaviors that customers should or should not perform when they are experiencing any of these emotions. To achieve this goal, I will use a critical incident technique (CIT).

## **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES**

In Study 1, I evaluate if people have the capacity to differentiate between guilt and embarrassing situations. The ability to differentiate between emotions is essential for Study 2 – which is qualitative -since participants would need to be able to provide and recall a different narrative per emotion. Study 2 is divided into three parts. Study 2a, presents the categorization of the antecedents of embarrassment and guilt. Study 2b, validate the elicitation capacity of the incidents . Finally, Study 2c presents the categorization of service employee behaviors with potential to help customers to deal with guilt or embarrassment in service settings.

This essay attempts to follow some of the guidance provided by Zeithaml et al. (2020) on how to use the Theories-in-Use (TIU) approach to develop marketing knowledge. Zeithaml et al. (2020) argue that the TIU approach can facilitate development of much needed marketing theory. More specifically, it is important for marketing to build theories because when borrowing from other disciplines, it can happen that the specific marketing context and focal actors are disregarded. It is important to highlight that since the TIU approach depends on in-depth interviews, and this essay relies on the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), the approach described reflects the spirit, though not necessarily instantiation of the rule depicted by Zeithaml et al. (2020). However, it strives to reach some of the goals of the TIU approach by following a similar process: construct development (i.e., identifying categories from raw data), proposition development (i.e., identifying possible antecedents, moderators, and mediators) and argument development (i.e., identifying high level categories and propose relationship among them).

## **STUDY 1: CAN PARTICIPANTS DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN EMOTIONS?**

Participants' capacity to differentiate between guilt and embarrassment, and subsequently provide accurate descriptions of events that specifically elicit one or the other emotion is paramount. Participants' inability to differentiate between guilt and embarrassment represents a foundational threat to internal validity, as it would be impossible to generate inferences bearing on the nature of the data in-fact collected using the instrument. Thus, the objective of Study 1 is to explore participants' capacity to identify and differentiate between situations that elicit guilt and embarrassment.

**Stimuli Development.** A scenario-based study was run with the aim of evaluating the individuals' capacity to recognize and differentiate between guilt and embarrassment. Six scenarios were created, three of which described embarrassing situations in service settings (Scenarios 1 to 3), while three depicted events eliciting customers' guilt in service encounters (Scenarios 4 to 6). The scenarios were designed based on the literature review, which provided comprehensive descriptions of the characteristics of these emotions. The scenarios used in this study are presented in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6.

*Embarrassment and guilt scenarios*

Embarrassment Scenarios	Guilt Scenarios
<p><b>Scenario 1.</b> Imagine you are at a restaurant with some of your friends. The server comes, greets you, and proceeds to take your drink orders. You and your friends order drinks, and a couple of minutes later, the server brings the drinks. While chatting with your friends over deciding what to order, you forget your drink was on your right side and while putting the menu down you spill all your drink over yourself by mistake.</p>	<p><b>Scenario 4.</b> Imagine you are at a restaurant with some of your friends. You had ordered and already eaten, and now you want to have some dessert. You do not really want to spend more money since the food was already expensive, so you decide to lie and tell the server that it is your birthday to see if you can have a complimentary dessert. The server congratulates you for your birthday, brings you some cake with ice cream, and discounts your check by 10%. You eat the dessert, you pay and you leave.</p>
<p><b>Scenario 2.</b> Imagine you go to a tech store to buy a new computer. Once you arrive at the computer section of the store, a specialized employee approaches to offer advice and help. You quickly look at the tag and you identify the name Brooklyn, and you immediately start calling the person by this name. The service employee helps you during the process of choosing the computer. Also, the employee registers your purchase, receives your payment and gives you a business card in case you have questions or need any help. Once you read the card, you realize their name was Jordan, and you kept calling the person by a different name. When you look at the tag more carefully, you realized it said: Jordan Smith, from Brooklyn, NY.</p>	<p><b>Scenario 5.</b> Imagine you arrive late at the airport to catch a flight. You start using the self-checkout machine to check your luggage and print your boarding pass. You submit your ID, name, and flight number, but you get the following error message: Please ask one of the employees for help. You cannot get a ticket using the self-checkout machine if your flight departs in less than 45 minutes. You then start doing the line. By the time it is your turn you are a bit irritated. You raise your voice and with an attitude, you demand the employee to do the job quickly. The employee kindly checks your luggage and prints your ticket in a timely manner. You take the ticket and leave.</p>
<p><b>Scenario 3.</b> Imagine you are in a clothing store buying an outfit for an important event. You find some options and decide to try them in the fitting room. While you are trying one of the pants, a salesperson approaches and tells you that the pants are not unisex and that they are designed for the opposite sex.</p>	<p><b>Scenario 6.</b> Imagine you go to a grocery store to buy some food. Once you finish shopping, you go to the checkout section. The cashier asks if you found everything you were looking for and scans all your products. Before giving you the total amount to pay, the cashier asks if you want to donate one dollar to a non-profit organization dedicated to children with cancer. You say no, and the cashier asks if you are sure. You repeat, “yes I am sure”, then the cashier gives you the total amount to pay, you pay, and you leave.</p>

**Sample, Research Design, and Procedure.** A total of 102 participants (30.40% between 25 and 34 years old, 52% female) were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Individuals interested in participating were directed to an online Qualtrics survey. Participants were presented with six scenarios, and for each was asked to indicate the extent they would feel embarrassment and guilt if a similar situation happened to them, the emotion that was chiefly

elicited, and how confident they were with the emotion they selected. The survey concluded with a section requesting demographic information.

**Measures.** To assess the extent that participants would feel embarrassment and guilt if a similar situation happened to them, a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \textit{strongly disagree}$ ,  $7 = \textit{strongly agree}$ ) reflecting agreement with the following statements was used: (1) I feel guilty, (2) I feel embarrassed. Then, a closed-ended question was used to measure the emotion that principally elicited by each of the scenarios (i.e., *a. Guilt, b. Embarrassment, c. Other*). To evaluate the level of confidence with the emotion selected, a 7-point Likert scale, ( $1 = \textit{not confident at all}$ ,  $7 = \textit{strongly confident}$ ) was used.

**Results.** Six paired t-tests were run. The goal was to evaluate if the likelihood of experiencing embarrassment/guilt was higher/lower than guilt/embarrassment in scenarios 1- 3/4-6. Since participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed that the scenarios evoked guilt and embarrassment, to run the analysis, guilt and embarrassment were set as dependent variables. The paired samples t-tests revealed that in scenarios 1-3 participants indicated a significantly higher likelihood of experiencing embarrassment ( $t_{s1}(101) = 4.49, p < .001$ ;  $t_{s2}(101) = 3.85, p < .001$ ;  $t_{s3}(101) = 4.18, p < .001$ ); whereas in scenarios 4-6, participants indicated a significantly higher likelihood of experiencing guilt than embarrassment ( $t_{s4}(101) = 5.00, p < .001$ ;  $t_{s5}(101) = 2.80, p < .01$ ;  $t_{s6}(101) = 2.42, p < .05$ ). A summary of these results can be found in Table 2-7.

Results from these analyses additionally revealed that, when participants were asked to identify the emotion principally elicited in the scenarios, the percentage of accuracy ranged from 52.90% (Scenario 1) to 71.60% (Scenario 4). This pattern of results indicates that, in general,

more than half of the participants were able to identify if the scenarios elicited embarrassment or guilt (see Table 2-7 for a summary of the results).

Finally, the results from six independent t-test revealed that the participants' average confidence that the identified emotion was, in fact, the emotion evoked by the scenarios was generally significantly higher when they chose the 'right' emotion ( $t_{s1}(95) = 3.97, p < .001$ ;  $t_{s2}(90.24) = 2.71, p < .05$ ;  $t_{s3}(92) = 3.54, p < .001$ ;  $t_{s4}(93) = -2.16, p < .05$ ;  $t_{s5}(92) = .46, p = .39$ ;  $t_{s6}(90) = -1.81, p = .07$ ).

Table 2-7.  
*Summary of Scenarios Evaluation*

Embarrassment										
Scenario 1			Scenario 2			Scenario 3				
	% <sup>1</sup>	$M_{conf}$ <sup>2</sup> (SD)	$M_s$ <sup>3</sup> (SD)***	%	$M_{conf}$ (SD)	$M_s$ (SD)***	%	$M_{conf}$ (SD)	$M_s$ (SD)***	$M$
Embar	52.90%	6.11 (1.06)	5.31 (1.34)	58.80%	5.60 (1.21)	5.11 (1.51)	54.90%	5.95 (1.21)	4.8 (1.75)	<b>5.07</b> <b>(1.12)</b>
Guilt	42.20%	5.28 (.98)	4.55 (1.66)	39.20%	4.97 (1.07)	4.29 (1.67)	37.30%	5.05 (1.18)	3.8 (2.12)	<b>4.21</b> <b>(1.32)</b>
<i>p</i>		< .001	< .001		< .05	< .001		< .001	< .001	
Guilt										
Scenario	Scenario 4			Scenario 5			Scenario 6			
	%	$M_{conf}$ (SD)	$M_s$ (SD)***	%	$M_{conf}$ (SD)	$M_s$ (SD)**	%	$M_{conf}$ (SD)	$M_s$ (SD)*	$M$
Embar	21.60%	5.14 (1.13)	4.07 (1.76)	24.50%	5.48 (1.09)	4.55 (1.60)	25.50%	4.73 (1.59)	4.02 (1.76)	<b>4.22</b> <b>(1.42)</b>
Guilt	71.60%	5.77 (1.22)	5.19 (1.60)	67.60%	5.35 (1.28)	5.05 (1.50)	64.70%	5.30 (1.27)	4.45 (1.78)	<b>4.90</b> <b>(1.21)</b>
<i>p</i>		< .05	< .001		.622	< .01		.07	< .05	

Notes: <sup>1</sup>Percentage of people that choose embarrassment or guilt as the mainly elicited emotion in the scenarios; <sup>2</sup>Mean confidence levels with the emotion selected; <sup>3</sup>Average likelihood of experience embarrassment or shame if a similar event happens to the participants.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

**Discussion.** The results of this study revealed that participants might experience embarrassment and guilt in all the above scenarios. However, the likelihood of experiencing one over the other increased, depending on the event. Since embarrassment and guilt share similar underlying characteristics, some overlap was expected. However, it was also expected there

would be a strong presence of embarrassment in Scenarios 1 to 3 because events depicted consumers unable to portray a desired image of themselves to others (e.g., being clumsy, distracted, inattentive). Likewise, scenarios 4-6 were expected to elicit a higher probability of guilt as they depicted reproachable behaviors (e.g., lying, aggressiveness, neglecting).

It thus appears participants are able to differentiate situations that elicit embarrassment vs. guilt, even when no definition or explanation of the emotions is provided. It is worth clarifying that the participants were simply asked to read and evaluate the scenarios, but were not presented with a definition of embarrassment or guilt. Despite this conservative methodology, there is clear evidence that they were able to differentiate one emotion from the other.

To execute Study 2 (i.e., collect the incidents), and increase the likelihood that participants were able to recall events that specifically elicited guilt or embarrassment, participants were provided with a definition of the emotion they were asked to recall, as well as several examples.

## **STUDY 2: COLLECTING THE INCIDENTS**

### **Method and Procedure**

This section of the essay is divided into three segments. The first presents an overview of data collection for Studies 2<sub>a-c</sub>, which includes a description of the Critical Incident Technique, the data collection procedure and the questionnaire development. The second section presents an overview of the data quality (e.g., quality of the critical incidents, and sample description). The third section describes the process used to analyzed and categorize customers' narratives.

#### **Data Collection**

*CIT (Critical Incident Technique)*. Flanagan (1954) was among the first to formally document the critical incidents technique, defined as a tool for collecting observations of

activities and developing principles to solve practical problems. The behaviors observed are called incidents, and by collecting them, explanations for behaviors – and predictions bearing on future behavior – can be developed. The aim is to generate narratives of events through interviews and questionnaires.

The CIT has been widely used by service marketing researchers (Gremler, 2004) to identify and categorize events that make a service satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994; Bitner et al., 1990), document the types of failures in retail settings (Kelley et al., 1993), the causes of customers' switching behaviors (Keaveney, 1995) and to study emotions such as embarrassment in service encounters (Grace, 2007).

Here, Critical incidents are defined as a situation where an individual experienced embarrassment or guilt in a service environment. To be included in the analysis, an incident had to (1) be broadly described by the subject, (2) occur in a service environment, and (3) be related to an episode where the subjects experience guilt or embarrassment.

***Data Collection Procedure.*** A total of 675 Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers participated in the study in exchange for monetary compensation. Participants were initially presented with a consent form, and upon agreeing to participate were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. The first asked participants to recall an embarrassing event while the second asked them to recall a guilt-triggering event. Once assigned, participants were presented not only with the instructions to complete the questionnaire but also with a detailed description of the emotion that they were asked to recall

After the participants were presented with the description of an emotion, they were asked to indicate if they could recall an incident where they felt embarrassed/guilty in a service setting. If they reported they could not recall an incident, they were thanked for their time and were sent

to the end of the survey. Participants who indicated that they could remember an event were provided with a set of open-ended questions to collect the incident. After participants completed their description, those surveyed in the embarrassment condition were asked to indicate how embarrassed they felt during the incident using a 6-item ( $\alpha = .71$ ) scale from Verbeke and Bagozzi (2002) (e.g., I felt ridiculous, I got the feeling I looked like a fool), ranging from (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*). Participants in the guilt condition were asked to indicate their guilt levels using a 3-items ( $\alpha = .85$ ) scale from Han, Duhachek, and Agrawal (2014), also on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1 = *not guilt-ridden / not culpable / not remorseful*, 7 = *guilt-ridden / culpable / remorseful*). After participants indicated their levels of guilt or embarrassment, they were asked to provide basic demographic information.

***Questionnaire development.*** In an effort to prompt meaningful responses, participants were presented with the following questions. They were designed to simulate in-depth interview conversation guides, and aimed to find the antecedents of embarrassment and guilt on service encounters, as well possible mediating and moderating variables with the capacity to help explain some of the relationships described by participants, or with the potential to affect the strength of these relationships (based on Zeithaml et al., 2020 TIU approach):

- **Contextual Questions:** Please provide some information related to where the embarrassment triggering-episode occurred, the type of service involved, the reason you were involved with this particular service, and approximately how long ago the interaction occurred.
- **Emotional Experience Questions (Research goal: Find antecedents):** What were the specific reasons you believe this situation led you to feel the emotion?

- **Coping Behavior Question (Research goal: Find mediators):** Can you describe any specific feelings you had during this encounter? How did you cope with the situation?
- **Social Questions (Research goal: Find moderators):** Were you with other people? If yes, who were they? Explain your relationship with them.
- **Service Employee Role Questions (Research goal: Find moderators):** Was a service employee directly involved in the incident? If yes, explain how the employee promoted, lessened, or helped to trigger the incident. How do you think the service employee could have helped you to reduce the strength of the emotion felt in this particular situation? How do you think a service employee could have increased the strength of the emotion felt in this specific situation? Exemplify.

### **Data Quality**

*Quality of the critical incidents.* A total of 675 participants agreed to participate after reading the informed consent and the instructions. A group of 37 participants indicated that they were unable to recall an incident and were removed from final sample. An additional 212 participants who indicated that they were able to recall an incident also had to be taken out of the sample because they did not complete the task.

A further 159 cases were removed from the analysis for varying reasons. Ten participants provided answers that were unrelated to the questions asked, 87 recalled events that did not happen in the context of a service encounter, 11 participants described the experience from their perspective as service employees (e.g., server, cashier), and 51 did not provide enough information about the episode to support meaningful analysis. Table 2-8, presents a summary of the incidents collected.

Table 2-8.  
*Summary of Cases*

<b>Emotion</b>	<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>Incidents not included</b>	<b>Total incidents used</b>	<b>% Female</b>	<b>Age (25-34)</b>
Guilt	334	213	121	50.45%	29.73%
Embarrassment	341	195	146	58.16%	39.85%
Total	675	408	267	49.81%	

**Characteristics of the Sample.** The sample was 49.81% female and 41.57% male with 8.61% not providing a dichotomous gender preference. Just over ten percent (10.11%) of participants were between 18 to 24 years old, 32.21% were between 25 to 34, 20.59% were 35 and 34, 17.23% were between 45 and 54 8.24% were 55 and 64, 4.87% were between 65 and 74, and 0.74% between 75 and 84. Just under six percent (5.99%) of the participants did not report their age.

The majority of the incidents reportedly happened in sit-down restaurants (100), followed by grocery stores (22), fast-food restaurants, (21) banks (19), clothing stores (13), movie theaters (10), coffee shops (9), hospitals (7), bars (6), hotels (6), doctors office (4), among others. A total of 41 distinct service settings were identified.

### **Data Analysis**

**Category development.** The incidents were coded using NVivo 12 (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2018). The data collected was analyzed and categorized using the grounded theory approach, a methodology that allows researchers to draw theoretical constructs from qualitative data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Studies from Miller (1992) and Keltner (1996) were used as theoretical comparisons during the analysis of the data, in an attempt to understand and develop the categorization schema for the incidents. The data analysis followed a three-stage process as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Zeithaml et al. (2020): (1) open coding, (2)

axial coding, and (3) selective coding. In other words, first the researchers identified the recurrent themes and topics mentioned by the participants in the different incidents (i.e., open coding). Second, the researchers started finding associations and relationships among the different themes, which includes collapsing some of the topics, or the creation of groups or categories (i.e., axial coding). Finally, the researcher develops the core categories and relationships, which concludes with a theoretical model that helps to characterize the phenomena studied (i.e., selective coding).

After collecting the data, the primary researcher (coder A) and a graduate student trained in qualitative methods (coder B) made an initial complete reading of all the cases to become familiar with the incidents and detect broad patterns. Following this, independently, the coders started an *open coding process* (construct development), by assigning descriptive names (i.e., indicators) to the participants' responses to build their independent categories. When coding with a qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo, these codes are known as *nodes*. For example, one person mentioned feeling embarrassed after being clumsy and spilling a glass of water. This incident was coded by one of the coders under the descriptor *behavioral shortcomings*, which in the NVivo software will be the *behavioral shortcomings node*. Similar incidents were added to the same node in order to create a more robust category.

Another important part of this process is “memoing,” which refers to taking notes about possible interpretations, relationships, and thoughts aroused from the data coding. NVivo allows the creation of these notes. For example, to continue with the same water incident from above, the coder can easily attach the following a memo to the participant response: It looks like people tend to experience embarrassment when they lose control of their body or make an unintentional move.

Once the researchers advance to coding and begin detecting relationships between nodes, the *axial coding process* starts (proposition development). In this stage, some nodes/categories were merged, creating what is known as tree nodes, other groups of incidents were recategorized into new nodes or into existing ones that fitted better with their content. For example, some individuals indicated that they felt embarrassed after realizing they forgot the wallet at home once they received the check at a restaurant. These incidents were initially categorized by one of the coders under the behavioral shortcoming node, but it was then realized that they could be an independent category, and they were put under a new node called *cognitive shortcomings*.

After completing the axial coding process, the process continues with the *selecting coding phase* (argument development). In this stage major groups are created by trying to limit the number of categories to finish with a more concrete set of concepts. For example, in the selecting coding phase all the nodes were categorized into four major groups, depending on whose behavior triggered the self-conscious emotion in the service setting, namely, (1) customer behavior, (2) interactive behavior: customer, (3) interactive behavior: service employee or (4) bystander behavior (in the next section there is a complete description of each category). In this case, the *behavioral shortcomings node* and the *cognitive shortcomings node* were categorized under the *customer behavior node* (major category), since both embarrassing situations happened because of the customers' actions or pitfalls.

***Inter-coder reliability.*** Once coders *a* and *b* finished developing the categories, they compared their codes, combined them, adjusted them, and created new ones. Any discrepancies about the categorization system were discussed until reaching an agreement. Both, coders *a* and *b*, developed the codebooks to keep a record of the coding process and help with the interpretation of the categories (See Appendix 2A to 2D). Once the codebooks were defined,

coder *a* and a new coder (*c*) not familiar with the categorization process coded the incidents. The interjudge agreement between coders *a* and *c* was calculated, reaching acceptable levels, based on a threshold of 75% to 80% (Graham, Milanowski, & Miller, 2012; Hartmann, 1977; Stemler, 2004).

Table 2-9.  
*Interjudge Agreement*

Categorization	Interjudge Agreement	
	Guilt	Embarrassment
Antecedents *	80.09%	80.63%
Expected Service Employee Behaviors	75.90%	74.92%

\*Includes categorization of cases that were not related to service settings that did not provide enough information, and were told from the service employee perspective.

**Model: Summary of Categorization of Antecedents and Service Employee Behaviors**

The model in Figure 2-1 summarizes the events that elicit customers’ guilt and embarrassment in service encounters, as well as the customers’ perceived positive or negative reactions from service employees to these emotional states. The major categories, as well as the categories within major groups for the antecedents of guilt and embarrassment and service employee reactions, will be presented in-depth in Studies 2<sub>a</sub> to 2<sub>c</sub>.

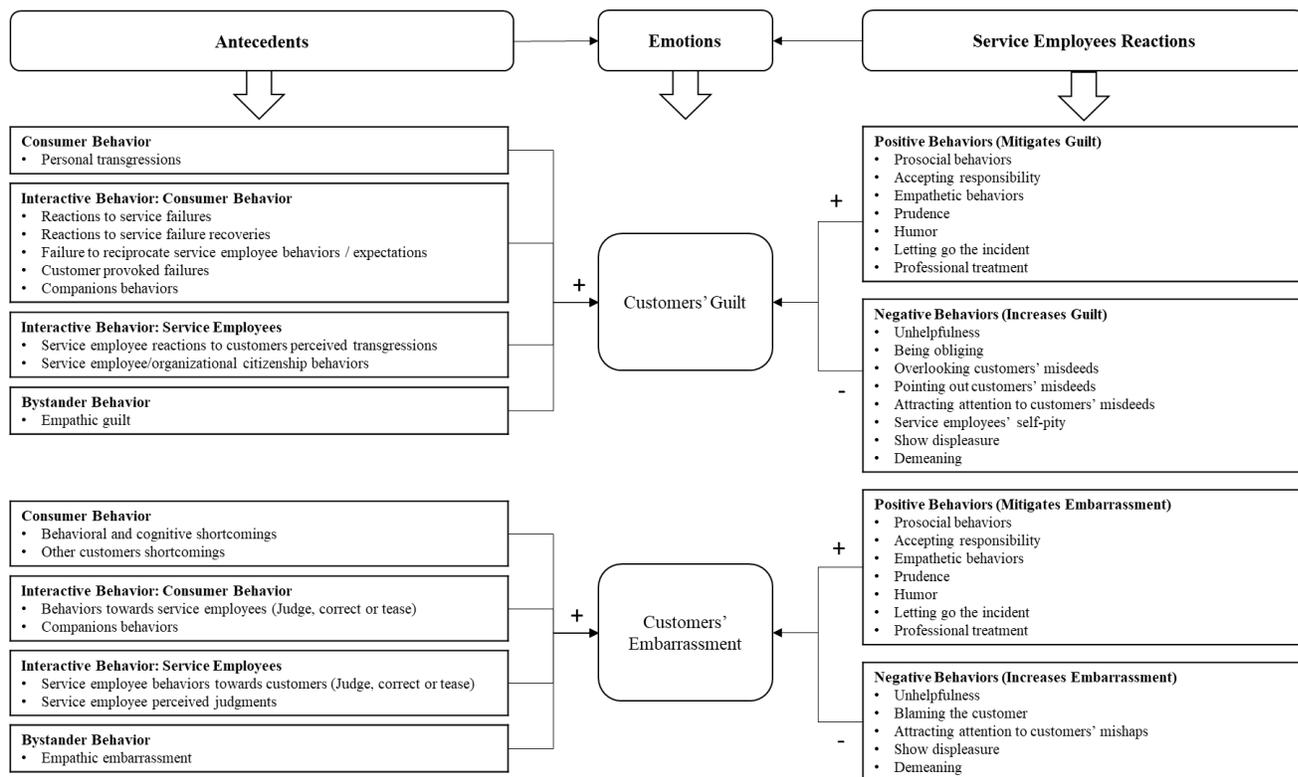


Figure 2-1.  
*Model of the antecedents of guilt and embarrassment on service settings and the reactions from service employees*

## STUDY 2A: GUILT AND EMBARRASMENT ANTECEDENTS

Study 2a presents the categorization of embarrassment and guilt antecedents. This section is divided into three parts. The first offers a description of the major groups used to categorize the antecedents of guilt and embarrassment. The second and third parts report the categories between major groups that are particular to embarrassment and guilt correspondingly.

### Customer Incidents Classification: Major Groups

The incidents related to embarrassment and guilt were analyzed and categorized into four major groups, described below. Table 2-10 presents a summary of the incidents found in each

one of the major groups. This section presents a brief discussion of the highest level categories. Greater detail will be offered when presenting the results for each one of the emotions.

- **Group 1. Customer behavior.** The events grouped under this category are those that elicited the emotions as a consequence of customer's actions that occurred in service settings, but were not elicited as a product of an interaction with a service employee, or are events that happened without being noticed by service employees—for example, feeling guilty after lying about the birth date to get a free dessert, or embarrassed after spilling a drink in front of companions.
- **Group 2. Interactive Behavior: Customer.** This category included those encounters where the self-conscious emotions were attributed to customers or their companions' behaviors that affected a service employee. The incidents included in this category describe active communication between customers and service employees, where the actions of the customers impact the service employees—for example, feeling guilty after not giving a good tip or feeling embarrassed because the customer ordered the food wrong.
- **Group 3. Interactive Behavior: Service Employee.** This category includes incidents that elicited self-conscious emotions in a service encounter, and that can be credited directly to the frontline employee behaviors. The events included in this category describe active communication between customers and service employees, where the actions of the service employees impacted the customers—for example, feeling guilty when a service employee signals a customers' wrong behavior or feeling embarrassed when a service employee publicly announces that the customers' card has been rejected.

- **Group 4. Bystander behavior.** Incidents under the bystander behaviors category included situations where participants felt the emotion after seeing others' inappropriate actions (not companions, not service employees) — for example, feeling guilty after seeing other customers being rude with a service employee and not intervening.

Table 2-10.

*Summary of Incidents per Major Categories*

<b>Major Categories</b>	<b>Guilt</b>		<b>Embarrassment</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Customer Behavior	55	45.45%	85	58.22%	52.43%
IB: Customer Behavior	58	47.93%	11	7.53%	25.84%
IB: Service Employee	5	4.13%	50	34.25%	20.60%
Bystander Behavior	3	2.48%	0	0.00%	1.12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*IB: Interactive Behavior

**Customer Incidents Classification: Categories within Major Groups (Antecedents of Guilt)**

Each group of emotions was independently analyzed and coded, and as a result, they showed different classification patterns within the major groups identified above. Below is a categorization of the incidents that elicit embarrassment and guilt.

Table 2-11 provides a summary of the categories and subcategories related to guilt-inducing incidents, as well as some examples (See Appendix 2A. to check the codebook).

Table 2-11.

*Guilt Antecedents*

<i>Guilt Antecedents</i>	<i>Quotes</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>1. Customer Behavior</b>			
<i>a. Personal transgressions</i>			
- Cheating, stealing, lying	“We went and saw [a movie] and stayed and watch three more movies which we didn't pay for. On top of that we got a popcorn and drink that was refillable. We ate and drank them out of the house.”	21	17.36%
- Inappropriate spending of money	“I ended up tipping a large amount to the person who greeted me as I received my food. It occurred to me later that that's not a general tippable situation and with other employees around I wish I (...) hadn't left such a large tip.”	7	5.79%
- Unintentional Inappropriate behaviors	“I was in long waiting line to buy black Friday deals' product. But suddenly the cashier form a new line and I was at the end of a another line but I joined the newly formed line and got a check out way more faster than a lot of people standing for hours.”	27	22.31%
		<b>55</b>	<b>45.45%</b>
<b>2. Interactive Behavior: Customer Behavior</b>			
<i>a. Customer's Reactions to Service Failures</i>			
- Complaining / Correcting	“The service staff took unusual long time to take our order and even longer time bringing our food. The waiter brought the wrong order to our table and we had to flag him to let him know which took considerable amount of time (...) We asked for a new waiter.”	14	11.57%
- Inappropriate reactions	“I sarcastically said to the waitress "maybe it'll only be another 2 hours" which was rude on my part.”	10	8.26%
- Monetary penalties	“I felt guilty about being upset with the service. I left a poor tip and felt bad about it. I thought about how busy the server was and how she must have been having a bad day. I wished that I had had more compassion for her”	6	4.96%
		<b>58</b>	<b>47.93%</b>
<i>b. Customer's Reactions to Service Failure Recovery</i>			
- Inappropriate reactions	“He just sort of nonchalantly said “have a great day” and I was still upset but felt I couldn't say how I really felt”.	1	0.83%
<i>c. Customers' Failure to Reciprocate Service Employee Behaviors / Expectations</i>			
- Failure to reciprocate service employees interpersonal treatment	“The employee was so polite and I was responding angrily.”	4	3.31%
- Customers' inappropriate use of resources/service	“Going for window shopping and using service employee's advice, knowing you are not planning to buy anything.”	13	10.74%
<i>d. Customers' Provoked Service Failures</i>			

- Customers' mishaps	"I made a mess that the employees were forced to clean up."	6	4.96%
<i>e. Customer-Companions Interactions</i>			
- Others in one's group transgressions	"I was at a cafe with some friends. One of my friends was unnecessarily rude to the hostess for messing up on a drink order. I felt guilty."	4	3.31%
<b>3. Interactive Behavior: Service Employees</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>4.13%</b>
<i>a. Service Employee Reactions to Real and Not Real Transgressions</i>			
- Service employee judge customer transgressions	"When we went to order the waiter acted like it was the end of the world when I started asking things on the side and what some of the foods were cooked in. It made me feel guilty needless to say, even though it was there job to take my order without grumbling."	3	2.48%
<i>b. Service Employee/Organizational Citizenship Behaviors</i>			
- Citizenship Behaviors	"I feel I made several people work extra for my benefit, due to a mistake I made. I wasted the time of the front desk person, a security person who had to go retrieve my item, and then another security person who had to deliver it back to me when I arrived at the hotel to pick it up."	2	1.65%
<b>4. Bystander Behavior</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>2.48%</b>
<i>a. Empathic Guilt</i>	"I saw the next table leave without paying. I felt bad because the server might have ended up having to pay for it"	3	2.48%
<b>Total Incidents</b>		<b>121</b>	

**Group 1. Customer behavior.** The events grouped under the category of *customer behavior* (45.45% of total incidents) are those that elicited guilt as a mere consequence of the customers' actions. In other words, they occurred in service encounters but were not directly produced by an interaction with a service employee. The incidents attributed to customers were all categorized as (1a.) *personal transgressions*.

The (1a.) *personal transgressions* subcategory includes the events where customers felt guilty after not meeting their own behavioral standards. Yet, these behaviors happened without the service employee knowledge or were not produced by active interaction with service personnel. The personal transgressions subcategory included three types of events, namely (1) cheating, stealing, lying, (2) inappropriate spending of money, and (3) unintentional inappropriate behaviors.

The cheating, stealing, lying group of behaviors included situations where customers recalled being dishonest to benefit themselves from certain circumstances in service settings. For example, someone mentioned having cheated when: “[he/she] went to a movie. [and] stayed and watched two movies instead of one”. Other customers remembered situations where they steal, for example, by not paying for all the items when checking out at the grocery store, not giving extra cash back, or taking someone else’s order. Individuals also mentioned lying as a guilt-inducing behavior, like in the following incident, where one of the participants misbehave to avoid a long waiting line.

“[I] was at a Mexican restaurant near my house (...). Normally you have to wait in a waiting area to be shown to a table but there was a few people waiting already. So me and the person I was with, walked by and told the hostess that we were meeting people there so we could claim a table without waiting”

Participants also mentioned feeling guilty as a result of spending money inappropriately, like, for example, by tipping a large amount or overspending on products/services. Finally, the unintentional inappropriate behaviors category included situations where customers displayed behaviors that did not meet their code of conduct, but that was the result of random acts that involuntarily makes customers feel that they are taking advantage or exploiting the circumstances. For example, a customer mentioned having taken someone else’s order by mistake. Another discussed having ordering delivery during lousy weather.

**Group 2. Interactive Behavior: Customer.** This category major category includes the events where the self-conscious emotions were elicited from an active interaction between customer and service employee, more specifically, from actions that customers or their companions perform and that have a direct impact on the service personnel. The incidents were

grouped into four main categories: (2a.) *customers' reactions to service failures* (24.79%), (2b.) *customers' reactions to service failure recoveries* (0.83%), (2c.) *customers' failures to reciprocate service employee behaviors/expectations* (14.05%), (2d.) *customers' provoked service failures* (4.96%) and (2e.) *customer-companion interactions* (3.31%). Unlike embarrassment, interactive behaviors contained the majority of the incidents that triggered guilt in the service encounter, by representing 47.93% of the reported events.

A vast majority of the participants mentioned they had experienced guilt when they (2a.) *reacted to service failures* inappropriately. These abnormal reactions include complaining behaviors and corrective ones, such as, having to tell service employees that they are not doing a good job, or how to do their job. An example of this kind of situation is:

“When we received our food we tasted it and it was already cold so we think they completely forgot about our orders and it had been just sitting there. We complained to the manager and requested for a refund and left the restaurant. I felt guilty because I really don't like to complain about services I am the type of person to eat, tip, and never come back but considering what happened I felt the need to let the horrible service be known but I definitely felt guilty for doing that”

Also, customers indicated that they had experienced guilt when they reacted inappropriately to a service failure; in other words, where they express their emotions and frustration in socially unacceptable ways, such as being upset, being rude, yelling at service employees, or neglecting their presence. Moreover, participants revealed that when there was a service failure, and they implemented monetary penalties, such as reducing the tip amount, they experienced guilt mainly because tipping is understood as a social norm (Conlin, Lynn, &

O'Donoghue, 2003). Even if the service employee deserves not to be tipped, under tipping made customers feel uncomfortable.

The second type of interactive behavior that elicits guilt is *(2b.) customer reactions to service failure recoveries*. These incidents are experienced after customers received compensation or an apology for a dissatisfactory service encounter. In these kinds of incidents, the customers felt guilty judging/complaining about the service or the front line employee, after the service failure occurred. This results are aligned with past research that has shown that guilt can explain why customers would feel more satisfied with a service experience after a service recovery, compared to a service encounter with no service failure (Cheng et al., 2015). Below there is an example of these type of events:

“I was so angered that they couldn't get a simple order correct and my having to go inside and waste my time. The young man said “have a great day”. I felt guilty over him being so nice in the encounter at the end.”

The third type of *interactive behavior* that provokes guilt is *(2c.) customers' failures to reciprocate service employee behaviors and expectations*. In this group, we categorized situations where the consumers felt they were not able to return service employees' treatments or expectations (i.e., “I was rude to somebody who was only trying to be helpful.”), or where they use service employees' time or resources without providing adequate compensation. Such as not being able to tip a service employee that did an excellent job, or not buying a product or service after receiving employee assistance:

“The sales rep was very warm and charismatic. She knew that we only wanted the perks. She knew we had no intention of buying a timeshare. She shared her

history with us and appeared to be very candid. I felt guilty because we wasted her time. She was very motherly.”

These types of behaviors have been already been proven to elicit guilt. For example, Baumeister, Wotman, and Stillwell (1993) found that when individuals are unable to reciprocate others’ affection, they experience guilt. Similarly, Dahl et al. (2005) determined that customers’ feel guilty when they do not buy products or services from a representative for whom they feel socially connected.

Another subcategory of events is the *(2d.) customers’ provoked service failures*. In this subgroup we categorized all events where customer mishaps affected service employees, such as investing time and resources to assist customers. For example:

“I then went to push the cart and the corner of the cart bumped into a display filled with wine. The entire display fell and a bunch of glass broke. I notified an employee and offered to both pay and clean up. He told me not to worry about it and I apologized graciously again.”

Lastly, in the category of interactive behaviors, we have the *(2e.) customer-companions interactions*. In this group of incidents, customers recalled events where their companions transgressed a social or personal norm (e.g., a companion is rude to service employee), for example:

“It was about 2 years ago. [It] was with a (former) friend who was pretty much always rude to people she felt were "beneath" her. We were checking out at Walgreen's and she was REALLY rude to the checker. Can't recall what she was berating her about. I'm sure she felt no guilt [...].”

**Group 3. Interactive Behavior: Service Employee.** In this category, we grouped the incidents that elicited guilt in a service encounter, and that can be credited to front line employee behaviors (4.13%). Two types of events were identified as guilt triggering circumstances: (3a.) *service employee reactions to real and not real transgressions* (2.48%) and (3b.) *service employee/organizational citizenship behaviors* (1.65%).

The first type of incidents is associated with service employees' public reactions to perceived customers' transgressions. Specifically, when customers feel they are being judged by service employees. The following quote illustrates the types of incidents included in this category:

“We asked to see drink menu's knowing that we would probably not buy any drinks. (...) The server kept giving us dirty looks like if she was judging us.”

The second type of incidents includes service employee/organizational citizenship behaviors. In this group of events, we included episodes where customers felt guilty after service employees go above and beyond to provide a good experience, to the point that exhibits behaviors that are not listed as part of their regular job responsibilities:

“At the end of January when I was in Vegas for Chinese New Year, when I checked out of my hotel, I forgot my passport in the safe in my room. I only realized this when I got to the airport, and called the front desk, which transferred me to security and they dispatched one of their team members to go retrieve my stuff [...]”.

**Group 4. Bystander behavior.** Finally, incidents under the *bystander behaviors* (2.48%) included events where participants felt guilty of others' inappropriate actions (not companions,

not service employees). For example, seeing others being rude with a service employee and not being able to intervene. Below there is another example:

“I felt guilt because we were all drinking and I saw the next table leave without paying. I felt bad because the server might have ended up having to pay for it and I didn't say anything”

**Customer Incidents Classification: Categories within Major Groups (Antecedents of Embarrassment)**

Table 2-12 presents the embarrassment incidents categorized in the four major groups and the categories within groups. Quotes are provided to exemplify the incidents (See Appendix 2B to check the codebook).

Table 2-12.

*Embarrassment Antecedents*

<i>Embarrassment Antecedents</i>	<i>Quotes</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>1. Customer Behavior</b>		<b>85</b>	<b>58.22%</b>
<i>a. Behavioral and cognitive shortcomings</i>			
- Behavioral Shortcomings	“I was at the gym about three months ago to work out. I tripped on the treadmill and fell off of it in front of a lot of people.”	24	16.44%
- Cognitive Shortcomings	“I felt embarrassed when I had gone to a restaurant, and asked for chicken crispers, which was not a product of that restaurant but a similar restaurant, and the waiter was surprised and did not understand what I was asking for.”	58	39.73%
<i>b. Other Customers Shortcomings</i>			
- Other Customers	“Someone dumped soda on me and got my clothes all wet and the employee had to help clean up.”	3	2.05%
<b>2. Interactive Behavior: Customer Behavior</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>7.53%</b>
<i>a. Customer’s Behaviors towards Service Employees</i>			
- Customers judge a service employee	“I made a comment about our waitress. She was embarrassed and couldn’t look me in the eye the rest of the night (...). I was embarrassed”	3	2.05%
- Customers correct a service employee	“The representative screwed up my last name so badly. (...) I made it a point to tell her how badly she mispronounced my name.”	1	0.68%
- Customers tease a service employee	“The waitress said her name was Samantha, (...) I was saying we should all order like Tony Danza and call her Samanttaa, in that silly gravelly voice. (...) I thought she had already left, but she was still there.”	1	0.68%
<i>b. Customer-Companions Interactions</i>			
- Others in one’s group transgressions	“We were talking and one of my friend loudly proclaim his sexual escapades right when a waitress came up to our table.”	6	4.11%
<b>3. Interactive Behavior: Service Employees.</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>34.25%</b>
<i>a. Service Employees Behaviors towards Customer</i>			
- Service employee judge a customer	“I felt like the server was shaming me - that I was not being conscientious about the environment in requesting a bag for my sandwich.”	7	4.79%
- Service employee correct a customer	“I was in a restaurant and I was embarrassed as I pronounced the dish name incorrectly which was a French dish, [the server] corrected my pronunciation”	14	9.59%
- Service employee tease a customer	“I asked about flossing my 1 year old's teeth and the secretary scoffed at me for even doing so.”	4	2.74%
- Intentionally or not, service employee attracts attention to the customer	“The bank teller literally explicitly said out loud my bank account status, which was embarrassing.”	5	3.42%

*b. Service Employee Perceived Judgment*

- Service employee virtual judgment of customers' flaws	“When I told the employee I did not have enough money she just stared at me and did not say anything for what seemed like an hour, but was probably just a few seconds. I did feel (probably irrational) that the employees was judging me as stupid, poor, or trying to get away with something.”	20	13.70%
<b>4. Bystander Behavior</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>
<i>a. Empathic Embarrassment</i>	No incidents identify	0	0.00%
<b>Total Incidents</b>		<b>146</b>	

**Group 1. Customer behavior.** This category includes all the situations where customers attributed their embarrassment to their own actions. In other words, the embarrassing situations are not elicited as a product or an active interaction with the service employee, which means, that embarrassment is not attributed to the service personnel actions or the customers’ actions towards them. In this group, we categorized 58.22% of the incidents, which makes it the largest major category. This category includes two main types of events: *(1a.) behavioral and cognitive shortcomings* (56.16%) and *(1b.) other customers' shortcomings* (2.05%).

Under the group of *behavioral and cognitive shortcomings*, customers mentioned having experienced embarrassment as a result of uncoordinated or unintentional body actions. For example, by being clumsy, spilling a drink, tripping, or falling (*behavioral shortcomings*). Also, respondents indicated that *cognitive shortcomings* could arouse embarrassment, like forgetting how to perform simple behaviors, not paying attention to a task, or misunderstanding directions, like in the following case:

“It was a while ago when I was first trying to get my license, it was at my local DMV. The person told me to stand behind the counter, so I went inside where she was standing. I later figured that she meant I should stand behind the counter meaning I should stand right in front of her. It is "behind" the counter from her perspective.”

The *(1b.) other customers' shortcomings* group include incidents where participants recalled how other customers mishaps impacted their service experience or made them the center of attention, for example, by spilling food or drinks on them, like in the following incident:

“I was at a Wendy's and someone spilled their soda all over me because they tripped. It was really embarrassing. I was there with my friend and it was a month or so ago.”

**Group 2. Interactive Behavior: Customer.** Interactive behaviors encompass the incidents that happen as a result of an interaction between the customer and other people present in the service encounter, namely, service employees and customer companions. Also, for being part of this category, the embarrassing episodes had to be aroused because of customers' or their companions' actions towards the service employees. In this group of interactive behaviors, two major types of incidents were detected, specifically, embarrassing events due to *(2a.) customer's behaviors towards service employees* (3.42%) and *(2b.) customer-companion interactions* (4.11%).

*(2a.) Customer's behaviors towards service employees* grouped the situations where the customer's feels embarrassed after emitting evaluations of service employees' real or unreal mishaps, or appearance flaws or characteristics. Under this subcategory, we found incidents where customers publicly express an opinion to the service employee, correct them after making a mistake, like mispronouncing a name, or laugh at them, like in this case:

“At Hooters, me and my friends went out for dinner and drinks after work. After a few rounds of shots I made a comment about our waitress. She was embarrassed and couldn't look me in the eye the rest of the night. I felt obligated to give a big tip afterwards.”

The second type of interactive behavior is *(2b.) customer-companions interactions*.

Under this category, we include situations where the participant described feeling embarrassed by the actions and thoughts of their consumption companions. For example, a participant mentioned the following incident:

“I was with my mother, my husband, and my daughter. My mother had ordered the seafood alfredo. When she received her meal she was unhappy with the amount of seafood to pasta ratio. Instead of politely talking to the waitress she made a very large fuss about it so the whole restaurant could hear.”

**Group 3. Interactive Behavior: Service Employee.** This category includes incidents where the front line employees’ actions, judgments and thoughts towards the customer are responsible for the customer’s embarrassment. Also, this is the second category with the highest number of recalled embarrassment triggering situations (34.25%). The incidents in this category were divided into two types: *(3a.) Service employee behaviors towards customers (20.55%), and (3b.) service employee perceived judgment (13.70%)*.

Amongst the incidents categorized as *(3a.) service employee behaviors towards customers*, we found four primary forms of embarrassment triggering situations. The first one includes the situations where service employees judge customers, for example, by stigmatizing or evaluating their actions or choices (e.g., “The waitress insulted my dietary restrictions and mocked me for not being able to eat seafood”). The second one includes the incidents where the service employee corrects customers’ mistakes, like in this case:

“I remember a time when I was at a family gathering for a Christmas (...), when the server was taking my drink order, I had mispronounced Pinot Noir.

The server corrected me in front of everyone. It made me feel stupid and wished I had ordered a different wine.”

The third type of incidents is related to situations where the service employee tease’s the customer. One perfect example is the following case provided by one of the participants:

“My nails were a mess, and the person doing my nails said I was not taking care of myself. (...) The employee made me feel judged and then loudly told my friends who also made fun of me.”

The fourth type of incidents in this category is the one where a service employee intentionally or unintentionally, publicized customers’ deficiencies, or attracted unwanted attention from others (e.g., companions, service employees, other customers). Mainly, these incidents described episodes where service employees put the customers in a position that made them stand out from the crowd, or where they were the targets of the service employee’s clumsiness (e.g., spilling food).

A final kind of embarrassment eliciting incident that is attributed to service personnel are *(3b) perceived judgments*. These are events where customers think they are being evaluated by service employees, even if the service employees do not explicitly indicate they are judging the customer (with their behaviors or words). For example:

“My car broke down (...), it was raining. I called for assistance and the guy only accepted cash. Since I had been outside trying to figure out what was wrong with the car, I was soaking wet. The guy gave me a ride to the nearest [bank] so I could withdraw cash. And OF COURSE the ATM was out of service. Which meant I had to go into the bank soaking wet. I felt like an idiot and ashamed. I know everyone was looking at me wondering "what's wrong

with this guy." So I made no eye contact, got the cash, and went about my day.

But it was awful.”

**Group 4. Bystander behavior.** No incidents were identified as empathic embarrassment.

In summary, we can conclude from Study 2a, that guilt it is mostly caused by customers’ actions towards the service employees or organizations (47.93%), followed by customers’ personal transgression or behaviors that are inconsistent with their personal standards (45.45%). Whether embarrassment, is mainly evoked by customers’ behavioral and cognitive shortcomings (56.16%), followed by actions of service employees that made them feel judge, evaluated, or attract the attention of others towards an incident (34.25%).

## **STUDY 2B: VALIDATION OF GUILT AND EMBARRASMENT**

### **ANTECEDENTS**

Study 2b seeks to evaluate how much the categories within major groups, are good representations of the guilt/embarrassment evoking situation they were asked to describe. First, the evaluation of the guilt antecedents is presented, followed by the embarrassment antecedents.

#### **Validation of Guilt Antecedents**

To assess the extent that the categories within the major groups are good representations of the antecedents of guilt, the mean level of guilt elicited by each one the categories were compared with the scale midpoint response (i.e., *neither agree nor disagree with the emotion being guilt*). The mean of each category is the average score of all participants' level of agreement with a set of statements designed to measure how much guilt they experienced during the situation they recalled (scales adapted from Han et al., 2014). A set of one-sample t-tests were conducted, where the mean of the categories within the major groups was compared to the scale midpoint (i.e., 4). A summary of the t-test results is presented in Table 2-13.

Table 2-13.

*Validation of Guilt*

<b>Guilt Antecedents</b>	<i>M</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>M<sub>difference</sub></i>	<i>p</i>
<b>1. Consumer Behavior</b>	<b>5.42</b>				
a. Personal transgressions	5.42	7.77	54	1.42	< .001
<b>2. Interactive Behavior: Consumer Behavior</b>	<b>5.29</b>				
a. Customer's Reactions to Service Failures	5.20	4.52	29	1.20	< .001
b. Customer's Reactions to Service Failure Recovery	1.00	-	-	3.00	-
c. Customers' Failure to Reciprocate Service Employee Behaviors / Expectations	5.44	4.71	15	1.44	< .001
d. Customers' Provoked Service Failures	6.28	9.15	5	2.28	< .001
e. Customer-Companions Interactions	4.92	1.79	3	0.92	.38
<b>3. Interactive Behavior: Service Employees</b>	<b>4.22</b>				
a. Service Employee Reactions to Real and Not Real Transgressions**	4.67	-	-	0.67	-
b. Service Employee/Organizational Citizenship Behaviors ***	4.00	-	-	0.00	-
<b>4. Bystander Behavior</b>	<b>4.00</b>				
a. Empathic Guilt ***	4.00	-	-	0.00	-

\* Note: Sample sizes are different for some categories since some participants did not evaluate the events (i.e., left them blank or there is missing data).

\*\* T-test was not calculated since the sample size was equal to 1.

\*\*\* T-test was not calculated since the standard deviation was equal to 0.

The t-tests revealed that the categories that arouse a higher level of guilt were the customers' provoked service failures ( $M = 6.28$ ), followed by situations where the customers failed to reciprocate service employee behaviors / expectations ( $M = 5.44$ ), and customers' personal transgressions ( $M = 5.42$ ).

The categories that failed to reach a significant difference from the neutral point were customers'-companions' interactions ( $M = 4.92$ ), empathetic guilt ( $M = 4.00$ ), customers' reactions to service failure recovery ( $M = 4.00$ ) and service employee/organizational citizenship behaviors ( $M = 4.00$ ). A possible explanation for why the two first categories were not significantly different from the midpoint is the fact that these categories refer to situations where others (i.e., companions, other customers) exhibited a transgressive behavior. This means that when customers do not have direct responsibility for a misdeed, guilt levels are not strong enough even to surpass a mid-level of the emotion. The category of customers' reactions to

service failure recovery also did not exceed the midpoint level of guilt. These low levels can be the result of a transfer of responsibility, which justifies the customers' behaviors, making them feel less guilty. For example, imagine a customer gets the wrong food order, the person complains, and the employee gives the order for free (recovery strategy). Now imagine that even after the service employee gives the customers food for free, the customer expresses lack of conformity with the service, or displays a bad attitude, both of which behaviors are guilt-triggers. However, the customer experience low guilt since receiving food for free is a sign that the organization, or employee, has accepted fault for the incident, providing justification for rude behaviors.

### Validation of Embarrassment Antecedents

As with participants in the guilt condition, recalling the embarrassing event, participants were asked to indicate how they felt in the situation by indicating their agreement with a group of statements measuring embarrassment (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2002). The results from six one-sample t-tests, run with the aim of determining whether embarrassment was significantly different from a neutral point (*i.e., neither agree nor disagree with the emotion being embarrassment*), are summarized in Table 2-14.

Table 2-14.

#### Validation of Embarrassment

<b><i>Embarrassment Antecedents</i></b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>M<sub>difference</sub></i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b><i>1. Consumer Behavior</i></b>	<b>5.23</b>				
<i>a. Behavioral and cognitive shortcomings</i>	5.21	9.73	75	1.21	< .001
<i>b. Other Customers Shortcomings</i>	5.83	4.16	2	1.83	< .05
<b><i>2. Interactive Behavior: Consumer Behavior</i></b>	<b>4.83</b>				
<i>a. Customer's Behaviors towards Service Employees</i>	4.13	.22	4	.13	.84
<i>b. Customer-Companions Interactions</i>	5.42	3.76	5	1.42	< .05
<b><i>3. Interactive Behavior: Service Employees.</i></b>	<b>5.26</b>				
<i>a. Service Employees Behaviors towards Customer</i>	5.29	6.52	29	1.29	< .001
<i>b. Service Employee Perceived Judgment</i>	5.20	5.14	19	1.20	< .001

\* Note: Sample sizes are different for some categories, since some participants did not evaluate the events (*i.e., left them blank or there is missing data*).

These analyses indicated that most of the categories demonstrated higher-than-neutral embarrassment levels. Higher levels of embarrassment were experienced when customers were put in an embarrassing situation as a consequence of other shortcomings ( $M = 5.83$ ), or companions' mishaps ( $M = 5.42$ ), followed by events where they believed their deficiencies or faults were being judged by service employees ( $M = 5.29$ ), their own behavioral or cognitive shortcoming ( $M = 5.21$ ), and explicit judgmental service employees' behaviors towards customers ( $M = 5.20$ ; e.g., judging, correcting, teasing).

The only categories that failed to reach significance was the one grouping customers' behaviors towards service employees ( $M = 4.13$ ). This was not surprising as many of these behaviors are related to situations where customers have to complain due to a service failure. Participants indicated feeling embarrassed by the fact that they had to correct or complain, but because they were not responsible for the failure their embarrassment tended to be relatively lower.

## **STUDY 2C: CATEGORIZATION OF EMPLOYEE BEHAVIORS**

Study 2c describes the categorization of the positive and negative service employees' behaviors that participants believe would lessen or intensify customers' guilt and embarrassment. Study 2c is divided into three sections. The first presents an overview of the major groups (i.e., positive vs. negative behaviors). The second and third sections present the categories within major groups for embarrassment and guilt.

### **Employee Intervention Incidents Classification: Major Groups**

These behaviors were categorized into positive and negative employee behaviors. Those categorized as positive tend to help customers to reduce negative self-conscious emotions, while those categorized as negative then to exacerbate customers' guilt and embarrassment.

A total of 111 participants in the guilt condition and 134 in the embarrassment condition provided feedback about service employees' behaviors with potential to increase/ decrease customers' guilt/embarrassment. Three participants' responses from the guilt condition were not included in the analysis because they did not provide enough clear information. Participants were asked to list service employees' behaviors with potential to increase/decrease their guilt/embarrassment. The number of enumerated behaviors exceeded the number of participants, as some described more than one behavior. These are summarized in Table 2-15.

Table 2-15.

*Summary of Critical Service Employees' Behaviors per Major Categories*

Major Categories	Guilt		Embarrassment		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	%
Positive (Decrease emotion)	127	50.60%	160	52.12%	51.43%
Negative (Increase emotion)	124	49.40%	147	47.88%	48.57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>251*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>307*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Note: All individuals that fill out the survey were asked to provide both negative and positive behaviors. Also, participants tended to mention more than one positive/negative behavior, and in the majority of the cases, the service employee behaviors belonged to more than one subcategory.

**Service Employees' Behaviors Classification: Categories within Major Groups (Guilt)**

Each group of emotions was independently analyzed and coded, and as a result, they showed different classification patterns within the major groups identified above. A categorization of the incidents that elicit embarrassment and guilt is presented in Table 2-16, below. (A detailed description of the categories is provided in the codebook – see Appendix 2C).

**Positive behaviors by service employees.** A total of 22.83% of the responses indicated that after experiencing guilt, they would like service employees to exhibit *(1a) prosocial behaviors*, such as, providing help, or offering indications in how to resolve an issue. A total of 7.20% of the responses indicated that it helps when the service employees *(1b) accept*

*responsibility* for an event that causes them to feel guilty as a result of the employee actions (e.g., “*I think he should have acknowledged what they did was incorrect and at the very least, should have given me an apology*”).

Approximately 6.30% of the answers mentioned that service employees’ *(1c) empathetic behaviors* that reflect their understanding of the customers’ situation help them to deal with the guilt. For example, by being sympathetic or being able to relate to the circumstances, like in the following case: “*He just kept telling me to quit apologizing. He told me that I was good and that it happens all the time.*” Just over two percent (2.36%) of participants said that employees *(1d) prudence* would help them to feel less guilty. For example, service employees could engage in potentially guilt-inducing behaviors more privately so that cause customers do not feel directly judged (e.g., *Maybe waited until we leave and then come and clean our table*). A total of 3.15% of the responses signaled that the use of *(1e) courteous humor*, such as a graceful laugh or an innocent joke would be a better way to reduce the guilt. While 11.81% of answers provided by the participants cited that a right course of action from service employees is *(1f) letting go* of the incident by dismissing it or being indifferent to it.

Just over 18 percent (18.52%) of the behaviors identified by participants were related to keeping a *(1g) professional treatment*. Apparently, it is vital that, even if events arise as a result of customers’ mistakes, the service employee should remain patient and have a polite attitude. Finally, approximately one third (31.50%) of responses specified a that service employees are *(1h) unable to reduce customers’ guilt* with their actions, either because the only way to remove the emotion would be a priori prevention of the guilt-triggering event, or because service employees’ actions do not affect guilt.

**Negative behaviors by service employees.** Regarding negative behaviors that increase guilt, 4.84% of responses mentioned (2a) *unhelpfulness* as one of the factors that trigger higher levels of this emotion. Approximately 0.81% of the answers pointed out that customers feel guiltier when service employees are (2b) *being obliging*, which means that they continue providing excellent service following customer exhibition of transgressive behavior. These results can seem paradoxical, as has already been noted, a good number of participants indicated that professional treatment also is key to a reduction of guilt.

Another service employee behavior that increases guilt is service employee (2c) *overlooking* behaviors (0.81%). Guilt tends to increase when, following transgressing a personal or social norm (e.g., lying, stealing), participants get away with it due to service employee omission or leniency in rule enforcement.

A total of 33.87% responses specified that when service employees (2d) *point out the customers' mishaps*, either by calling them out or by repeatedly prolonging the guilt-triggering event (e.g., continually discussing or remind them about it), it increased guilt. Participants also indicated that when service employees (2e) *attract attention to customers' mishaps* (17.74%), they feel guiltier. For example, when they publicly announce wrongdoing by inviting others to be part of the situation (e.g., a manager), talking too loudly, or making a scene.

When employees made mistakes, participants indicated that sometimes they (2f) *resort to self-pity tactics* (8.87%). To illustrate, they can ask customers for their understanding about their mishaps (e.g., I was busy, I need your help, I need your tip, It has been a good day for me), or recognize and apologize for their mistakes or the situation, hoping that customers will empathize. Approximately 23.39% of the responses suggested that when service employees are (2g) *showing displeasure* for customers' wrongdoings also increases guilt, for example, by seeming

annoyed, angry, disappointed, or just having an attitude after the guilt-triggering event occurs.

Finally, 9.68% of the negative behaviors recalled by the participants are *(2h) demeaning* actions, which are situations where the service employees directly shame, criticize, or are condescending with the customers after a guilt-triggering event occurs.

Table 2-16.

*Service Employees' Behaviors that Impact Guilt*

	<i>Quotes</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>1. Positive Behaviors (Reduce Guilt)</b>		<b>127</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>a. Prosocial Behaviors</i>		29	22.83%
- Providing help	"I believe they did about all they could. They definitely believed me, acted courteously, and got my foolish error resolved in a satisfactory manner."	29	22.83%
<i>b. Accepting Responsibility</i>		9	7.20%
- Taking the blame	"If the employee would have been polite and accepted blame, the incident could have ended then."	9	7.20%
<i>c. Empathetic Behaviors</i>		8	6.30%
- Sympathy	"Understanding that we were not being mean, we just couldn't afford to tip her."	7	5.51%
- Relate to the situation	"[The service employee] should have said that I'm not the only one who does this."	1	0.79%
<i>d. Prudence</i>		3	2.36%
- Being discrete	"Been more discrete in receiving my tip."	3	2.36%
<i>e. Humor</i>		10	3.15%
- Courtesy laugh / smile	"I suppose if she laughed it off I would not have felt so bad."	3	2.36%
- Joking	"They did apologize, but a light joke at their own expense could have also have helped."	1	0.79%
<i>f. Letting go the incident</i>		15	11.81%
- Diminishing	"The clerk did what he should have, he did say that it was no big deal."	8	6.30%
- Being Indifferent	"They could just leave me alone when I'm shopping."	7	5.51%
<i>g. Professional Treatment</i>		19	18.52%
- Being patient	"They were calm and relaxed, but that actually helped the guilty feelings."	9	7.09%
- Being polite	"[Being] polite and responsive and not "put upon."	10	7.87%
<i>h. Unable to reduce customers' guilt</i>		40	31.50%
- Avoiding the failure	"If they were more organized in the flow of order handling [the situation] it wouldn't have even happened."	23	18.11%
- Not possible to help	"There was nothing she could have done. She just did her job. This was all me."	17	13.39%
<b>2. Negative Behaviors (Increase Guilt)</b>		<b>124</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>a. Unhelpfulness</i>		6	4.84%
- Being uncooperative	"[The service employee] could have made me clean all of it without help."	6	4.84%
<i>b. Being Obliging</i>		1	0.81%
- Obliging	"I think that her being really nice to me made me feel worse about me being short"	1	0.81%

	with her.”		
<i>c. Overlooking customers' mishaps</i>		1	0.81%
- Oversight	“The employee could have given me a great upgraded room with extras in the first place without me having to argue with them.”	1	0.81%
<i>d. Pointing out customers' mishaps</i>		42	33.87%
- Pointing out customers' wrongdoings	“If they would have accused me of stealing while I was still in the store that would have increased my guilt.”	38	30.65%
- Dwelling upon	“By making remarks as to our being indecisive.”	4	3.23%
<i>e. Attracting attention to customers' mishaps</i>		22	17.74%
- Drawing attention	“They could of drawn more attention to it, talking excitedly or more energetic.”	22	17.74%
<i>f. Service Employees' self-pity</i>		11	8.87%
- Asking for sympathy	“Talking to us about how she is over worked and under paid and underappreciated.”	7	5.65%
- Recognizing their mistakes	“I think if they owned up to their mistakes, I would have felt more guilty for being so angry.”	4	3.23%
<i>g. Show Displeasure</i>		29	23.39%
- Being angry/annoyed	“If the worker had acted angry with me for wasting their time, or acted like I was an annoyance then my guilt would have been increased for asking for their help.”	14	11.29%
- Being disappointed	“If she had shown visible sadness or mentioned that it wasn't her fault and she couldn't do anything about the situation.”	2	1.61%
- Having an attitude	“The person could have made snide remarks, or commented about the long time period since I had received the shoes and was just now calling about the issue.”	13	10.48%
<i>h. Demeaning</i>		12	9.68%
- Shaming	“Yelling at me and telling me about the reasons I am a bad person.”	7	5.65%
- Being critical	“Making us feel like she was judging us.”	2	1.61%
- Being condescending	“It would have been terrible for me if they had made some comment about me being careless or foolish (which would have been true, but would have been devastating for my mental state at the time).”	3	2.42%
<b>Total Incidents</b>		251	

### Service Employees' Behaviors Classification: Categories within Major Groups

#### (Embarrassment)

A summary of these behaviors is provided in Table 2-17 (for a detailed description of the categories, see the codebook in Appendix 2D). The coding process resulted in a total of 8 categories.

**Positive behaviors by service employees.** As regards positive service employees' actions, 20.63% of the incidents related to *(1a) prosocial behaviors*. Following a mishap, service employees' help, orientation, and assistance during the event, is critical to reducing customers' embarrassment. Just under two percent (1.88%) of the responses pointed out that when the cause of the embarrassing incident is the service employees' actions, the strength of the emotion is reduced when the employees *(1b) accept responsibility* for the event. Additionally, 7.50% mentioned *(1c) empathetic behaviors* as an embarrassment-mitigating strategy. Participants mentioned that hearing sympathetic words from the service employee, believing that the employee understands their point of view, and listening to the employees relating the embarrassing event to their past experiences or other people can diminish embarrassment (e.g., *She could (...) said she understood where I was coming from*”).

A very small group (4.38%) of the positive behaviors reflect on employees' *(1d) prudence* when aiding a customer experiencing embarrassment (e.g., *“They could have just come up to me and quietly said what they said, as opposed to saying it in front of other people”*). Just over six percent (6.25%) of the positive behaviors were related to the use of *(1e) humor*. It is worth clarifying that this is a sympathetic-type of humor, without judgmental intentions, such as, a courteous laugh or smile, or a gentle joke (e.g., *“She could have just laughed it off and then say something funny”*).

*(1f) letting go* was another type of positive behavior identified by participants, with 18.75% of the positive behaviors falling into this category, which includes diminishing the

importance of the mishap, or simply ignoring the situation (e.g., “[The employee was] acting like it was no big deal”). Moreover, a total of 24.38% fell into the (1g) *professional treatment* category. Participants indicated that seeing service employees remain calm following an embarrassing event can diminish embarrassment. Finally, 16.25% of the collected behaviors indicated that employees are (1h) *unable to reduce their embarrassment*, since they would have had to avoid the failure in the first place for that to happen, or because they did not believe employee behaviors were enough to reduce the customers' embarrassment.

**Negative behaviors by service employees.** When it comes to negative behaviors, 7.48% of the responses specified that service employees (2a) *unhelpfulness*, increases embarrassment. More specifically, employee's unwillingness to cooperate, or help customers to deal with mishaps, increases embarrassment. Also, 10.20% of the critical behaviors indicate that directly (2b) *blaming the customer* by pointing out customers' wrongdoings, or dwelling on their mistakes increases embarrassment (e.g., “[the employee could have increased the embarrassment] by continuing trying to find fault or point the blame”).

A total of 39.46% of the negative service employees' behaviors were related to (2c) *attracting attention* to embarrassing events. This category was the second most mentioned negative behavior, and comprises service employees' actions that make others aware of the customers' shortcomings, for example, by being loud, exposing the incident to other customers, or making a scene. Moreover, 10.88% of the responses indicated that when service employees (2d) *show displeasure* to the customer after the embarrassing event occurs, it makes them feel worst. For example, when customers seemed angry, annoyed, or changed their attitude (e.g., “[the employee could have increased the embarrassment] by getting angry or by rolling their eyes”).

Finally, 31.97% of the critical behaviors signaled that (2e) *demeaning* customers increased their embarrassment levels. This category includes the majority of the negative incidents, and contains behaviors such as mockery, and condescending acts (e.g., “*You do NOT joke about someone's dietary restrictions.*”).

Table 2-17.  
*Service Employees' Behaviors that Impact Embarrassment*

	<i>Quotes</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
<b><i>1. Positive Behaviors (Reduce Embarrassment)</i></b>		<b>160</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>a. Prosocial Behaviors</i>		33	20.63%
- Providing help	"[...] Helping me clean up the mess I made."	33	20.63%
<i>b. Accepting Responsibility</i>		3	1.88%
- Taking the blame	"I think if he took the blame that may have helped. Like it could have been his mix up."	3	1.88%
<i>c. Empathetic Behaviors</i>		12	7.50%
- Sympathy	"She could have said something sympathetic towards me and the situation."	9	5.63%
- Relate to the situation	"The salesman could have said something empathetic like, "No worries, there are so many different types of connections it's easy to confuse them"."	3	1.88%
<i>d. Prudence</i>		7	4.38%
- Being discrete	"What she did was plenty! She saw what was happening right away and came over to me. She talked to me quietly so no one else heard. That helped me very much."	7	4.38%
<i>e. Humor</i>		10	6.25%
- Courtesy laugh / smile	"They could have laughed and been graceful."	5	3.13%
- Joking	"[...] He also could've lightened the situation by cracking a quick joke about the situation."	5	3.13%
<i>f. Letting go the incident</i>		30	18.75%
- Diminishing	"Acting like it was no big deal."	18	11.25%
- Being indifferent	"The employee didn't really say anything and moved on to the next person quickly and I feel that in doing that, the server DID help my situation and did help to not further my embarrassment."	12	7.50%
<i>g. Professional Treatment</i>		39	24.38%
- Being patient	"By being patient with my mistake."	17	10.63%
- Being polite	"She was very cordial and didn't make a big deal of it."	22	13.75%
<i>h. Unable to Reduce Customers' Embarrassment</i>		26	16.25%
- Avoiding the failure	"They could have given me more space and could have avoided the incident."	14	8.75%
- Not possible to help	"There's not really anything they could've done. It was 100 percent on me."	12	7.50%
<b><i>2. Negative Behaviors (Increase Embarrassment)</i></b>		<b>147</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>a. Unhelpfulness</i>		11	7.48%
- Being uncooperative	"By not helping me and ignoring the mess	11	7.48%

	that was made.”		
<i>b. Blaming the customer</i>		15	10.20%
- Pointing out customers' wrongdoings	“Making me feel like the mistake was my fault.”	9	6.12%
- Dwelling upon	“Making remarks about the mess (the customer made).”	6	4.08%
<i>c. Attracting Attention to Customers' Mishaps</i>		58	39.46%
- Drawing attention	“By speaking loudly about my account's status.”	58	39.46%
<i>d. Showing Displeasure</i>		16	10.88%
- Being angry/annoyed	“She could have [increase my embarrassment] by laughing at me or yelling at me for being somewhere I wasn't supposed to be.”	10	6.80%
- Having an attitude	“If they were mean, rude, or if they complained.”	6	4.08%
<i>e. Demeaning</i>		47	31.97%
- Mockery	“Nothing is worse than laughing at someone who is clearly embarrassed.”	34	23.13%
- Being condescending	“The employee was being condescending and made me feel dumb.”	13	8.84%
<b>Total Incidents</b>		307	

In summary, when customers experience embarrassment and guilt, service employees must exhibit prosocial behaviors and provide a professional treatment (i.e., being patient and polite) since these are the most mentioned positive behaviors by participants. Also, when customers are experiencing guilt, service employees should avoid pointing out customers' mistakes or showing displeasure (i.e., disappointment, anger, annoyance). Finally, when customers experience embarrassment, service employees should try to not direct attention to the customers' mishaps or demeaning them for their mistakes.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

### Implications for Research

In an economy where customers are increasingly acquiring more responsibilities in the service process, it is more likely that mistakes will be made. These mistakes might make customers and their actions more vulnerable to the judgment of others (e.g., customers, service

employees, companions), and in consequence, to the experience of more self-conscious emotions in service settings, particularly, embarrassment and guilt. The model proposed in this essay seeks to guide managers on how to address events where customers' may experience embarrassment or guilt. To accomplish this goal, this essay tried to incorporate a TIU approach as much as possible in an effort to make a theoretical contribution to the marketing discipline and, more specifically, to the service field. This approach has been found particularly helpful in developing theories that fit the specifics of the marketing context and the stakeholders involved in it (Zeithaml et al., 2020).

Following this approach, this essay not only asked consumers to identify the circumstances that elicit guilt and embarrassment in a service context, but also asked them to provide information about how service employees (i.e., contextual stakeholders) can help them to deal with these emotions. Additionally, the open-ended questions used to collect critical incidents were designed to identify antecedents, as well as possible moderators and mediators of the relationships that emerged in the raw data.

This approach facilitated identification of the four major categories that comprise the antecedents for customers' guilt and embarrassment (i.e., Customer behaviors, Interactive behaviors: Customers' behaviors, Interactive behaviors: Service employees, and bystander behaviors). It also helped to identify and differentiate the types of situations, which are more likely to arouse guilt vs. embarrassment, and vice versa. Moreover, and even though it was not part of the set of questions asked of participants (one of the research limitations), some of the respondents signaled that experiencing these events reduced their satisfaction with the service, and their likelihood of repurchasing from a provider. In consequence, these emotions affected the

way they evaluated their service experience. This indicates that guilt and embarrassment can be possible mediators in the relationship between specific antecedents and service outcomes.

Finally, by asking customers about the role service employees play in reducing/increasing embarrassment and guilt, we identify possible moderators in the relationship between the antecedents and experienced emotions, or these emotions and service outcomes.

### **Implications for Managers**

One important implication is that customers believe service employees' actions can impact their guilt and embarrassment. For example, when asking participants to indicate possible actions that service employees can take to reduce/increase embarrassment or guilt, the vast majority was able to list at least one behavior, and while only 11.84% of the participants believed that service employees reduce these emotions. This speaks to the central thesis that service employees and managers can direct and control their behaviors in ways that reduce the negative effect that guilt and embarrassment may have on customers' overall service experience.

When embarrassing or guilt-triggering events occur, we find that managers should encourage service employees to display prosocial behaviors, and continue to exhibit professionalism during the interaction by being calm, hospitable, and polite. Service employees also should exhibit empathy because this helps customers to feel less uncomfortable. More specifically, service employees should try to adopt customers' perspective, be understanding, a good listener, and provide support (e.g., I understand you, I have been there, it has happened to other customers too).

In the case of embarrassing situations, managers should train service employees to avoid demeaning behaviors, such as mocking or being condescending, because these behaviors make customers feel more self-conscious about themselves and their mishaps. For example,

participants mentioned that laughing, an automatic and usually spontaneous response to an embarrassing situation, makes them feel ridiculed. Further, managers should train service employees to restrain themselves from making the embarrassing situation noticeable to others (e.g., customers, managers, companions). Drawing attention was the most mentioned negative behavior (i.e., increases embarrassment). Making a scene, being loud, calling others to participate in the event, or just by making others aware of the situation increases embarrassment.

Regarding guilt-triggering events, managers should train service employees to avoid showing visible signs of displeasure. For example, service employees should try to not display strong emotions such as anger, annoyance, and disgust. They should also refrain from exhibiting a bad attitude (e.g., impolite, bad-mannered, mean). Beyond showing displeasure, a vast majority of the participants mentioned that when service employees point out their mishaps or misdeeds, they feel guiltier. By way of illustration, some indicated that their guilt would increase if they had been called out by a service employee for their intentional or unintentional actions.

In general, participants made it very clear that managers and service employees' specific actions can increase/decrease embarrassment and guilt. However, to be able to train service staff in how to respond to an embarrassing or guilt-triggering event appropriately, it is important that managers understand the antecedents of these situations in a service encounter contexts. That is why the model proposed in this essay starts with a detailed classification of situations are more likely to trigger customers' embarrassment or guilt in service settings. As expected, and in alignment with theory, the majority of the guilt-arousing incidents were related to customers' sense that their actions or those of their companions had a direct impact on service employees (i.e., Interactive Behaviors: Customer Behavior – 47.93%). For example, customers' guilt feelings were primarily tied to negative reactions to a service failure (e.g., raising their voice,

being rude), such as having to complain, requesting compensation, or reducing the amount of tip provided to a server. Respondents also felt guilty when they were unable to reciprocate service employees' interpersonal treatment or compensate for their work or time. For example, being mean to a courteous employee, under tipping after receiving good service, or asking for service employees' advice without any intention of buying what the service employee is selling or promoting.

The analysis also revealed that embarrassment can be elicited by service employees' actions that affected the customers' public self (i.e., Interactive Behaviors: Service Employee – 34.25%). For example, when customers feel explicitly or virtually judged, corrected, or teased by service employees based on their perceived mistakes or flaws, or when the service employees publicize their shortcomings to others. These results suggest that in service encounters, when customers attribute a negative event to themselves and their actions (i.e., wrongdoing, misdeeds) they are more likely to experience guilt. Conversely, when asking participants to recall which events elicit embarrassment, they principally remembered service employees' behaviors (i.e., judging; evaluating) as the triggers for these emotions. Based on these results, it is not surprising that participants indicated that when it comes to embarrassment, service employees should avoid demeaning and attracting more attention to the incident.

### **Limitations and Directions**

In terms of reliability, in this essay intra-judge reliability was not calculated. According to Weber (1990), the calculation of intra-judge reliability requires that each of the judges categorize the same incidents across two points in time. However, this measure will be included in a future publication of this essay. In addition, further data collection will be necessary to

increase content validity, which will include categorization of more incidents using the coding schema developed in this study, with a focus on the emergence of additional categories.

In terms of the model, although the open-ended questions designed to collect the critical incidents ask for the customers' coping behaviors, this variable was not included in the model. It will be important for future research to integrate customers' coping to the existing model, as this will aid in training service employees to not only identify the situations are more likely to elicit these emotions, but also the ways in which customers cope with these events. Knowing customers' possible responses to embarrassing and guilt-triggering events will provide managers and service employees additional tactical directions to identify the type of emotion customers experienced, and determine how best to respond. Also, none of the questions included in the model asked explicitly for the effects that the emotions may have had on service outcomes, and service employee evaluations, which represents another important avenue for future research to explore.

In terms of the method, one of the significant limitations of this essay is the lack of in-depth interviews, which made it difficult to follow the TIU approach as recommended by Zeithaml et al. (2020) in a linear way. Yet, this also represents an opportunity to pursue further data collection using face-to-face interviews.

This essay opens the door for new research questions. First, it will be interesting to study the relationships between embarrassment and guilt might and service outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, word-of-mouth). Embarrassment appears when there are deficiencies in customers' self-presentation (Klass, 1990), and appear to be primarily triggered when service employees judge, correct or tease costumers based on their shortcomings or mishaps. Thus, it would be reasonable to expect to see a negative effect of embarrassment on service outcomes. In contrast,

in accordance with theory, the current analysis revealed that guilt appears to be elicited when customers' misdeeds have perceived negative effects on others (H. B. Lewis, 1971), in this case, the service employees or the service encounter. From these patterns, it would be expected that guilt will have a positive effect on service outcomes because providing a good evaluation of the service outcomes may be a way that customers can ameliorate their wrongdoings (Zeithaml et al., 2020).

Second, it would be particularly interesting to evaluate if customers will experience more embarrassment than guilt when their mishaps and shortcomings are publicized or publicly judge by a service employee (affecting customers' public self-presentation). Likewise, it also will be important to test whether customers will experience more *guilt than embarrassment* when they perceive that their transgressions are highly inconsistent with their personal standards. Finally, it will be important for future research to test the moderating effect that service employees' behaviors have on guilt and embarrassment, such as empathetic actions, pro-social behaviors, and professional treatment.

In conclusion, the results of this essay not only established that guilt and embarrassment are common emotions experienced in service settings, but that service employees can help customers to deal with these emotional states. Moreover, the findings of this essay, indicate that service employees can consciously or unconsciously trigger or strengthen customers' embarrassment and guilt with their behaviors. Therefore, it can be concluded that the studies conducted in this essay, provide guidance to organizations and service providers about the situations that are more likely to trigger guilt and embarrassment, and open the doors for new research focused on how service employees can positively help customers to manage their emotions.

## REFERENCES

- Argo, J. J., Dahl, D. W., & Manchanda, R. V. (2005). The influence of a mere social presence in a retail context. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(2), 207-212.
- Babcock, M. K. (1988). Embarrassment: A window on the self. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 18(4), 459-483.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (2006). The role of social and self-conscious emotions in the regulation of business-to-business relationships in salesperson-customer interactions. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 21(7), 453-457.
- Bagozzi, R. P., Verbeke, W., & Gavino Jr, J. C. (2003). Culture moderates the self-regulation of shame and its effects on performance: The case of salespersons in the Netherlands and the Philippines. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(2), 219-233.
- Batson, C. D. (1987). Prosocial motivation: Is it ever truly altruistic? In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 20, pp. 65-122). New York: Academic Press.
- Baumeister, R. F., Stillwell, A. M., & Heatherton, T. F. (1994). Guilt: An interpersonal approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115(2), 243-267.
- Baumeister, R. F., Wotman, S. R., & Stillwell, A. M. (1993). Unrequited love: On heartbreak, anger, guilt, scriptlessness, and humiliation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64(3), 377.
- Biggs, A., Brough, P., & Drummond, S. (2017). Lazarus and Folkman's psychological stress and coping theory. In C. L. Cooper & J. C. Quick (Eds.), *The handbook of stress and health* (pp. 349-364). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Mohr, L. A. (1994). Critical service encounters: The employee's viewpoint. *The Journal of Marketing*, 58(4), 95-106.
- Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Tetreault, M. S. (1990). The service encounter: Diagnosing favorable and unfavorable incidents. *The Journal of Marketing*, 54(1), 71-84.
- Bonnici, J., Campbell, D. P., Fredenberger, W. B., & Hunnicutt, K. H. (1996). Consumer issues in coupon usage: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 13(1), 31-40.

- Brumbaugh, A. M., & Rosa, J. A. (2009). Perceived discrimination, cashier metaperceptions, embarrassment, and confidence as influencers of coupon use: An ethnoracial–socioeconomic analysis. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(3), 347-362.
- Buss, A. H. (1980). *Self-consciousness and social anxiety*. San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman.
- Buss, A. H. (2001). *Psychological dimensions of the self*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cheng, Y. H., Chang, C. J., Chuang, S. C., & Liao, Y. W. (2015). Guilt no longer a sin: The effect of guilt in the service recovery paradox. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 25(6), 836-853.
- Choi, S., & Mattila, A. S. (2008). Perceived controllability and service expectations: Influences on customer reactions following service failure. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(1), 24-30.
- Conlin, M., Lynn, M., & O'Donoghue, T. (2003). The norm of restaurant tipping. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 52(3), 297-321.
- Dahl, D. W., Honea, H., & Manchanda, R. V. (2003). The nature of self-reported guilt in consumption contexts. *Marketing Letters*, 14(3), 159-171.
- Dahl, D. W., Honea, H., & Manchanda, R. V. (2005). Three Rs of interpersonal consumer guilt: Relationship, reciprocity, reparation. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(4), 307-315.
- Dahl, D. W., Manchanda, R. V., & Argo, J. J. (2001). Embarrassment in consumer purchase: The roles of social presence and purchase familiarity. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(3), 473-481.
- Dubé, L., & Menon, K. (2000). Multiple roles of consumption emotions in post-purchase satisfaction with extended service transactions. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 11(3), 287-304.
- Ekman, P., & Cordaro, D. (2011). What is meant by calling emotions basic. *Emotion Review*, 3(4), 364-370.
- Ekman, P., & Keltner, D. (1997). Universal facial expressions of emotion. In U. C. Segerstråle & P. Molnár (Eds.), *Nonverbal communication: Where nature meets culture* (pp. 27-46). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ellsworth, P. C., & Scherer, K. R. (2003). Appraisal processes in emotion. In R. Davidson, K. R. Scherer, & H. H. Goldsmith (Eds.), *Handbook of affective sciences* (Vol. 572-595, pp. V595). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The Critical Incident Technique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 51(4), 327-358.

- Frost, D. (1996). No thanks, I'm just browsing. *American Demographics*, 18(9), 25-27.
- Grace, D. (2007). How embarrassing! An exploratory study of critical incidents including affective reactions. *Journal of Service Research*, 9(3), 271-284.
- Grace, D. (2009). An examination of consumer embarrassment and repatronage intentions in the context of emotional service encounters. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 16(1), 1-9. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2008.02.004
- Graham, M., Milanowski, A., & Miller, J. (2012). Measuring and Promoting Inter-Rater Agreement of Teacher and Principal Performance Ratings. *Online Submission*.
- Gremler, D. D. (2004). The critical incident technique in service research. *Journal of Service Research*, 7(1), 65-89.
- Han, D., Duhachek, A., & Agrawal, N. (2014). Emotions Shape Decisions through Construal Level: The Case of Guilt and Shame. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(4), 1047-1064. doi:10.1086/678300
- Hartmann, D. P. (1977). Considerations in the choice of interobserver reliability estimates. *Journal of applied behavior analysis*, 10(1), 103-116.
- Heidenreich, S., Wittkowski, K., Handrich, M., & Falk, T. (2015). The dark side of customer co-creation: Exploring the consequences of failed co-created services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(3), 279-296.
- Hoffman, K. D., Kelley, S. W., & Chung, B. C. (2003). A CIT investigation of servicescape failures and associated recovery strategies. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 17(4), 322-340.
- Hoffman, K. D., Kelley, S. W., & Rotalsky, H. M. (1995). Tracking service failures and employee recovery efforts. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 9(2), 49-61.
- Hui, M. K., & Toffoli, R. (2002). Perceived control and consumer attribution for the service encounter. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32(9), 1825-1844.
- Iacobucci, D., Calder, B. J., Malthouse, E. C., & Duhachek, A. (2003). Psychological, marketing, physical, and sociological factors affecting attitudes and behavioral intentions for customers resisting the purchase of an embarrassing product. *ACR North American Advances*, 30(1), 236-240.
- Inman, J. J., & Zeelenberg, M. (2002). Regret in repeat purchase versus switching decisions: The attenuating role of decision justifiability. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 116-128.
- Izard, C. E. (1977). *Human Emotions*. New York: Plenum.

- Kaufman, G. (1996). *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes, Second Edition* (2 ed.). New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Keaveney, S. M. (1995). Customer switching behavior in service industries: An exploratory study. *Journal of Marketing*, 59(2), 71-82.
- Kelley, S. W., Hoffman, K. D., & Davis, M. A. (1993). A typology of retail failures and recoveries. *Journal of Retailing*, 69(4), 429-452.
- Keltner, D. (1996). Evidence for the distinctness of embarrassment, shame, and guilt: A study of recalled antecedents and facial expressions of emotion. *Cognition & Emotion*, 10(2), 155-172.
- Keltner, D., & Buswell, B. N. (1997). Embarrassment: Its distinct form and appeasement functions. *Psychological Bulletin*, 122(3), 250-270.
- Klass, E. T. (1990). Guilt, shame, and embarrassment. In H. Leitenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of social and evaluation anxiety* (pp. 385-414). New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Kleinginna, P. R., & Kleinginna, A. M. (1981). A categorized list of emotion definitions, with suggestions for a consensual definition. *Motivation and emotion*, 5(4), 345-379.
- Krampf, R., Ueltschy, L., & d'Amico, M. (2003). The contribution of emotion to consumer satisfaction in the service setting. *Marketing Management Journal*, 13(1), 32052.
- Krishna, A., Herd, K. B., & Aydınoğlu, N. Z. (2019). A review of consumer embarrassment as a public and private emotion. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 29(3), 492-516.
- Kristjánsson, K. (2010). *The self and its emotions*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). Progress on a cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion. *American Psychologist*, 46(8), 819-834.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Lewis, H. B. (1971). Shame and guilt in neurosis. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 58(3), 419-438.
- Lewis, M. (1995). *Shame: The exposed self*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Lewis, M. (2008). Self-conscious emotions: Embarrassment, pride, shame, and guilt. In M. Lewis, J. M. Haviland-Jones, & L. F. Barrett (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (3 ed., pp. 742-756). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Liljander, V., & Strandvik, T. (1997). Emotions in service satisfaction. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 8(2), 148-169.

- Lunardo, R., & Saintives, C. (2018). Coping with the ambivalent emotions of guilt and pride in the service context. *Journal of Services Marketing, 32*(3), 360-370.
- Mano, H., & Oliver, R. L. (1993). Assessing the dimensionality and structure of the consumption experience: Evaluation, feeling, and satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*(3), 451-466.
- Mattila, A. S., & Wirtz, J. (2004). Consumer complaining to firms: the determinants of channel choice. *Journal of Services Marketing, 18*(2), 147-155.
- McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Patterson, P. G., Smith, A. K., & Brady, M. K. (2009). Customer rage episodes: Emotions, expressions and behaviors. *Journal of Retailing, 85*(2), 222-237.
- Miller, R. S. (1992). The nature and severity of self-reported embarrassing circumstances. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18*(2), 190-198.
- Miller, R. S. (1996). *Embarrassment: Poise and peril in everyday life*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Miller, R. S., & Tangney, J. P. (1994). Differentiating embarrassment and shame. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 13*(3), 273-287.
- Oliver, R. L. (1977). Effect of expectation and disconfirmation on postexposure product evaluations: An alternative interpretation. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 62*(4), 480-486.
- Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research, 17*(4), 460-469.
- Oliver, R. L. (1981). Measurement and evaluation of satisfaction processes in retail settings. *Journal of Retailing, 57*(3), 25-48.
- Oliver, R. L. (1993). Cognitive, affective, and attribute bases of the satisfaction response. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*(3), 418-430.
- Palmatier, R. W., Jarvis, C. B., Bechhoff, J. R., & Kardes, F. R. (2009). The role of customer gratitude in relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 73*(5), 1-18.
- Patterson, P. G., McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Smith, A. K., & Lu, Z. (2009). Customer rage: Triggers, tipping points, and take-outs. *California Management Review, 52*(1), 6-28.
- Plutchik, R. (2001). The nature of emotions: Human emotions have deep evolutionary roots, a fact that may explain their complexity and provide tools for clinical practice. *American Scientist, 89*(4), 344-350.
- Pounders, K. R., Moulard, J. G., & Babin, B. J. (2018). Examining customer-created guilt in a service context. *Psychology & Marketing, 35*(11), 830-844.

- QSR International Pty Ltd. (2018). NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Version 12).
- Roos, I. (1999). Switching processes in customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 2(1), 68-85.
- Sabini, J., & Silver, M. (1997). In defense of shame: Shame in the context of guilt and embarrassment. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 27(1), 1-15.
- Smith, C. A., & Ellsworth, P. C. (1985). Patterns of cognitive appraisal in emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(4), 813-838.
- 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(1), 138-159.
- So, J., Achar, C., Han, D., Agrawal, N., Duhachek, A., & Maheswaran, D. (2015). The psychology of appraisal: Specific emotions and decision-making. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(3), 359-371.
- Stemler, S. E. (2004). A comparison of consensus, consistency, and measurement approaches to estimating interrater reliability. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 9(1), 4.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Svaeri, S., Svensson, G., Slåtten, T., & Edvardsson, B. (2011). A SOS-construct of negative emotions in customers' service experience (CSE) and firms' service recovery (FSR) in the Norwegian tourism industry. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 20(1), 51-58.
- Tangney, J. P. (1991). Moral affect: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(4), 598-607.
- Tangney, J. P. (1995). Recent advances in the empirical study of shame and guilt. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38(8), 1132-1145.
- Tangney, J. P. (1999). The self-conscious emotions: Shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride. In T. Dalgleish & M. J. Power (Eds.), *Handbook of cognition and emotion* (pp. 541-568). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tangney, J. P. (2003). Self-relevant emotions. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 384-400). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Tangney, J. P., & Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and guilt*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Tangney, J. P., Miller, R. S., Flicker, L., & Barlow, D. H. (1996). Are shame, guilt, and embarrassment distinct emotions? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(6), 1256-1269.
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral Emotions and moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58(1), 345-372.
- Tangney, J. P., & Tracy, J. L. (2012). Self-conscious emotions. In J. P. Tangney (Ed.), *Handbook of Self and Identity* (2 ed., pp. 446-478). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2004). Putting the self into self-conscious emotions: A theoretical model. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(2), 103-125.
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2006). Appraisal antecedents of shame and guilt: Support for a theoretical model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(10), 1339-1351.
- Tronvoll, B. (2011). Negative emotions and their effect on customer complaint behaviour. *Journal of Service Management*, 22(1), 111-134.
- Tsiros, M., & Mittal, V. (2000). Regret: A model of its antecedents and consequences in consumer decision making. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(4), 401-417.
- Van Vaerenbergh, Y., Orsingher, C., Vermeir, I., & Larivière, B. (2014). A meta-analysis of relationships linking service failure attributions to customer outcomes. *Journal of Service Research*, 17(4), 381-398.
- Verbeke, W., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2002). A situational analysis on how salespeople experience and cope with shame and embarrassment. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(9), 713-741.
- Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic content analysis*: Sage.
- Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review*, 92(4), 548-573.
- Weiner, B. (2000). Attributional thoughts about consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(3), 382-387.
- Westbrook, R. A., & Oliver, R. L. (1991). The dimensionality of consumption emotion patterns and consumer satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(1), 84-91.
- White, C., & Yu, Y.-T. (2005). Satisfaction emotions and consumer behavioral intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(6), 411-420.
- Wilson, A., & West, C. (1981). The marketing of unmentionables. *Harvard Business Review*, 59(1), 91-101.

- Wu, L. L., & Mattila, A. (2013). Investigating consumer embarrassment in service interactions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 33(2), 196-202.
- Yi, S., & Baumgartner, H. (2004). Coping with negative emotions in purchase-related situations. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(3), 303-317.
- Zahavi, D. (2010). Shame and the exposed self. In J. Webber (Ed.), *Reading Sartre: On Phenomenology and Existentialism*: Routledge.
- Zeelenberg, M., Inman, J. J., & Pieters, R. G. (2001). What we do when decisions go awry: Behavioral consequences of experienced regret. In J. Baron, G. Loomes, & E. Weber (Eds.), *Conflict and tradeoffs in decision making* (pp. 136-155). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Zeelenberg, M., & Pieters, R. (1999). Comparing service delivery to what might have been: Behavioral responses to regret and disappointment. *Journal of Service Research*, 2(1), 86-97.
- Zeelenberg, M., van Dijk, W. W., & Manstead, A. S. R. (1998). Reconsidering the relation between regret and responsibility. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 74(3), 254-272.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Jaworski, B. J., Kohli, A. K., Tuli, K. R., Ulaga, W., & Zaltman, G. (2020). A Theories-in-Use Approach to Building Marketing Theory. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(1), 32-51.

**CHAPTER 3. ESSAY 2: IT IS MY FAULT! THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF GUILT  
AND EMBARRASSMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMERS'  
SELF-ATTRIBUTED FAILURES AND SERVICE OUTCOMES**

**ABSTRACT**

This research investigates the effect of customers' self-attributed service failures on service outcomes, as well as the mediating role of guilt and embarrassment. It is proposed that self-attributed service failures will lead to higher levels of guilt and embarrassment than when the failure is attributed to other parties (e.g., the service provider). It is further suggested that perceived social presence will moderate the mediating effect of embarrassment on the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes (i.e., satisfaction and word-of-mouth). Also, this essay evaluates if customers' behavioral inconsistency moderates the mediating effect of guilt on the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes. Three studies were conducted to test the hypotheses. This research is expected to provide tools to service employees and organizations that allow them to identify the situations that are more prone to elicit customers' embarrassment and guilt on service settings.

*Keywords:* self-attributed service failures, guilt, embarrassment, satisfaction, word-of-mouth.

## INTRODUCTION

Service failures have long been known to elicit negative emotions (Smith & Bolton, 2002) such as anger (Folkes, Koletsky, & Graham, 1987; McColl-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith, & Brady, 2009) or rage (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009; Patterson, McColl-Kennedy, Smith, & Lu, 2009). Research has highlighted the extent to which customers engage in retribution or revenge in response to these emotions (Grégoire, Laufer, & Tripp, 2010; Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009). This research has provided service marketers with insights into not only what causes these emotions but also how service employees may react to reduce the negative impact of these emotions on service outcomes (Menon & Dubé, 2000, 2004). However, to date, most work has investigated emotions within the context of failures attributed to the firm with relatively little research focusing on emotions that arise from “self-attributed” service failures, that is, service failures for which the customer takes responsibility (Van Vaerenbergh, Orsingher, Vermeir, & Larivière, 2014).

This becomes germane as recent research has highlighted the fact that customers are increasingly being asked to engage in the co-production of services (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). As customers play a more significant role in the service production process, it is more likely they will make mistakes and consequently partly attribute failures to themselves. These self-attributions of failure will likely be associated with what has come to be known as negative self-conscious emotions (Tangney & Tracy, 2012), a group of emotions that includes guilt, shame, and embarrassment. While all three represent fruitful avenues for investigation, this research focuses on guilt and embarrassment, due in part to the fact that, unlike shame, they are often accompanied by behaviors that are observable by service employees. This, in turn, may provide an actionable cue for service providers following service failures.

Guilt is the emotional state that is aroused when individuals attribute a failure to their own behavior and emerges when individuals believe their actions negatively impact others and are the focus of others' evaluations and disapproval (real or imagined (H. B. Lewis, 1971; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). For example, a customer may feel guilty after arriving late to the airport and missing a flight, by not giving a good tip, or treating a service employee poorly. Unlike other emotions, guilt more likely triggers reparative behaviors designed to reduce possible harm and discomfort their actions may have generated (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). For example, a customer may try to explain to a frontline employee why they arrived late to the airport to request help, or after treating a service employee poorly, a customer may decide to give a better tip or apologize to make up for their initial behavior. When it comes to guilt, research suggests that guilt explains the positive relationship between customer's participation levels in service failure recoveries and customers' satisfaction (Heidenreich, Wittkowski, Handrich, & Falk, 2015). Also, studies have indicated that guilt can impact repurchase behaviors among customers with a strong relationship with service employees (Pounders, Moulard, & Babin, 2018).

Embarrassment occurs when people fail to convey a desired image of themselves to others (Klass, 1990; Tracy & Robins, 2004) such as when they spill a drink, mispronounce the name of a dish, or a service employee publicly notes that the customer's credit card has been declined. When embarrassment occurs, people tend to smile and even joke to make the event less uncomfortable (Rowland S. Miller & Tangney, 1994). Embarrassment has been shown to have an impact on repurchase behaviors (Grace, 2009), and it reduces the likelihood of spreading negative word-of-mouth when is caused by external factors (e.g., service employees; Wu and Mattila, 2013).

The goal of this research is to provide an initial investigation into how customer self-attributions regarding service failures impact service outcomes (i.e., satisfaction and word-of-mouth), and how this relationship can be explained by guilt and embarrassment. Also, in this paper, I investigate the conditions on which embarrassment or guilt work as the only mediator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes. This research also explores conditions that may heighten the impact of self-attributions of service failures on guilt and embarrassment. The first is the presence of others. It is suggested the perceived presence of others will accentuate the relationship between self-attributed service failures on embarrassment. The second boundary condition explored is behavioral inconsistency. As guilt is the result of feeling that individuals' behaviors are the focus of others' evaluation, it is proposed that in circumstances where customers exhibit behaviors that do not match their personal behavioral standards, the effect of self-attributed service failure on guilt will be increased.

The proposed research draws from Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Theory of Stress and Coping, which suggests that individuals are continually monitoring their surroundings and that negative emotions are the result of encountering stressful situations (e.g., threatening, challenging or harmful events). The current model also emerges from the implications of Weiner's (1985, 2000) Theory of Attribution. Here, following situational events, individuals tend to attribute experienced failure/success to something or someone, and this attribution triggers particular emotions. For example, guilt and embarrassment arising from adverse events for which individuals blame themselves (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

It is expected that this research will make several contributions. First, it will provide insights regarding the effects that emotions can have on the customer service experience, with a specific focus on the role of guilt and embarrassment. Second, it will provide insight into how

customers' self-attributed failures can trigger guilt and embarrassment. Third, it will show evidence that customers' embarrassment can be exacerbated by the belief that others' are aware of the behavior responsible for the service failure. Fourth, it will provide clues about the type of situations (behavioral inconsistency) where customers' guilt will have a stronger explanatory role in the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes. Finally, it provides further guidance for frontline employees, relating to service recovery strategies with the potential to avoid a range of negative consequences associated with customers' guilt and embarrassment feelings.

Three experimental studies are proposed. Study 1 will test the mediating role of guilt and embarrassment in the relationship between customers' attributions of service failures and service outcomes (e.g., service satisfaction and word-of-mouth). Study 2 will test the moderating role of perceived presence of others in the relationship between self-blame and guilt and embarrassment. Study 3 will test the level of the inconsistency of customers' behaviors as a moderator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and guilt and embarrassment.

The figure below provides a depiction of the conceptual model that guides the research

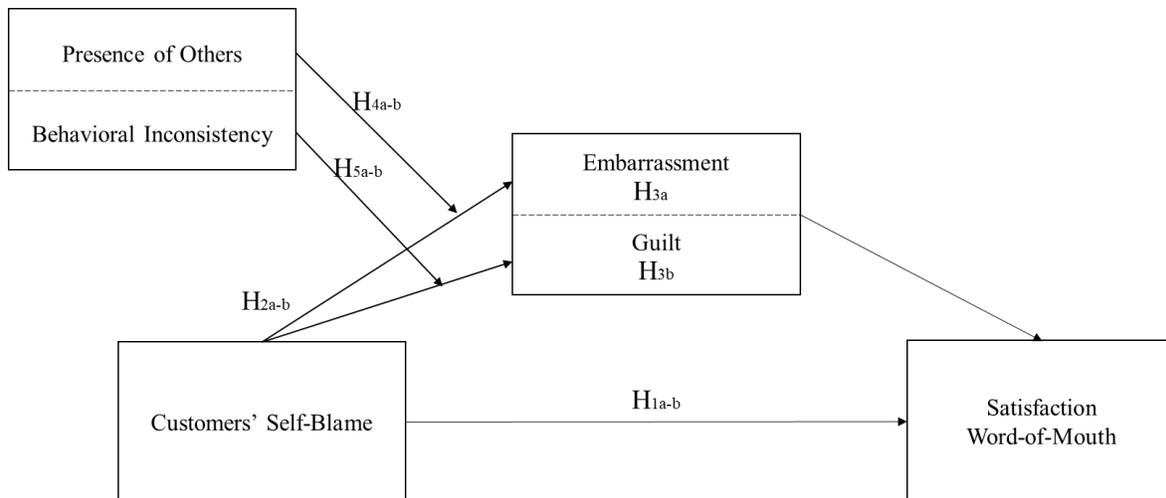


Figure 3-1.  
*Proposed Model*

The proposed essay has been divided into four major sections. The first provides an overview of the theories used to explain how emotions are aroused in response to environmental events and, more specifically, how guilt and embarrassment are triggered as a result of self-attributed failures. The second section presents the hypotheses development. The third section describes how the study hypotheses were tested, and the results for the studies conducted. In the final section, I provide a discussion and limitations.

## **CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND**

### **Customers' Emotional Responses to Failures**

Cognitive Appraisal Theory is one of the theoretical approaches that has been used to explain the effects of service failure on customers' emotional states and behaviors (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Here, individuals monitor their environment and make initial situational appraisals (Biggs, Brough, & Drummond, 2017; Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This initial assessment facilitates determination of whether an event is insignificant, or has positive or negative consequences for the self. If the situation has the potential to be harmful,

threatening, or challenging, a second appraisal is undertaken to determine if the individual has enough resources to respond to the event. If there are not enough resources, stress is experienced. That is when coping appears, which can be defined as individuals' mechanism to reduce the negative feelings produce by a the negative event, and enhance the positive ones (Duhachek, 2008).

For example, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) argued that after people realize they have insufficient resources to cope with an event, they direct their efforts to control, endure or diminish the emotional response to the event. These coping strategies have been classified into two types, problem-focused or emotion-focused. Problem-focused strategies are efforts to change the current situation; while emotion-focused strategies are efforts to change the way a situation is experienced (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, a problem-focused strategy may include running when people feel in danger, while an emotion-focused strategy might include trying to distract themselves from the situation, like avoiding thinking about the amount spent after making an impulsive purchase. When it comes to guilt and embarrassment, research has found that, when individuals experience guilt, they are more likely to use a problem-focused strategy. While, when individuals believe they have less control over a situation, they tend to use an emotion-focused strategy (which may apply for embarrassment). (Duhachek, Agrawal, & Han, 2012; Han, Duhachek, & Rucker, 2015)

### **Types of Emotions and Customers' Failures Attribution**

Weiner (1985, 2000) offered attribution theory as a vehicle to enhance the explanatory power of theories of coping and stress. According to Weiner (1985, 2000), the type of emotion experienced may be determined by the attributed cause or source of the success or failure of an event. More specifically, this theory proposes that after an event is evaluated as successful or

failed, individuals conduct an initial appraisal, where they tend to look for something or someone to attribute the cause of the event outcome (Oliver, 1993; Weiner, 2000). These causes are evaluated based on three criteria: locus of control, stability, and controllability Weiner (1985, 2000). Locus of control is reflective of the degree that causes of the success or failure can be attributed to internal or external factors, whether individuals can attribute the success or failure of an event to their own behaviors, the behavior of others, or external factors. Stability reflects the extent that the cause of the success or failure fluctuates. Whether an event can be attributed to permanent (i.e., that are the same over time), or unstable conditions (i.e., never the same) drives perceptions of stability. The final criterion is controllability – the perceived level of power that individuals have to change a situation. Weiner (1985, 1994, 2000) work suggests that these attributions can trigger customers' emotional states, with different emotions emerging from different combinations of the causal attribution dimensions.

Guilt and embarrassment are likely to arise when the failure is attributed to the self. More specifically, guilt is elicited when individuals attribute a failure to controllable, unstable, and specific aspects of the self (Tracy & Robins, 2004; Weiner, 2000). For example, people may experience guilt after making a mistake due to actions or inactions (i.e., controllable aspect) that do not fit personal behavioral standards (i.e., unstable aspect). Embarrassment occurs when people attribute the cause of a failure to uncontrollable, personal, and unstable causes (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Weiner, 2000). For example, individuals feel embarrassed when causing a failure due to unexpected (i.e., uncontrollable aspect) or unplanned mishaps (i.e., unstable aspect).

Research has recognized the mediating role of emotions in the relationship between an individuals' assessment of events (i.e., positive vs. negative, internal vs. external) and their coping behaviors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Weiner, 2000; Yi & Baumgartner, 2004).

According to Yi and Baumgartner (2004), customers may use different combinations of emotional and behavioral strategies depending on the emotion they experience. They proposed eight types of coping behaviors in purchase-related situations, including, (1) planful problem solving; (2) confronting coping; (3) seeking social support; (4) mental disengagement; (5) behavioral disengagement; (6) positive reinterpretation; (7) self-control; and (8) acceptance. Yi and Baumgartner (2004) argued, for example, that when customers have to cope with a situation elicited by a self-attributed failure, and over which they have a low level of control (i.e., low perceived capacity to avoid or fix the situation), they use coping strategies such as self-control and mental disengagement. However, when customers perceive a high level of control over a situation (i.e., high perceived capacity to avoid or fix the situation), they may react more actively by seeking social support and planful problem solving.

In line with Yi and Baumgartner (2004), it is expected that when customers experience guilt, they will look for social support (i.e., discuss feelings and get advice from others), and engage in planful problem-solving (i.e., take steps to solve a problem). Which means that there is a high probability that customers will share a failure experience with others, such as companions, other customers, or service employees. While, in the case of embarrassment and due to its uncontrollable nature, it is expected that individuals engage in self-control (i.e., trying to hide the embarrassment) and mental disengagement (i.e., letting go the situation) when having to handle this emotion. Which indicates that when people feel embarrassed there is a high probability they will try to avoid others notice of the event or attracting more attention to the situation.

In summary, consistent with the implications of cognitive appraisal and attribution theories in this context, when a service failure drives the need to cope, guilt and embarrassment are likely to be elicited when customers make self-attributions (i.e., internal locus of control) for

service failures. Also, it is believed that the right differentiation between the situations that lead to each one of these emotions can help organizations to train frontline employees to notice guilt and embarrassment-inducing service failures. Moreover, they can also be trained to be sensitive to guilt and embarrassment alleviating behaviors, and actions to maximize service recovery.

## **HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Effects of Self-Attributed Failures on Service Outcomes**

It is almost impossible to always deliver a failure-free service encounter (Bitner, 1992; Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991). Maxham III (2001) defined service failures as “service-related mishaps or problems (real or perceived) that occur during a customer’s experience with a firm.” A customer’s natural reaction following service failures may be to identify the source of the problem. As noted in the previous section, service failures can be attributed to different underlying causes (Folkes, 1984; Gelbrich, 2010; Weiner, 2000). Broadly speaking, when a failure occurs, customers may attribute the failure to themselves (i.e., high self-attribution), or to others, such as the service firm/service employees (i.e., low self-attribution). For example, a customer that spills a drink on a table may attribute the majority of service failure to themselves, but a customer that spills a drink on a table because the service employee left the beverage near the table edge may experience a low self-attribution of the failure.

To date, research has principally focused on failures attributed to service providers and employees (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014) with less research having focused on customers’ self-attribution of service failures on service outcomes (e.g., missing a flight, treating a service employee poorly, or not tipping enough money). In light of the increasing prevalence of co-production in service settings, this is a particularly fruitful area of research (Etgar, 2008; Silpakit & Fisk, 1985; Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012; Zeithaml, 1981). For example, research

from Bitner, Booms, and Mohr (1994) showed that frontline employees attributed 22% of the dissatisfactory service events to problem customers who break firm rules and policies, are uncooperative, verbally or physically abusive, or intoxicated.

Researchers have argued that in situations where individuals made mistakes, and in order to protect their self-concept, they tend to exhibit a self-serving bias, which refers to individual's predisposition to believe that positive outcomes can be credited to themselves, and negative outcomes to external circumstances (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). Aligned with this theory, researchers have found that when there is a product failure, customers sometimes attribute their mistakes to others (Folkes, 1984). This indicates that even in situations where customers made mistakes, the mere attribution to others (e.g., organization) will negatively impact the evaluation of a product or service. However, more recent studies have shown that this does not hold true when customers are actively involved in the service co-creation process. More specifically, research has shown that when customers accept at least partial blame for a service failure, they experience higher levels of satisfaction and repurchase intentions, and complain less than when they blame the firm (Choi & Mattila, 2008; Westbrook, 1987). Therefore, it is proposed that when customers make self-attributions regarding a service failure, they may experience higher levels of satisfaction and word-of-mouth, leading to the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>1a</sub>.** When customers make self-attributions for a service failure, they will report higher levels of satisfaction.

**H<sub>1b</sub>.** When customers make self-attributions for a service failure, they will be more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth.

### **The Mediational Effect of Guilt and Embarrassment**

Even in situations where customers are the ones to blame for an event that negatively interferes with the service encounter, these situations can be considered service failures.

Moreover, since they are unpleasant occurrences that interfere with customers' goals (i.e.,

expected experience), it is expected that they may trigger negative emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Oliver, 1993). As noted previously, self-attributed negative events can elicit guilt and embarrassment (Tracy & Robins, 2006; Weiner, 1994).

Guilt and embarrassment are considered negative self-conscious emotions, since they are evoked when individuals deliberately make an assessment of themselves and their behaviors (Tangney & Tracy, 2012), as a result of feeling actually or virtually evaluated by others (Tangney, 1999). More concretely, guilt is elicited when individuals feel their actions are the focus of the evaluation (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994), while embarrassment results from the inability to present a desired image to others (Klass, 1990). For example, when customers leave a poor tip, they experience guilt, since they consider they did not comply with an established social norm (i.e., their actions are the focus of evaluation). However, when a customer's credit card gets rejected, it is more likely the person will experience embarrassment, since the customer will feel that it is delivering a wrong image to others (e.g., bad financial situation). We believe that when customers attribute failure to themselves, they are likely to experience both embarrassment and guilt since they will not only perceive they are delivering an undesired image to others but that the actions that caused the failure will be the focus of evaluation by others. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**H<sub>2a</sub>.** Customers will experience higher levels of embarrassment when they make self-attributions for a service failure.

**H<sub>2b</sub>.** Customers will experience higher levels of guilt when they make self-attributions for a service failure.

Furthermore, guilt and embarrassment can explain the effect of customers' self-attributed service failures on service outcomes. Research has shown that provoked negative emotional states can have a negative impact on the overall service experience (Gountas & Gountas, 2007;

Mano & Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 1994; Söderlund & Rosengren, 2007). However, although guilt and embarrassment are negative emotional states aroused by internal attributions of failures (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2006; Weiner, 1994, 2000), guilt and embarrassment can have a positive effect on service outcomes. For example, customers who experience guilt tend to feel more satisfied with a service recovery (Heidenreich et al., 2015) and exhibit higher repurchase intentions when they have a strong commercial relationship with a salesperson (Dahl, Honea, & Manchanda, 2005; Pounders et al., 2018). This positive effect may be explained by the fact that when people experience guilt, they are more empathetic towards others, and consequently may think more about the harm done to others and how they can repair the damage (Tangney, 1991, 1995). One way to compensate for the harm done (to the service encounter) can be by providing better evaluations of the service and exhibiting a higher likelihood to spread positive word-of-mouth. Hence it is proposed that:

**H<sub>3a</sub>.** The positive relationship between self-attributed service failures and service outcomes is mediated by guilt.

When it comes to embarrassment a similar positive effect of customers' self-attributed service failures on service outcomes is expected. Previous research has revealed that embarrassment reduces the likelihood of spreading negative word-of-mouth when customers' mistakes are pointed out by service employees (Wu & Mattila, 2013) and increases individuals' pro-social behaviors (Feinberg, Willer, & Keltner, 2012). Researchers have indicated that the positive effect of embarrassment on customers' likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth may be due to customers' avoidance to tell others the details of a negative event for which they are responsible (Krishna, Herd, & Aydınoğlu, 2019; Philp & Ashworth, 2013). Based on the above:

**H<sub>3b</sub>.** The positive relationship between self-attributed service failures and service outcomes is mediated by embarrassment.

## **The Moderating Effect of Others Presence**

Embarrassment appears as an emotional reaction to events where individuals fail to convey a desired image of themselves to others (Klass, 1990). In other words, embarrassment occurs when people feel there is a misrepresentation of their identity to the public (Sabini & Silver, 1997; Tracy & Robins, 2004). This undesirable image is usually transmitted by people through mishaps, minor social transgressions (not moral; Kristjánsson, 2010), or by getting unwanted attention (M. Lewis, 2008). For example, by being told in public that the credit card has been declined, falling in front of others, or mispronouncing the name of a plate. In line with the characteristics of guilt, it is believed that when the self-attributed service failure is strongly caused by customers' mishaps, embarrassment will appear as the only explanation of the relationship between their self-blame and service outcomes.

The properties of embarrassment as an emotion indicate that in order to be elicited, people should perceive a real or virtual evaluation of their *self*. This means that higher levels of embarrassment are more prone to occur in the presence of others. This also indicates that embarrassment is likely to occur in service encounters since it typically occurs in the presence of others (e.g., service employees, companions, or other customers; Grove and Fisk, 1983). Moreover, previous research has shown that social presence can increase the level of embarrassment people can experience. For example, it was found that individuals who notice the presence of others while presented with nude content (Costa, Dinsbach, Manstead, & Bitti, 2001) or while buying embarrassing products (Dahl, Manchanda, & Argo, 2001) exhibit a stronger emotional state.

This pattern of results coincides with the precepts of the Social Impact Theory (SIT) (Latané, 1981), which proposes that the real or imaginary presence or actions of others (i.e.,

social sources) can influence behaviors and emotions. SIT further suggests that the impact of social presence on individuals' behaviors and emotions increases when there is a stronger relationship with the social sources (e.g., familiarity, group belongings) when the social sources are closer (e.g., proximity), and/or when they are more numerous (e.g., size; Latané, 1981; Latané and Wolf, 1981).

One of the antecedents of embarrassment is whether individuals feel the real or imaginary evaluation of their behaviors by others. Accordingly, when customers make a self-attribution for a service failure, they will experience more embarrassment if they believe others are aware of the event. Customers will experience greater embarrassment in public (at least one other person), and whenever others are close enough to evaluate the event (high proximity). If customers perceive that at least one other person can judge them, they will tend to experience greater levels of embarrassment, leading to the following hypothesis:

**H<sub>4a-b</sub>.** The mediating effect of embarrassment between self-attributed service failures and service outcomes is moderated by the perceived evaluation of others, such that the perceived presence (absence) of others during a service failure will increase (decrease) the effect of self-attributed failures on embarrassment, and subsequently will (a) have a positive (negative) effect on customers' satisfaction and (b) increase (decrease) the customers' likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth.

### **The Moderating Effect of Behavioral Inconsistency**

People experience guilt as a result of a perceived real or imaginary evaluation of specific behaviors (H. B. Lewis, 1971; Tangney et al., 2007). These behaviors are usually related to transgressions where individuals have negatively affected others with their actions (Tangney, 1991, 1995) such as disrupting another's activities, making them feel uncomfortable, or exhibiting disagreeable behaviors. Tangney (1991, 1995) has also noted that when individuals feel guilty, there is a recognition of their wrongful actions, which triggers individuals' remedial

actions. Consequently, it is believed that when a self-attributed service failure is caused by customers' misdeeds, guilt will serve as a better explanation of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes.

The nature of guilt implies that a misconduct has taken place, which suggests that the behaviors portrayed by individuals are not consistent with some personal behavioral standards. Not surprisingly, guilt is classified as a moral emotion since it occurs when individuals believe they have displayed a moral or social offense (Tangney et al., 2007). For example, research has shown that customers feel guilty after the employees or organizations implement service recovery strategies (Cheng, Chang, Chuang, & Liao, 2015), or when they do not buy products from a service employee with whom they have developed a relationship (Dahl et al., 2005). In these examples people may feel guilty because by complaining they are making the service employee uncomfortable. They are receiving something extra after having to complain about a service failure, or they are using a service employee's time without the intention of buying a product.

Accordingly, it is believed that the effect that customers' self-attributed service failures have on guilt can be strengthened by the level of the behavioral inconsistency that customers' exhibit during the service failure. In other words, people who feel their behaviors are more distant from their personal standards will feel guiltier than people that behave in a more consistent way. For example, imagine a person that has to complain about a dissatisfactory service to an employee. The complaining action by itself will make the customer feel guilty. Now, the levels of guilt will be higher if the customer yells at the service provider while expressing dissatisfaction (i.e., high behavioral inconsistency) than if the person just has a plain conversation with the service employee (i.e., low behavioral inconsistency).

The belief that behavioral inconsistency will strengthen this relationship is supported by Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT), which suggests that people tend to experience feelings of discomfort when there are discrepancies among their attitudes, knowledge, opinions, and beliefs about the world, themselves, and their behaviors (Festinger, 1957). Also, previous research has shown that when individuals experience high behavioral discrepancies, they tend to experience negative emotions, such as guilt and self-criticism (Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991). Therefore, it is proposed that:

**H<sub>5a-b</sub>**. The mediating effect of guilt between self-attributed service failures and service outcomes is moderated by customers' behavioral inconsistency, such that high (low) behavioral inconsistency during a service failure will increase (decrease) the effect of self-attributed failures on guilt, and subsequently will (a) have a positive (negative) effect on customers' satisfaction, and (b) increase (decrease) the customers' likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth.

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

Three studies will be carried out to test the hypotheses presented above. Study 1 investigates the extent to which guilt and embarrassment mediate the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes (H1<sub>a-b</sub>; H2<sub>a-b</sub> and H3<sub>a-b</sub>). Study 2 tests for the moderating role of perceived social presence, which is proposed to strengthen the relationship between customers' attribution of blame and embarrassment (H4<sub>a-b</sub>). Finally, Study 3 evaluates the moderating role of behavioral inconsistency on the relationship between customers' self-blame and guilt (H5<sub>a-b</sub>).

### Study 1

Study 1 investigates the effect of customers' self-attributed service failures on satisfaction and word-of-mouth (H1<sub>a-b</sub>), as well as on embarrassment and guilt (H2<sub>a-b</sub>). Also, it explores the mediating role of guilt and embarrassment in the relationship between customers'

self-blame and service outcomes (e.g., service satisfaction and word-of-mouth; H4<sub>a-b</sub>). Results suggest that when customers blame themselves for a service failure, they report higher levels of satisfaction and increased intentions to spread positive word-of-mouth, as well as stronger levels of guilt and embarrassment. Study 1 also provides evidence that the main effect of customers' self-blame on service outcome is explained by guilt and embarrassment. Additionally, in Study 1 I was able to rule out shame as a possible explanation of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes.

Finally, in Study I it is important to clarify that I proceed by estimating the mediating effects of guilt and embarrassment independently due to expected high correlations between these self-conscious emotions. This added collinearity in the regression models predicting the outcome variables can lead to increased widths in confidence intervals for the partial relationships (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003; Hayes, 2018), making it harder to detect mediating effects. However, in an effort to fully document the nature of the relationships, I conduct and document a post-hoc analysis where I assess the mediators in parallel.

**Stimuli Development.** Two scenarios based on previous work by Choi and Mattila (2008) were developed to manipulate customers' self-blame. The scenarios presented a situation where customers are visiting a restaurant, but once they arrive, they have to wait to be seated (see scenarios in Appendix 3A). The participants were asked to imagine that after becoming a bit impatient, they wave over a service employee who finally helps them to be seated. After describing a typical dining experience, participants are told that the manager approaches to ask about their experience at the restaurant, and they complain about the waiting time. In the high self-blame condition (see (a) in Appendix 3A), respondents read that when leaving the restaurant, they see a sign that reads, "Please seat yourself," suggesting the earlier wait was their

fault. In the low self-blame condition, respondents are told there was no similar sign (see (b) in Appendix 3A).

**Pre-test.** Before collecting the data used to test the hypotheses, a pre-test was conducted to ensure the self-blame manipulation was operating as expected. To do this, 254 participants were recruited using the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform, but only the 210 subjects that were able to answer the attention filters successfully used to conduct the analysis (46.7% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 38.89$ ). The three-item customers' attribution of blame scale developed by Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002) was used as a manipulation check (see Appendix 3B for the list of items included in the scale). Participants were asked to respond using a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{not at all}$ ,  $7 = \text{completely}$ ). The three items that make up the scale were averaged to create a self-blame index ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

To determine if the self-blame manipulation worked as expected, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with the measure described above as the dependent variable and the two levels of self-blame as the independent variable. The analysis revealed that customers' self-blame was manipulated successfully since there were significant differences in the customers' self-blame for the service failure between the two scenarios ( $F(1,208) = 298.63$ ;  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .59$ ). Participants assigned to the high level of self-blame scenario scored significantly higher on the blame scale ( $M_{\text{high}_{SB}} = 6.91$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) than the participants presented with the low self-blame scenario ( $M_{\text{low}_{SB}} = 2.09$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ).

The use of scenarios in experimental designs has been criticized for their lack of external validity (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014) since the effects obtained in experimental settings may not hold in real situations. To help provide some assurance that the results obtained through the use of the scenarios can be generalized to non-experimental situations (i.e., natural settings), they

were evaluated in terms of their realism (“the scenario was realistic”) and plausibility (“something like the situation described in the scenario has happened to me”). A 7-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) was used. The participants indicated that the scenarios were highly realistic ( $M_{realism} = 5.80$ ,  $t(209) = 19.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and believable ( $M_{believability} = 6.00$ ,  $t(209) = 24.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in comparison with the scale midpoint (4.0). Also, there were no significant differences in realism ( $M_{low\_SB} = 5.71$ ;  $M_{high\_SB} = 5.90$ ;  $F(1,208) = 1.13$ ,  $p = .29$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .005$ ), and believability ( $M_{low\_SB} = 6.01$ ,  $M_{high\_SB} = 5.98$ ;  $F(1,208) = .03$ ,  $p = .86$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ ) between the high and low self-blame conditions.

**Main Study Sample, Research Design, and Procedure.** A total of 261 subjects were surveyed through MTurk. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire by clicking on a link that transfers them to a Qualtrics survey. Since a total of 69 participants failed to answer the attention filters included in the survey, only 192 responses were used for the final analysis (60.2% male,  $M_{age} = 37.35$ ). A between-subjects experimental design was conducted. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios discussed above in the Stimuli Development and Pre-Test sections.

**Measures.** Two scales from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003) were adapted to measure service outcomes, a 3-item scale to measure word-of-mouth ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and a 2-item scale to measure satisfaction ( $r = .77$ ). As recommended by Eisinga, te Grotenhuis, and Pelzer (2013), the Spearman-Brown coefficient was used to measure the reliability of the 2-item scale. The two scales used to measure service outcomes were anchored by 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree). Customers’ guilt was measured using 3-items ( $\alpha = .92$ ) from Han, Duhachek, and Agrawal (2014) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not guilt-ridden / not culpable / not remorseful*, 7 = *guilt-ridden / culpable / remorseful*). A 7-item scale adapted from Verbeke and Bagozzi (2002)

was employed to measure embarrassment ( $\alpha = .91$ ), using a 7-point Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree Likert scale.

With the purpose of ruling out shame as a possible mediator, this self-conscious emotion was also measured. Shame was measured using a 7-item scale ( $\alpha = .83$ ) adapted from Marschall, Sanftner, and Tangney (1994). These items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The idea behind ruling out shame comes from the belief that guilt and embarrassment serve as a better explanatory variable of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes for two reasons. First, research has indicated that when individuals feel guilty or embarrassed, they are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors in order to repair their wrongdoings or recover their lost image (Baumeister et al., 1994; Rowland S Miller & Leary, 1992; Tangney, 1995). These prosocial behaviors can serve as an explanation for customers' higher satisfaction ratings and a higher likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth.

Second, when people feel shame, they are inclined to hide and escape from the situation that evoked the emotion (Tangney, 1995), and are less likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors (De Hooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2007). These actions can be translated into customers avoiding to talk about the incident (i.e., no positive/negative word-of-mouth), and less concern about evaluating a service experience as more positive/negative. Shame, unlike guilt (individuals' behaviors are the cause of an event) and embarrassment (individuals are not able to portray the desired image to others) occurs when individuals feel that their *global self* is the one that is being evaluated by others (M. Lewis, 1995), and it is more likely to be aroused due to a perceived evaluation of individuals' personal characteristics and flaws (e.g., stable features inherent to each individual). According to Tangney (1995) when people experience shame they

are more worried about themselves (self-focus), than about trying to make amends (other-focus).

The survey finished measuring attribution of blame, with the same three-item scale employed for the stimulus pre-test to conduct the manipulation check ( $\alpha = .93$ ). At the end of the survey, participants were asked to indicate their age group and gender. A complete list of the items included in each scale is presented in Appendix 3B.

Finally, to check for the linear relationship between the variables being measured, a set of correlations was conducted. As expected, the correlations were reasonably high between mediators and dependent variables (guilt-embarrassment = .76; guilt-shame = .67; embarrassment-shame = .78; satisfaction-word-of-mouth = .88), and moderated among the mediators and dependent variables (guilt-satisfaction = .50; guilt-word-of-mouth = .53; embarrassment-satisfaction = .44; embarrassment-word-of-mouth = .43). All correlations were significant ( $p < .01$ ).

**Manipulation Check.** To check the extent to which the self-blame manipulation worked, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. For the manipulation check, the Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003) index (i.e., 3-items scale) was used as a dependent variable, and customers' self-blame as independent variable. The analysis revealed that there were significant differences in customers' self-blame between the scenarios. Very similar to what was found in the pre-tests, respondents who read the high self-blame scenario reported higher means ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.77$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) than those who read the low self-blame scenario ( $M_{low\_SB} = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ;  $F(1,190) = 190.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .50$ ).

**Results.** The results are presented as follows; first, I test for the main effect of customer self-blame on service outcomes ( $H_{1a-b}$ ). Second, I evaluate if different levels of customers' self-blame elicit significantly different levels of guilt and embarrassment ( $H_{2a-b}$ ). Third, I assess if

guilt and embarrassment mediate the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes (H<sub>3a-b</sub>).

**Service Outcomes.** A one-way ANOVA was conducted to check for the effect of customers' self-blame on service outcomes (i.e., satisfaction (H<sub>1a</sub>) and word-of-mouth (H<sub>1b</sub>)). The results provided support for H<sub>1a</sub> and H<sub>1b</sub>. When using satisfaction as an outcome variable, the data indicated that there are statistically different satisfaction levels between the participants assigned to the low self-blame and high self-blame conditions ( $F(1, 190) = 82.94, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .30$ ). More specifically, participants in the high self-blame condition reported significantly higher levels of self-blame ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.74, SD = 1.09$ ) than the ones in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 4.02, SD = 1.50$ ). Similar results were found when running the analysis with word-of-mouth, where participants in the high self-blame condition indicated a significantly higher likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.36, SD = 1.19$ ), than the participants in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 3.75, SD = 1.50; F(1, 190) = 68.28, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .26$ ).

**Self-conscious emotions.** Two one-way ANOVAs were run to test if there were significantly different levels of guilt (H<sub>2a</sub>) and embarrassment (H<sub>2b</sub>) between self-blame conditions. The results provide support for H<sub>2a</sub>, since they showed that the levels of guilt aroused by the self-blame conditions were significantly different ( $F(1, 190) = 216.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .30$ ), with the participants in the high self-blame condition reporting higher levels of guilt ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.11, SD = 1.35$ ) than the ones in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 2.99, SD = 1.88$ ). Also, the data offered support for H<sub>2b</sub>, since for embarrassment the one-way ANOVA revealed that the participants in the high self-blame condition felt significantly more embarrassment ( $M_{high\_SB} = 4.92, SD = 1.14$ ) than the ones in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB}$

= 3.25, SD = 1.27;  $F(1, 190) = 92.59, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .33$ ).

***The Mediation Role of Guilt.*** To formally test for H<sub>3a</sub>, the mediating effect of guilt on the relationship between self-attributions of blame and service outcomes, Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples was used. Customers' self-blame was used as the independent variable (i.e., High self-blame vs. Low self-blame) and service satisfaction and word-of-mouth as dependent variables. When using satisfaction as a dependent variable, the results revealed that there is a main effect of customers' self-blame on guilt ( $b = 2.13, SE = .24, p < .001, 95\% CI [1.66, 2.59]$ ) and satisfaction ( $b = 1.23, SE = .22, p < .001, 95\% CI [.80, 1.65]$ ). Also, a main effect of guilt on satisfaction was found ( $b = .23, SE = .06, p < .01, 95\% CI [.12, .34]$ ). The data also revealed that there was a significant indirect effect such that guilt successfully mediates the relationship between self-blame and satisfaction ( $b = .49, SE = .14, 95\% CI [.24, .80]$ ).

Similar results were found for word-of-mouth. The data indicated that there was a significant effect of customers' self-blame on guilt ( $b = 2.13, SE = .24, p < .001, 95\% CI [1.66, 2.59]$ ) and word-of-mouth ( $b = .99, SE = .22, p < .001, 95\% CI [.56, 1.42]$ ). Equally, the analysis indicated that there was a main effect of guilt on word-of-mouth ( $b = .29, SE = .06, p < .001, 95\% CI [.18, .40]$ ). Finally, it was found that guilt successfully mediates the relationship between customers' self-blame and word-of-mouth ( $b = .62, SE = .14, 95\% CI [.35, .91]$ ). Together, these results provide support for H<sub>3a</sub>. A summary of the results of the mediation analysis can be found in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1.  
*Mediation Results of Guilt*

<i>Y = Satisfaction</i>						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Guilt	2.13	.24	9.05	< .001	1.66	2.59
X <sub>1</sub> → Satisfaction	1.23	.22	5.67	< .001	.80	1.65
Guilt → Satisfaction	.23	.06	4.11	< .01	.12	.34
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>.49</b>				<b>.24</b>	<b>.80</b>
<i>Y = Word-of-mouth</i>						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Guilt	2.13	.24	9.05	< .001	1.66	2.59
X <sub>1</sub> → WOM	.99	.22	4.52	< .001	.56	1.42
Guilt → WOM	.29	.06	5.17	< .001	.18	.40
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>.62</b>				<b>.35</b>	<b>.91</b>

Note: X<sub>1</sub> = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame).

***The Mediation Role of Embarrassment.*** Further analysis was conducted to evaluate the possible mediational role of embarrassment in the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes (H<sub>3b</sub>). This mediational analysis was also conducted using Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples. When running the analysis with satisfaction as dependent variable, the results indicated there was a main effect of customers' self-blame on embarrassment ( $b = 1.67, SE = .17, p < .001, 95\% CI [1.33, 2.02]$ ) and satisfaction ( $b = 1.39, SE = .23, p < .001, 95\% CI [.95, 1.84]$ ). Also, a main effect of embarrassment on satisfaction was found ( $b = .19, SE = .08, p < .05, 95\% CI [.04, .34]$ ). Importantly, the indirect effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction did not include zero ( $b = .32, SE = .15, 95\% CI [.04, .63]$ ), which suggests that embarrassment mediates the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction.

Similar results were found when testing for the mediating effect of embarrassment on the relationship between customers' self-blame and their likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth. Analyses indicated that there was a main effect of customers' self-blame on embarrassment ( $b = 1.67, SE = .17, p < .001, 95\% CI [1.33, 2.02]$ ) and word-of-mouth ( $b = 1.24, SE = .23, p < .001, 95\% CI [.78, 1.70]$ ). Also, there was a main effect of embarrassment on

word-of-mouth ( $b = .22$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [.06, .38]). Since the confidence interval of the indirect effect did not include zero ( $b = .37$ ,  $SE = .16$ , 95% CI [.06, .70]), it was found that embarrassment mediates the relationship between customers' self-blame and word-of-mouth, providing support for H<sub>3b</sub>. The results of the mediation analysis can be found in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2.  
*Mediation Results of Embarrassment*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Embarrassment	1.67	.17	9.62	< .001	1.33	2.02
X <sub>1</sub> → Satisfaction	1.39	.23	6.16	< .001	.95	1.84
Embarrassment → Satisfaction	.19	.08	2.46	< .05	.04	.34
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>.32</b>				<b>.04</b>	<b>.63</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Embarrassment	1.67	.17	9.62	< .001	1.33	2.02
X <sub>1</sub> → WOM	1.24	.23	5.31	< .001	.78	1.70
Embarrassment → WOM	.22	.08	2.77	< .05	.06	.38
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>.37</b>				<b>.06</b>	<b>.70</b>

Note: X<sub>1</sub> = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame).

**Post-Hoc Test: Parallel Mediation.** To assess the potential of guilt and embarrassment to mediate the effects in parallel, I conducted a post-hoc test. Specifically, I once again tested the model using PROCESS Model 4, but this time, I included both mediators simultaneously in the system of equations. The results of running the parallel mediation showed that the indirect effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction ( $b = .51$ ,  $SE = .18$ , 95% CI [.18, .89]) and word-of-mouth ( $b = .68$ ,  $SE = .17$ , 95% CI [.36, 1.04]) through guilt were different from zero. However, the indirect effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction ( $b = -.04$ ,  $SE = .18$ , 95% CI [.38, .33]) and word-of-mouth ( $b = -.11$ ,  $SE = .17$ , 95% CI [-.45, .25]) via embarrassment were not significantly different from zero (Table 3-3 presents a review of the results). The analysis indicates that customers' self-blame has a stronger impact on customers' guilt than embarrassment, which results in higher customers' satisfaction and willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth.

Table 3-3.  
*Mediation Results of Parallel Mediation (Study 1)*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Guilt	2.12	.23	9.05	< .001	1.66	2.59
X <sub>1</sub> → Embarrassment	1.67	.17	9.62	< .001	1.33	2.02
X <sub>1</sub> → Satisfaction	1.24	.23	5.48	< .001	.79	1.69
Guilt → Satisfaction	.24	.07	3.24	< .05	.09	.39
Embarrassment → Satisfaction	-.02	.10	-.21	.83	-.22	.18
<b>Indirect Effect (Guilt)</b>	<b>.51</b>				<b>.18</b>	<b>.89</b>
<b>Indirect Effect (Embarrassment)</b>	<b>-.04</b>				<b>-.38</b>	<b>.33</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Guilt	2.12	.23	9.05	< .001	1.66	2.59
X <sub>1</sub> → Embarrassment	1.67	.17	9.62	< .001	1.33	2.02
X <sub>1</sub> → WOM	1.03	.23	4.51	< .001	.58	1.48
Guilt → WOM	.32	.07	4.32	< .001	-.26	.13
Embarrassment → WOM	-.06	.10	-.63	.53	-.09	.30
<b>Indirect Effect (Guilt)</b>	<b>.68</b>				<b>.36</b>	<b>1.04</b>
<b>Indirect Effect (Embarrassment)</b>	<b>-.11</b>				<b>-.45</b>	<b>.25</b>

Note: X<sub>1</sub> = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame).

The results obtained from the parallel mediation, partially differ from the ones found when running the mediational analyses through independent models, since it was indicated that both embarrassment and guilt successfully mediated the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes. However, the results of this post-hoc test (parallel mediation) should be interpreted carefully, since the results from a parallel mediation can be affected if the constructs included are highly correlated, as is the case with guilt and embarrassment ( $r = .76$ ). Specifically, researchers have suggested that highly intercorrelated mediators may produce results where the indirect effects are insignificant, even though when tested individually in simple mediation models, they were significantly different from zero (Hayes, 2018, p. 183). Also, highly correlated mediators may lead to results that switch the direction of the effects (e.g., positive to negative) compared to the results obtained when evaluating the impact of the mediators in single models (Ntoumanis & Myers, 2016, p. 41). It is also important to highlight that even if small correlations values are expected between mediators in a parallel mediation model, highly correlated mediators are an indicator of multicollinearity (Hayes, 2018; Kane &

Ashbaugh, 2017). Therefore, it is important to highlight that the conclusions obtained by the individual models, will guide the results of the present essay.

***Ruling out Shame as a Mediator.*** An additional two mediation analyses were conducted to assess the extent to which the mediating effects proposed in this paper are specific to guilt and embarrassment or whether the same effects can be found using shame. First, a one-way ANOVA was run, to assess if different levels of customers' self-blame elicited significantly different levels of shame. The data indicated that the participants in the high self-blame condition, experienced significantly higher levels of shame ( $M_{high\_SB} = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ), than the participants in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .97$ ;  $F(1, 190) = 74.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .28$ ).

However, and as expected, the two mediation analyses conducted using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples, showed that shame does not mediate the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction and word-of-mouth. The first analysis used customers' self-blame as an independent variable, satisfaction as a dependent variable, and shame as a mediator. As for the direct paths, there was a significant main effect of customers' self-blame on shame ( $b = 1.39$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.08, 1.71]) and satisfaction ( $b = 1.56$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.12, 2.00]). However, there was no main effect of shame on satisfaction ( $b = .11$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p = .20$ , 95% CI [-.06, .28]), nor a significant indirect effect ( $b = .15$ ,  $SE = .13$ , 95% CI [1.33, 2.02]).

For the second mediation analysis, word-of-mouth was used as a dependent variable. Again, the data indicated a main effect of customers' self-blame on shame ( $b = 1.39$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.08, 1.71]) and word-of-mouth ( $b = 1.57$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.12, 2.02]). Nevertheless, the effect of shame on word-of-mouth was not significant ( $b = .11$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,

$p = .20$ , 95% CI [-.06, .28]). Also, the confidence intervals of the indirect effect included zero, which indicates that shame does not explain the relationship between customers' self-blame and word-of-mouth ( $b = .04$ ,  $SE = .14$ , 95% CI [-.21, .33]).

Table 3-4.  
*Mediation Results of Shame*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Shame	1.39	.16	8.65	< .001	1.08	1.71
X <sub>1</sub> → Satisfaction	1.56	.22	7.04	< .001	1.12	2.00
Shame → Satisfaction	.11	.08	1.29	.20	-.06	.28
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>.15</b>				<b>-.10</b>	<b>.42</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
X <sub>1</sub> → Shame	1.39	.16	8.65	< .001	1.08	1.71
X <sub>1</sub> → WOM	1.57	.23	6.82	< .001	1.12	2.02
Shame → WOM	.03	.09	.31	.76	-.15	.20
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>.04</b>				<b>-.21</b>	<b>.33</b>

Note: X<sub>1</sub> = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame).

**Discussion.** The results from Study 1 provide support for H<sub>1a-b</sub>, which proposed that when customers blame themselves for a service failure, they tend to exhibit higher service satisfaction and an increase in the likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth. Also, this study provided support for H<sub>2a-b</sub>, which proposed that when customers feel responsible for a service failure, they tend to experience higher levels of guilt and embarrassment. This study also provides evidence that guilt and embarrassment mediate the relationship between self-attribution of service failures and service outcomes (i.e., H<sub>3a-b</sub>). In other words, the data showed that when customers blame themselves for a service failure, they feel higher levels of guilt and embarrassment, and consequently, they evaluate the service experience more positively and exhibit higher intentions of spreading positive word-of-mouth, compared to when they blame others for a service failure. Additionally, in Study 1, shame was able to be ruled out as a possible explanation of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes.

## Study 2

Study 2 investigates the circumstances where embarrassment works as a better explanation of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes, as well as the impact of the presence/absence of others on the relationship between self-blame and embarrassment ( $H_{4a}$ ) and guilt ( $H_{4b}$ ).

**Pre-test.** As will be discussed in detail below, for Study 2 a behavioral experiment was designed to allow a more realistic manipulation of the two independent variables, self-blame and presence/absence of others. To manipulate self-blame, part of the experiment involved a Lab Assistant telling respondents that the error in a task they performed was either due to something beyond their control (low self-blame) or was likely due to a mistake made by the respondent (high self-blame). Owing to the inability to conduct a pre-test under the same conditions that would be in place in the behavioral lab, a scenario-based study was conducted using MTurk to try to get a sense of whether the self-blame manipulation would operate as expected. The scenarios mirror as much as possible the behavioral experiment that will occur in the Behavioral Lab. The scenarios used on the pre-test are presented in Appendix 3B.

A total of 121 participants were recruited, but since 45 participants failed at least one of the attention filters, only the responses of 76 participants were used to run the analysis (73.3% male,  $M_{age} = 34.04$ ). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions described in Table 3-2 and asked to imagine themselves in the scenario and to indicate their levels of self-blame. Next, they were asked to evaluate the described situation in terms of realism and believability and to indicate their age and gender.

Self-blame was measured using the attribution of blame scale developed by Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002) that had been previously used in study 1. The three-item attribution of

blame scale ( $\alpha = .78$ ) was combined into an index to indicate levels of customers' self-attribution of the service failure. Additionally, participants were asked to indicate the levels of self-attribution of the service failure on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *not responsible at all*, 7 = *completely responsible*; Appendix 3B for the list of items included in the scale). To measure the realism and believability of the scenarios, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = *strongly agree*; 7 = *strongly disagree*) with the following statements: (a) the scenario was realistic, and (b) the scenario was believable.

Results indicate that there were significant differences in the level of customers' self-blame ( $F(1, 74) = 21.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .22$ ). Participants in the low self-blame condition experienced lower levels of blame ( $M_{low\_SB} = 3.74, SD = 1.67$ ) than participants in the high self-blame condition ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.31, SD = 1.24$ ). This provides some evidence of the efficacy of the proposed manipulation that will be described below. Also, participants indicated that the scenarios were realistic ( $M_{realism} = 6.04, t(75) = 17.56, p < .001, d = 2.02$ ) and believable ( $M_{believability} = 6.00, t(75) = 17.55, p < .001, d = 2.01$ ) in comparison with the scale midpoint.

**Main Study Sample, Research Design, and Procedure.** The participants for the main study were business students from a large southeastern University. The students were invited to participate in a study at the Behavioral Lab in exchange for course credit. A total of 455 subjects completed the study; however, 29 participants failed to follow instructions; thus, only 426 responses were used to run the analysis (47.1% male,  $M_{age} = 20.28$ ).

Once the participants arrived at the Behavioral Lab, they were assigned to a computer station where they read a consent form and a description of the study. The participants were told that their task was to evaluate a shopping experience. A Lab Assistant then took participants to a retail space. The retail space was a small room that simulated the customers' shopping

experience at a grocery store. The room included a variety of non-perishable products that ranged from beverages and canned goods to cleaning and personal care supplies. The Lab Assistant gave an instruction sheet to the participants outside the room and let them go into the retail Lab by themselves. Once in the retail space, participants read the instruction sheet, which instructed them to find 5 listed products (pictures were also provided), and put them in a shopping basket. Each product had a sticker with a code that included numbers and letters that served as a unique product identifier. Students were indicated to engage in a self-checkout procedure using an iPad that was placed near the exit of the retail room. The students entered the products' codes on the iPad, using an interface designed through Qualtrics to simulate a self-checkout experience. Upon submitting the page with the list of items and their corresponding codes, all respondents received the following message: "At least one of the codes you submitted was incorrect, please ask the Lab Assistant for help." Until this specific moment, the Lab Assistant was out of sight, outside the room.

After being asked for help, the Lab Assistants were instructed to respond to the failure in a specific way depending on the self-blame condition running within the particular time frame. For those individuals in the *high self-blame condition*, the Lab Assistants indicated no one else had reported a problem (e.g., "Oh!, it looks like there is a problem. This is the first time I have seen this error message today. It suggests you made a mistake. You are the first one that has not been able to successfully register the products today."). The participants in the *low self-blame condition* were told by the Lab Assistants that all participants received the same error message (e.g., "Oh!, it looks like there is a problem. The system has been showing the same error message to some participants. They have not been able to successfully register the products today").

Then, to manipulate others' awareness of the service failure, confederates were utilized.

The confederates were trained to act as shoppers and to follow similar instructions as the participants. The participants in the *perceived presence of others condition* had a confederate shopping in the Retail Lab at the same time that they were shopping and registering the products on the iPad. The confederates were instructed that once they finished shopping, they should get in line to register the products; that way, they were able to overhear the feedback given to participants by the Lab Assistants. There was no other person engaged in the shopping task as the same time of the participants in the *unobserved perceived presence of others condition*. Accordingly, participants received the Lab Assistant feedback without having a confederate to overhear the conversation. After completing the shopping task, and interacting with the Lab Assistant who administered the blame manipulation, respondents were directed to a computer where they were asked to complete the measures to be used in the analyses.

A summary of the procedure is presented in Figure 3-2.

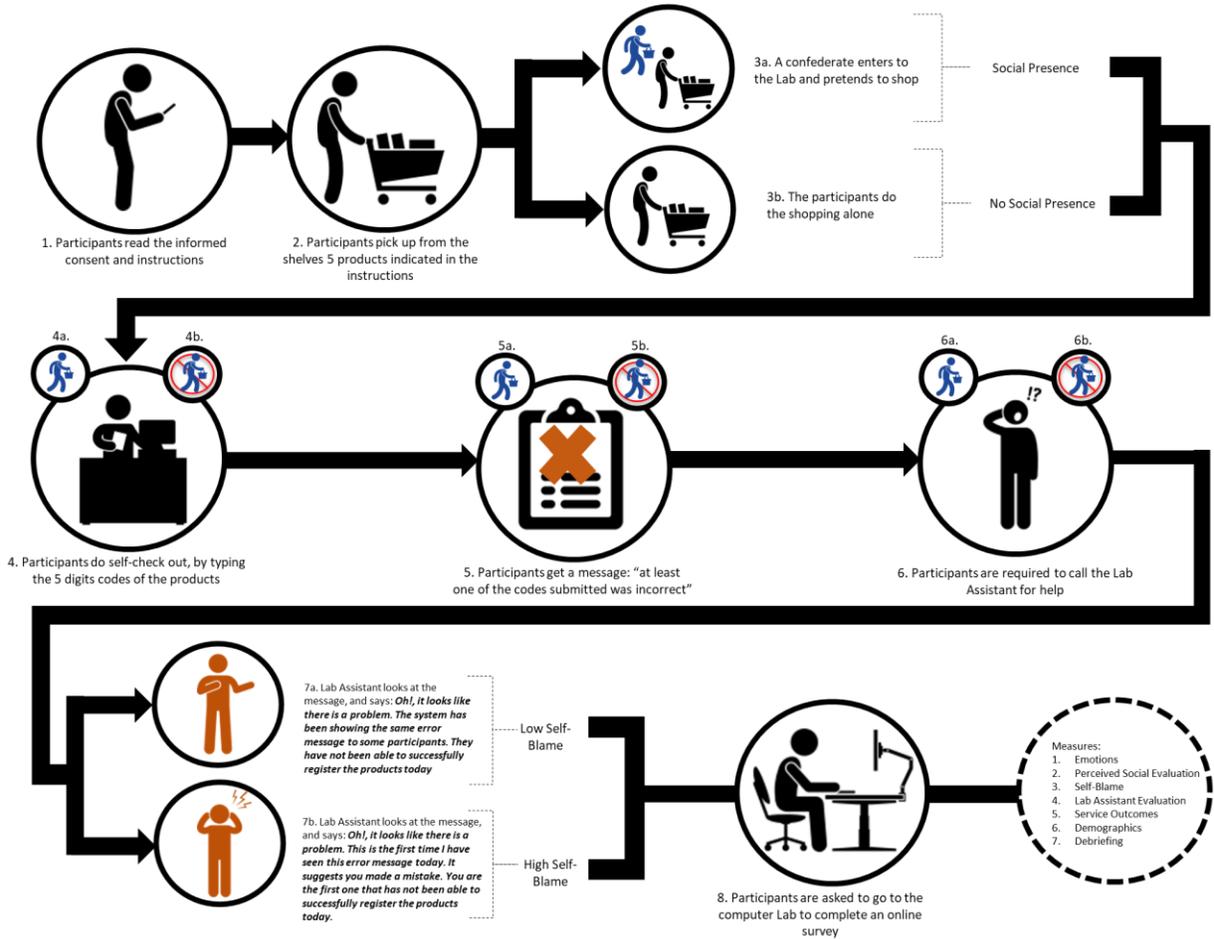


Figure 3-2.  
 Procedure Study 2

**Measures.** The same scales used in Study 1 to measure satisfaction ( $r = .78$ ), word-of-mouth ( $\alpha = .92$ ), guilt ( $\alpha = .94$ ) and embarrassment ( $\alpha = .90$ ), were employed in this study. Perceived social presence (i.e., presence/absence of others) was measured by asking participants if other customers were shopping in the retail space at the same time that they were doing their shopping. If participants answer yes to this question, they were then asked: (1) to what extent do you think other customers noticed the incident? (1 = *strongly agree*; 7 = *strongly disagree*) and (2) do you believe the event went unnoticed by other customers (1 = *strongly agree*; 7 = *strongly disagree*). It should be clarified that participants in the *unobserved perceived social presence*

*condition* were not asked the last two questions (i.e., if other customers noticed the incident) since they were alone shopping and registering the products. Demographic information was also requested (i.e., gender and age range). Customers' self-blame ( $\alpha = .72$ ) was measured with the same scale adapted from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003) and employed in the previous study/pre-test.

Finally, the correlation between each pair of variables was calculated to evaluate the linear relationship among the variables being studied. As it was anticipated, the correlation between dependent variables was strong (satisfaction-word-of-mouth = .75). In the case of the mediators, we found a moderated relationship between guilt and embarrassment (.55). All these correlations were significant ( $p < .01$ ). The rest of the correlations among variables tended to be very weak or indicated not relationship (guilt-satisfaction = -.08; guilt-word-of-mouth = -.03; embarrassment- satisfaction = -.29; embarrassment-word-of-mouth = -.21). None of these correlations were significant.

**Manipulation Check.** First, the extent to which the two types of feedback provided by the Lab Assistant (i.e., it was the respondent's fault vs the problem was possibly related to the iPad) elicited different levels of self-blame was assessed. Results from a one-way ANOVA indicated a significant main effect. More specifically, it was found that participants in the high self-blame condition reported significantly higher levels of self-blame ( $M_{high\_SB} = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ), than the participants in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ;  $F(1, 423) = 51.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .11$ ).

Following this, the extent to which the participants noticed the presence of another shopper in the retail space was assessed. All the participants in the *unobserved perceived social presence condition* indicated that there was not another shopper in the retail space when they

were engaged in the activity ( $n = 255$ ). Likewise, all the participants in the *perceived social presence condition* were aware of another shopper during the failure ( $n = 171$ ). A one-sample t-test revealed that participants in *perceived social presence* condition not only noticed the presence of the confederate, but also felt that the confederate noticed when they experienced the failure ( $M = 6.32$ ,  $t(171) = 27.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.12$ ) based on a comparison to the scale midpoint.

**Study 2 Results.** The result for Study 2 will be presented in the following order: First, the results for the analyses of the main effects of customers' self-blame on service outcomes. Second, the main effects of customers' self-attributed failures on guilt and embarrassment. Third, the results for the moderated mediation analysis, using embarrassment as a mediator, presence/absence of others as the moderator, and satisfaction ( $H_{4a}$ ) and word-of-mouth ( $H_{4b}$ ) as the outcome variables. An additional moderated mediation analysis was run, to rule out guilt as a possible mediator.

**Service Outcomes.** Two two-way ANOVAs were conducted, in which customers' self-blame and presence of others were used as independent variables and satisfaction and word-of-mouth were included as dependent variables. When running the analysis with satisfaction as an outcome variable, it was revealed that participants in the low self-blame condition, experienced higher levels of satisfaction ( $M_{low\_SB} = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ) than participants in the high self-blame condition ( $M_{high\_SB} = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ;  $F(1, 422) = 4.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ). Also, the analysis showed a main effect of the presence of others on satisfaction, such that the participants in the presence of others condition reported lower satisfaction levels ( $M_{presence} = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ), than the participant in the absence of others condition ( $M_{absence} = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ;  $F(1, 422) = 6.93$ ,  $p$

< .05,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ). Finally, there was no significant interaction effect between customers' self-blame and the presence of others ( $F(1, 422) = .002, p = .97$ ).

Similar results were found when using word-of-mouth as an outcome variable, since the average willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth was higher in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 4.04, SD = 1.61$ ), than in the high self-blame condition ( $M_{high\_SB} = 3.73, SD = 1.53$ ;  $F(1, 422) = 4.07, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ). The analysis also revealed a main effect of the presence of others on word-of-mouth. More specifically, it was found that participants in the presence of others condition indicated less willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth ( $M_{presence} = 3.67, SD = 1.49$ ), than the participants in the absence of others condition ( $M_{absence} = 4.02, SD = 1.62$ ;  $F(1, 420) = 4.65, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ). Last of all, no interaction effect between customers' self-blame and the presence of others was found ( $F(1, 420) = .02, p = .88$ ).

***Self-conscious emotions.*** Two two-way ANOVAs were run, to test if the experimental conditions (i.e., customers' self-blame and the presence of others) have a significant effect on guilt and embarrassment. In the first two-way ANOVA, customers' self-blame and the presence of others were used as independent variables and guilt as a dependent variable. The analysis revealed a main effect for self-blame with those in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 1.84, SD = 1.20$ ) reporting less guilt than participants in the high self-blame condition ( $M_{high\_SB} = 2.48, SD = 1.51$ ;  $F(1, 421) = 17.75, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ). There was no main effect of the presence of others on participants' guilt ( $M_{presence} = 2.24, SD = 1.45$ ;  $M_{absence} = 2.13, SD = 1.39$ ;  $F(1, 421) = .45, p = .50$ ). However, the main effect tests should be interpreted in light of a significant interaction between self-blame and the presence of others ( $F(1, 421) = 6.09, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ).

Post hoc analysis indicated that participants that were in the low self-blame condition experienced significantly higher levels of guilt in the presence of others condition ( $M_{presence} =$

2.11, SD = .16) than in the absence of others condition ( $M_{absence} = 1.68$ , SD = .12;  $F(1,421) = 4.59$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .011$ ; see Figure 3-3). However, participants that experienced high self-blame in the presence of others condition ( $M_{presence} = 2.34$ , SD = .14) experienced similar levels of guilt to subjects that felt high self-blame in the absence of others condition ( $M_{absence} = 2.59$ , SD = .12;  $F(1,421) = 1.74$ ,  $p = .19$ ).

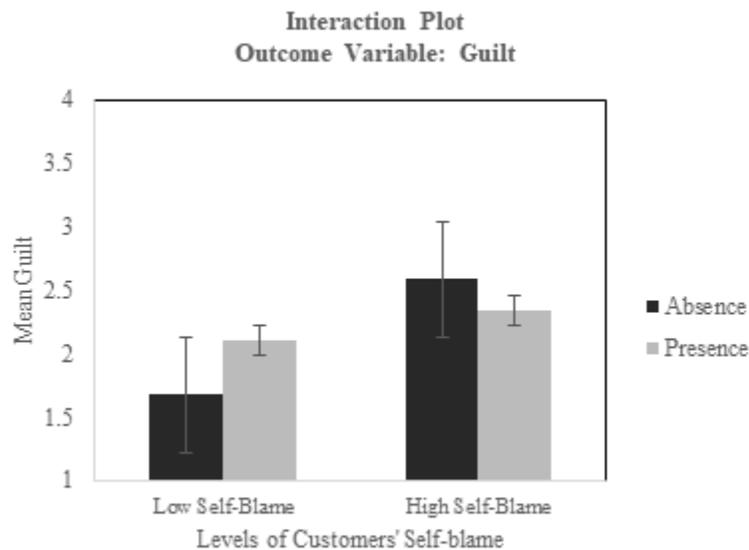


Figure 3-3.  
*Interaction Plot (Guilt)*

Next, customers' self-blame and the presence of others were set as predictor variables and embarrassment as a response variable. The results indicate that there was a significant effect of customers' self-blame on embarrassment, such that, participants in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 2.64$ , SD = 1.16) indicated lower levels of embarrassment, than the ones in the high self-blame condition ( $M_{high\_SB} = 3.17$ , SD = 1.32;  $F(1, 416) = 13.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ). In addition, the data showed that the presence of others elicited significantly different levels of embarrassment ( $F(1, 416) = 5.13$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ). More specifically, it was established that participants experienced lower embarrassment when they were in the absence of others condition

( $M_{absence} = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) than when in the presence of others condition ( $M_{presence} = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). Lastly, a significant interaction was found between customers' self-blame and the presence of others ( $F(1, 416) = 4.20$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ).

Post hoc analysis indicated that participants that experienced low self-blame had significantly higher levels of embarrassment when they made a mistake in front of a confederate ( $M_{presence} = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .14$ ) than when there were alone in the room ( $M_{absence} = 2.44$ ,  $SD = .11$ ;  $F(1,416) = 8.70$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; see Figure 3-4). Conversely, individuals in the high self-blame condition that made a mistake in the presence of a confederate ( $M_{presence} = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .13$ ) experienced similar levels of embarrassment to participants in the high-blame conditions that experience the mistake alone ( $M_{absence} = 3.16$ ,  $SD = .11$ ;  $F(1,416) = .03$ ,  $p = .87$ ).

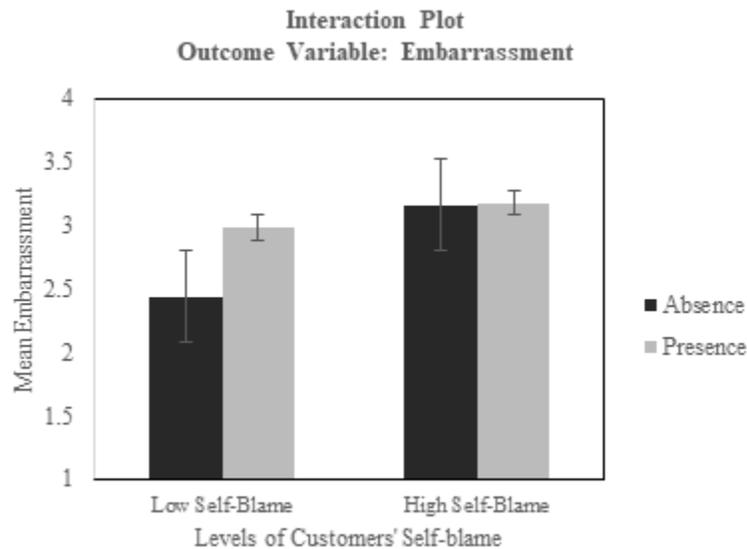


Figure 3-4.  
*Interaction Plot (Embarrassment)*

**Moderated Mediation (Guilt as a Mediator).** Two moderated mediation analyses were run with the objective of evaluating the moderating effect of perceived social presence on the mediating role of guilt on the relationship between customers' self-blame on service outcomes

(e.g., satisfaction and word-of-mouth). The analyses were conducted using Process Model 7 (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples.

The first analysis was conducted using customers' self-blame as independent variable, satisfaction as dependent variables, guilt as a mediator, and perceived social presence as a moderator. The analysis revealed that the moderated-mediation index was not significant (index = .04, 95% CI [-.03, .13]). The results signaled that no differences were found between the indirect effect of guilt in the presence of others condition and the indirect effect of guilt in the absence of others condition. A summary of the results is presented in Table 3-5.

The results were similar when running the analysis while using word-of-mouth as outcome variable. Results indicated that, the index of moderated-mediation was not significant (index = .01, 95% CI [-.08, .09]), which means that there were no significant differences between indirect effects. A summary of the results can be found in Table 3-5.

Table 3-5.

*Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Guilt)*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.91	.17	5.29	< .001	.57	1.25
PO → Guilt	.43	.20	2.14	< .05	.04	.82
SB x PO → Guilt	-.67	.27	-2.47	< .01	-1.21	-.14
SB → Satisfaction	-.31	.16	-2.01	< .05	-.62	-.01
Guilt → Satisfaction	-.06	.06	-1.11	.27	-.17	.05
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.04</b>				<b>-.03</b>	<b>.13</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.91	.17	5.29	< .001	.57	1.25
PO → Guilt	.43	.20	2.21	< .05	.05	.84
SB x PO → Guilt	-.67	.27	-2.46	< .01	-1.21	-.14
SB → WOM	-.30	.16	-1.88	.06	-.60	.01
Guilt → WOM	-.01	.06	-.22	.82	-.12	.10
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.01</b>				<b>-.08</b>	<b>.09</b>

Note: SB = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame); PO = Presence of others (0: Absence, 1: Presence).

***Moderated Mediation (Embarrassment as a Mediator)***. Two moderated mediation analyses were conducted with the aim of evaluating the moderating role of the presence of others

on the mediating effect of embarrassment on the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction and word-of-mouth (H<sub>4a-b</sub>). It was expected that there would be a mediating effect of embarrassment when the presence of others was taken into account, but that there would not be a mediating impact of guilt. The analyses were conducted using Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 7 with 5,000 bootstrap samples.

For the first moderated mediation analysis, customer self-blame was used as the independent variable, satisfaction was set as dependent variable, embarrassment was the mediator, and perceived social presence, was employed as a moderator. The results showed that there was a main effect of customers' self-blame ( $b = .71$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.41, 1.02]) and perceived social presence on embarrassment ( $b = .53$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.18, .89]). It was also revealed that there was a significant interaction between customers' self-blame and perceived social presence ( $b = -.51$ ,  $SE = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [-.99, -.02]). More specifically, the influence of customers' self-blame on embarrassment was significant in the absence of others condition ( $b = .71$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.41, 1.02]). This effect did not occur in the presence of others condition ( $b = .21$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $p = .28$ , 95% CI [-.17, .58]). Additionally, the analysis revealed a main effect of customers' embarrassment on satisfaction ( $b = -.35$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-.46, -.23]), but also showed that there was no effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction ( $b = -.15$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $p = .33$ , 95% CI [-.44, .15]). The moderated-mediation index (index = .18, 95% CI [-.46, -.23]) was also significant. Consistent with Study 1, the data indicated that embarrassment mediates the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction. Yet, this was only true when customers experience the embarrassing event in the absence of others ( $b = -.25$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI [-.38, -.13]), since there was not a mediation effect

of embarrassment when customers experienced the embarrassing event in the presence of others ( $b = -.07$ ,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI  $[-.22, .07]$ ). A summary of the results is presented in Table 3-6.

Similar results were found when using word-of-mouth as an outcome variable. The second moderated-mediation analysis revealed that there was a main effect of customers' self-blame ( $b = .71$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[.41, 1.02]$ ), and perceived social presence on embarrassment ( $b = .54$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[.19, .90]$ ). There was also a significant interaction between customers' self-blame and perceived social presence ( $b = -.52$ ,  $SE = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI  $[-1.01, -.03]$ ). As with the previous analysis, the moderating effect of the perceived social presence in the relationship between customers' self-blame and embarrassment was only present when the participants were experiencing the embarrassing effect in the absence of others ( $b = .71$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[.41, 1.02]$ ). The effect of customers' self-blame on the mediator, was not present when customers experience the embarrassing event in the presence of others ( $b = .19$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $p = .31$ , 95% CI  $[-.19, .58]$ ). The data also indicated that there was an effect of embarrassment on word-of-mouth ( $b = -.24$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[-.36, -.12]$ ), but not from customers' self-blame on word-of-mouth ( $b = -.16$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $p = .29$ , 95% CI  $[-.46, .14]$ ). The confidence intervals for the moderated-mediation index did not include zero, indicating that there was significant difference between the indirect effects based on the perceived presence of others (index =  $.13$ , 95% CI  $[.01, .27]$ ). The indirect effect was only significant when customers' experienced the event in the absence of others ( $b = -.17$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI  $[-.29, -.08]$ ). The indirect effect was not significant when customers experience embarrassment in the presence of others ( $b = -.05$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI  $[-.16, .05]$ ). A summary of the results is presented in Table 3-6.

Table 3-6.  
*Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Embarrassment)*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Embarrassment	.71	.16	4.57	< .001	.41	1.02
PO → Embarrassment	.53	.18	2.95	< .001	.18	.89
SB x PO → Embarrassment	-.51	.25	-2.05	< .05	-.99	-.02
SB → Satisfaction	-.15	.15	-.98	.33	-.44	.15
Embarrassment → Satisfaction	-.35	.06	-5.92	< .001	-.46	-.23
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.18</b>				<b>.01</b>	<b>.36</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Embarrassment	.71	.16	4.56	< .001	.41	1.02
PO → Embarrassment	.54	.18	2.98	< .001	.19	.90
SB x PO → Embarrassment	-.52	.25	-2.09	< .05	-1.01	-.03
SB → WOM	-.16	.15	-1.05	.29	-.46	.14
Embarrassment → WOM	-.24	.06	-4.04	< .001	-.36	-.12
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.13</b>				<b>.01</b>	<b>.27</b>

Note: SB = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame); PO = Presence of others (0: Absence, 1: Presence).

**Post-Hoc Test: Parallel Mediation.** The objective of this post-hoc test is to assess the moderating effect of perceived presence of others on the mediational effect of embarrassment and guilt (simultaneously) on the relationship between customers' self-blame and the service outcomes. To conduct this analysis, once again, I used PROCESS Model 7. The only difference is that both embarrassment and guilt were set as mediators when running the analysis. The results showed that when using satisfaction as an outcome variable, the indexes of moderated-mediation revealed that there were significant differences in the mediating effect of guilt (index = -.10, 95% CI [-.25, -.00]) and embarrassment (index = .22, 95% CI [.00, .47]) on the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction, between the absence of others and presence of others conditions. However, when looking at the indirect effects discriminated by the presence of others conditions, the indirect effects of customers' self-blame on satisfaction through guilt were both not different from zero ( $b_{absence} = .14$ , SE = .07, 95% CI [.02, .28];  $b_{presence} = .04$ , SE = .04, 95% CI [-.03, .13]). While the indirect effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction via embarrassment was only significant on the absence of others condition ( $b_{absence} = -.31$ , SE = .08,

95% CI [-.47, -.17];  $b_{presence} = -.09$ , SE = .09, 95% CI [-.27, .09]).

Similar results were found when using word-of-mouth as dependent variable, the indexes of moderated-mediation showed significant differences in the mediating effect of guilt (index = -.10, 95% CI [-.25, -.00]) and embarrassment (index = .17, 95% CI [.00, .37]) on the relationship between customers' self-blame and word-of-mouth, between the absence of others and presence of others conditions. Yet, when observing the indirect effects divided by the presence of others conditions, the indirect effects of customers' self-blame on word-of-mouth through guilt were both not different from zero ( $b_{absence} = .13$ , SE = .07, 95% CI [.02, .29];  $b_{presence} = .04$ , SE = .04, 95% CI [-.03, .13]). The indirect effect of customers' self-blame on word-of-mouth via embarrassment was only significant on the absence of others condition ( $b_{absence} = -.23$ , SE = .07, 95% CI [-.38, -.11];  $b_{presence} = -.06$ , SE = .07, 95% CI [-.21, .07]). (Table 3-3 presents an overview of the results).

These results are somehow consistent with the results obtained when running the analyses through independent models, since the indirect effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction and word-of-mouth was only significant on the absence of others condition.

Table 3-7.

*Mediation Results of Parallel Mediation (Study 2)*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.92	.17	5.31	< .001	.58	1.26
SB → Embarrassment	.72	.16	4.56	< .001	.41	1.02
PO → Guilt	.41	.20	2.04	< .05	.02	.80
PO → Embarrassment	.54	.18	2.95	< .05	.18	.89
SB x PO → Guilt	-.66	.27	-2.40	< .05	-1.20	-.12
SB x PO → Embarrassment	-.51	.25	-2.05	< .05	-1.00	-.02
SB → Satisfaction	-.20	.15	-1.35	.18	-.50	.09
Guilt → Satisfaction	.15	.06	2.42	< .05	.03	.27
Embarrassment → Satisfaction	-.43	.07	-6.33	< .001	-.57	-.30
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Guilt)</b>	<b>-.10</b>				<b>-.25</b>	<b>-.00</b>
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Embarrassment)</b>	<b>.22</b>				<b>.00</b>	<b>.47</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.92	.17	5.31	< .001	.58	1.26
SB → Embarrassment	.72	.16	4.55	< .001	.41	1.02
PO → Guilt	.42	.20	2.11	< .05	.03	.82
PO → Embarrassment	.54	.18	2.98	< .05	.19	.90
SB x PO → Guilt	-.66	.28	-2.39	< .05	-1.20	-.12
SB x PO → Embarrassment	-.52	.25	-2.09	< .05	-1.01	-.03
SB → WOM	-.21	.15	-1.35	.18	-.51	.10
Guilt → WOM	.15	.06	2.27	< .05	.02	.27
Embarrassment → WOM	-.33	.07	-4.64	< .05	-.47	-.19
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Guilt)</b>	<b>-.10</b>				<b>-.25</b>	<b>-.00</b>
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Embarrassment)</b>	<b>.17</b>				<b>.00</b>	<b>.37</b>

Note: SB = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame).

**Discussion.** The primary goal of Study 2 was to determine if the presence of others moderated the mediating impact of embarrassment on the relationship between self-blame and satisfaction and word-of-mouth ( $H_{4a-b}$ ). It was further expected that this effect would not be found when guilt was the mediator of the relationship. Results were somewhat mixed. First, as expected, there was no moderated mediation effect when guilt was the mediator of the self-blame → service outcomes relationship. However, as expected, moderated mediation was found when embarrassment was used as the mediator. We will now turn to a brief discussion of the full results from Study 2.

First, the results of this study indicated that there were significant effects of customers' self-blame and perceived presence of others on service outcome. However, these main effects

were negative, meaning that when customers took more blame for a service failure in perceived others presence, they reported less satisfaction and were less prone to spread positive word-of-mouth. This is surprising since studies have shown that when customers blame themselves for a failure, they exhibit more satisfaction, a greater desire to spread positive word-of-mouth, and less complaining behaviors (Choi & Mattila, 2008; Westbrook, 1987).

These negative effects may be explained by the moderation effect of the presence of others. Previous research has found that the presence of others, their number, and their proximity can increase the levels of self-consciousness experienced by customers in service contexts (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda, 2005). Furthermore, Argo et al. (2005) found that the level of discomfort that people experience while shopping depends on social size, such that their levels of discomfort increase with the number of people that they perceived in the store. However, they also found that there were no significantly different levels of discomfort between the customers that reported that there was nobody at the store versus when they reported the presence of at least three people, suggesting the existence of an inverted V-shape pattern. Based on these results, it is believed that further research needs to be conducted in order to evaluate if the results obtained for study 2 suggest a similar V-shape pattern, such that, a strong effect of social presence on customers' self-blame reduces embarrassment and consequently the effect of this emotion on service outcomes. Another possible explanation can be found in work by Grace (2009) which established that when customers' embarrassment is triggered by the service provider (e.g., by criticizing the customer), customers are less likely to report future purchase intentions. Since in the current study the experiment required the Lab Assistant to mention to the participant that they made a mistake (i.e., critique), this could be a possible factor that is changing the effect on the service outcomes.

Additionally, in Study 2 a significant interaction between customers' self-blame and the presence of others was found. More specifically, it was established that participants in the high-blame condition experience similar levels of guilt and embarrassment, whether other customers were present or not. However, when customers do not blame themselves for a service failure, but feel that other customers were aware of the incident, they experience a significantly higher level of guilt and embarrassment than when nobody else noticed the incident.

Finally, the moderated mediation analysis indicated that the effect of self-blame on embarrassment varies depending on the perceived presence of others (H<sub>4a</sub>). More precisely, in the absence of others, customers that experience high self-blame feel significantly higher levels of embarrassment than customers that experience low self-blame. Yet, in the presence of others, individuals with a high self-blame did not experience significantly different levels of embarrassment compared to the ones with a low self-blame. The analysis also revealed that there was an indirect effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction and word-of-mouth; furthermore, the indirect effect through embarrassment was significantly different between the individuals in the absence and the presence condition (Supporting moderated mediation - H<sub>4b</sub>).

### **Study 3**

Having shown in Study 2 that the presence of others moderates the mediating impact of embarrassment on the relationship between self-blame and outcomes, but that guilt does not, the primary goal of Study 3 is to identify a factor that may act as a moderator for guilt, but not embarrassment. The idea of behavioral inconsistency will be tested (H<sub>5a-b</sub>).

**Stimuli Development.** To test for H<sub>5a-b</sub>, four scenarios were designed to manipulate customers' self-blame (high vs. low) and behavioral inconsistency (high vs. low). The scenarios described a service encounter where a customer goes for lunch at a local restaurant. After the

server brings their food order the customer realizes the food includes some ingredients that cannot be eaten due to dietary restrictions (see scenarios in Appendix 3D). Participants in the high self-blame condition were asked to imagine they forgot to tell the service employee about the dietary restrictions, while the participants in the low self-blame condition were told that they made the service employee aware of their dietary restrictions, but the food still contained the ingredients. Regarding the behavioral inconsistency manipulations, participants in the high behavioral inconsistency condition were told to imagine they reacted to the situation by yelling at the service employee, while participants in the low behavioral inconsistency were told to imagine themselves calmly asking the service employee to change their food.

**Pre-test.** To provide some assurance that customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency manipulations were operating as expected, the scenarios were tested using MTurk. A group of 101 participants answer the survey, but only 53 responses were used to conduct the analysis (60.4% male,  $M_{age} = 35.34$ ) since 48 participants failed an attention filter. Participants were randomly presented with one of the four possible scenarios illustrated in Appendix 3D and asked to imagine themselves in the situation described. After carefully reading the scenario, participants were asked to indicate their level of self-blame and to evaluate if their reaction to the incident was inconsistent with their personal standards. Then, participants were asked to indicate if the scenario was realistic and believable and to respond to some demographic questions (i.e., gender and age).

The adapted scale from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002) employed to measure customers' self-blame in study 1 and 2, was again used in this study ( $\alpha = .85$ ). A three item scale was developed to measure behavioral inconsistency ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Specifically, participants were asked their level of agreement with the following statements ( $\alpha = .77$ ): (1) My reaction to the

situation was acceptable, (2) My reaction to the event does not reflect how one should behave in a similar situation, and (3) My reaction to the event does not match my personal behavioral standards. All items from the scales used in the pre-test were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly agree*; 7 = *strongly disagree*). Appendix 3B presents a complete list of the scales included in this study.

Two one-way ANOVAs were run to assess if the scenarios elicited different levels of customers' self-blame and if the customers' reactions to the failure represented different levels of behavioral inconsistency. The data analysis showed that customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency were manipulated successfully. The low self-blame condition elicited significantly lower levels of customers' self-blame ( $M_{low\_SB} = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ) than the high self-blame condition ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.77$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ;  $F(1, 51) = 40.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .44$ ). Similarly, participants in the low behavioral inconsistency, perceived the reaction as significantly less discrepant with their personal standards ( $M_{low\_BI} = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ), than the ones in the high behavioral inconsistency condition ( $M_{high\_BI} = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ;  $F(1, 51) = 13.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .22$ ). Compared to the scale midpoint, participants indicated that the scenarios they read were realistic ( $M_{realism} = 5.58$ ,  $t(52) = 24.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.30$ ) and believable ( $M_{believability} = 5.83$ ,  $t(52) = 11.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.61$ ).

**Study 3 Sample, Research Design, and Procedure.** Participants were recruited through MTurk. Three hundred seventy-five MTurkers participated in the survey; however, only 343 responses were used in the analysis, since thirty-two people failed to pass at least one of the attention filters included in the questionnaire (60.6% male,  $M_{age} = 36.25$ ). Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the four scenarios developed to manipulate different levels of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency (See Stimuli Development and Pre-Test).

The MTurkers interested in participating in the study were asked to follow a link for a Qualtrics survey. Once they opened the link, they were provided with an informed consent. The participants that agreed to participate were asked to read a scenario carefully and imagine themselves in that situation. After reading the scenario the participants were asked to respond to the dependent variables (satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth). They were then asked to respond to scales designed to measure guilt and embarrassment followed by scales that assessed their level of behavioral inconsistency and self-blame. Finally, demographic questions were asked.

**Measures.** The adapted scales used in previous studies to measure satisfaction ( $r = .70$ ) and word-of-mouth ( $\alpha = .93$ ) were used in this study, as well as the scales used to measure guilt ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and embarrassment ( $\alpha = .93$ ). To check if behavioral inconsistency was successfully manipulated, the same 3-items developed for the pre-test were used in this survey ( $\alpha = .77$ ). Customers' self-blame was measured using the same scale as in previous studies ( $\alpha = .81$ ). At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate their gender and age. To check for the linear relations among the measures, a correlation analysis was conducted with each pair of variables. As predicted, the correlations were strong between the mediators (guilt-embarrassment = .75) and outcome variables (satisfaction-word-of-mouth = .86) at a significant level ( $p < .01$ ). However, the correlations among the mediators and dependent variables were very weak (guilt-word-of-mouth = .25; guilt-satisfaction = .17; embarrassment-word-of-mouth = .16; embarrassment-satisfaction = .10). All correlations were significant ( $p < .01$ ), except for the correlation between satisfaction and embarrassment, which was not significant.

**Manipulation Check.** Two one-way ANOVAs were run to test if the scenarios elicited different levels of behavioral inconsistency and customers' self-blame. As with the pre-test, the

scenarios evoked significantly different levels of self-blame ( $F(1, 341) = 137.08, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .29$ ). The participants that were in the high self-blame condition experienced higher levels of self-blame than the ones that were in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 3.26, SD = 1.60$ ;  $M_{high\_SB} = 5.23, SD = 1.51$ ). As to behavioral inconsistency, there were significant differences between the participants in the high behavioral inconsistency scenario vs. those in the low one ( $F(1,341) = 100.19, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23$ ). More specifically, the participants in the low behavioral inconsistency conditions felt their behavior was less inconsistent with their personal standards ( $M_{low\_BI} = 3.38, SD = 1.46$ ), than the participants in the high behavioral inconsistency condition ( $M_{high\_BI} = 4.88, SD = 1.33$ ).

**Study 3 Results.** Study 3 results are presented as follows. First, the main effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency on service outcomes is evaluated. Following this is the test for the interactional effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency and the effect on guilt and embarrassment. Next, an assessment is presented of the extent to which behavioral inconsistency moderates the mediating effect of guilt on the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction (H<sub>5a</sub>) and word-of-mouth (H<sub>5b</sub>). Last, to rule out embarrassment as possible mediator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes, this emotion is also tested as a part of a moderated mediating analysis.

**Service Outcomes.** Two two-way ANOVAs were run to evaluate the effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency on satisfaction and word-of-mouth. The results indicated that when using satisfaction as a dependent variable, there were significantly different levels of satisfaction between the participants in the low self-blame condition and the ones in the high self-blame conditions ( $F(1, 338) = 29.92, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$ ). The participants in the high self-blame condition reported higher satisfaction ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.17, SD = 1.49$ ) than those in the

low self-blame group ( $M_{low\_SB} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ). This analysis also revealed that the participants in the high behavioral inconsistency condition ( $M_{high\_BI} = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ), felt less satisfied with the service than the participants in the low behavioral inconsistency condition ( $M_{low\_BI} = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ;  $F(1,336) = 19.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ ). No interaction effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency was found ( $F(1, 336) = 1.14$ ,  $p = .29$ ).

Similar results were found when running the analysis with word-of-mouth as a dependent variable, since participants in the high self-blame condition indicated significantly higher likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth ( $M_{high\_SB} = 5.02$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) than the participants in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ;  $F(1,341) = 33.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .09$ ). Also, participants in the high behavioral inconsistency condition, reported significantly less likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth ( $M_{high\_BI} = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ) than participants in the low behavioral inconsistency condition ( $M_{low\_BI} = 4.83$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ;  $F(1,339) = 10.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ). Finally, the analysis revealed that there was no significant interaction effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency ( $F(1, 339) = .37$ ,  $p = .54$ ).

***Self-conscious emotions.*** Two two-way ANOVAs were conducted to test if the self-blame and behavioral inconsistency conditions elicited significantly different levels of guilt and embarrassment. The first two-way ANOVA was conducted using the experimental conditions as independent variables and guilt as an outcome variable. The data showed that participants experienced significantly higher levels of guilt when assigned to the high self-blame condition ( $M_{high\_SB} = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) than when they were part of the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ;  $F(1, 339) = 10.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ). Also, it was revealed that participants felt guiltier in the high behavioral inconsistency condition ( $M_{high\_BI} = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) than in the low behavioral inconsistency condition ( $M_{low\_BI} = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ;  $F(1, 339) = 41.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ,

$\eta_p^2 = .11$ ). No effect of the interaction between customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency on guilt was found ( $F(1, 339) = .40, p = .53$ ).

A second two-way ANOVA was run to test the effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency on embarrassment. The analysis indicated that the participants in the high self-blame condition experienced significantly higher levels of embarrassment ( $M_{high\_SB} = 4.37, SD = 1.59$ ) than the participants in the low self-blame condition ( $M_{low\_SB} = 4.04, SD = 1.77$ ;  $F(1, 337) = 4.04, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ). Similarly, the data showed that participants that were presented with the high behavioral inconsistency scenarios felt higher levels of embarrassment ( $M_{high\_BI} = 4.67, SD = 1.51$ ) than the ones that were presented with the low behavioral inconsistency scenarios ( $M_{low\_BI} = 3.73, SD = 1.73$ ;  $F(1, 337) = 29.03, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$ ). The ANOVA also showed that there was no significant interaction between customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency ( $F(1, 337) = 1.53, p = .22$ ).

***Moderated Mediation (Guilt as a Mediator).*** Two moderated mediation analyses using Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 7 with 5,000 bootstrap samples were used to test the moderating role of behavioral inconsistency on the mediating effect of guilt on the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction ( $H_{5a}$ ) and word-of-mouth ( $H_{5b}$ ). The first analysis was conducted using customers' self-blame as an independent variable, satisfaction as a dependent variable, guilt as a mediator, and behavioral inconsistency as a moderator. The analysis revealed that the moderated-mediation index was not significant (index = .03, 95% CI [-.06, .16]), which means that for the participants in the low behavioral inconsistency condition the indirect effect of customers' self-blame on satisfaction through guilt was not significantly different from the indirect effect for the participants on the high behavioral inconsistency condition. A summary of these results are presented in Table 3-8.

The second moderated mediation analysis was conducted using word-of-mouth as a dependent variable. Similar to the previous analysis, it was found that the moderated-mediation index was not significant. In other words, the moderated-mediation index indicated that there was no significant difference between the indirect effect of guilt on the relationship between customers' self-blame and word-of-mouth on the low behavioral inconsistency and the high behavioral inconsistency condition (index = .05, 95% CI [-.10, .21]). Table 3-8 summarizes these results.

Table 3-8.  
*Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Guilt)*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.46	.25	1.80	.07	-.04	.96
BI → Guilt	1.03	.25	4.06	< .001	.53	1.53
SB x BI → Guilt	.24	.35	.66	.51	-.46	.93
SB → Satisfaction	.90	.18	5.04	< .001	.55	1.26
Guilt → Satisfaction	.13	.05	2.49	< .05	.03	.23
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.03</b>				<b>-.06</b>	<b>.16</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.46	.25	1.81	.07	-.04	.95
BI → Guilt	1.03	.25	4.07	< .001	.53	1.52
SB x BI → Guilt	.22	.35	.63	.53	-.47	.92
SB → WOM	.91	.18	5.17	< .001	.56	1.26
Guilt → WOM	.20	.05	4.03	< .001	.10	.30
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.05</b>				<b>-.10</b>	<b>.21</b>

Note: SB = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame); BI = Behavioral Inconsistency (0: Low Behavioral Inconsistency, 1: High Behavioral Inconsistency).

***Moderated Mediation (Embarrassment as a Mediator).*** Two moderated mediation analyses were conducted to test the effect of customers' behavioral inconsistency on the mediating role of embarrassment on the relationship between customers' self-blame and satisfaction and word-of-mouth. As stated previously, when using embarrassment as a mediator, a significant moderated mediation is not expected, since, guilt, unlike embarrassment, is more likely to be elicited when individuals feel they act in an inconsistent way.

The moderated mediation analyses were run using Process Model 7 (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples. To conduct the first moderated mediation analysis, customers' self-blame was set as an independent variable, satisfaction was defined as the dependent variable, embarrassment was assigned as the mediator, and behavioral inconsistency as the moderator. The analysis indicated that the indirect effects of customers' self-blame on satisfaction were not significantly different, since the confidence interval for the moderated-mediation index included zero (index = .04, 95% CI [-.03, .14]). A summary of the analysis can be found in Table 3-9.

A second moderated mediation analysis was conducted using word-of-mouth as an outcome variable. The index of moderated mediation indicated no significant differences between indirect effects based on the behavioral inconsistency conditions (index = .06, 95% CI [-.04, .18]). A Summary of the moderated mediation analysis can be found in Table 3-9.

Table 3-9.  
*Moderated Mediation Results (Mediator: Embarrassment)*

Y = Satisfaction						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Embarrassment	.12	.25	.49	.62	-.37	.62
BI → Embarrassment	.73	.25	2.89	< .001	.23	1.22
SB x BI → Embarrassment	.47	.35	1.32	.19	-.23	1.16
SB → Satisfaction	.96	.18	5.34	< .001	.61	1.32
Embarrassment → Satisfaction	.08	.05	1.42	.16	-.46	.18
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.04</b>				<b>-.03</b>	<b>.14</b>
Y = Word-of-mouth						
Antecedent	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Embarrassment	.14	.25	.54	.59	-.36	.63
BI → Embarrassment	.73	.25	2.89	< .001	.23	1.22
SB x BI → Embarrassment	.43	.35	1.24	.22	-.25	1.12
SB → WOM	.98	.18	5.49	< .001	.63	1.33
Embarrassment → WOM	.13	.05	2.55	< .05	.03	.24
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation</b>	<b>.06</b>				<b>-.04</b>	<b>.18</b>

Note: *SB* = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame); *BI* = Behavioral Inconsistency (0: Low Behavioral Inconsistency, 1: High Behavioral Inconsistency).

**Post-Hoc Test: Parallel Mediation.** The objective of this post-hoc tests is to evaluate if the moderated mediation would offer different results when guilt and embarrassment are simultaneously mediating the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcome.

To run the analysis, PROCESS Model 7 was again used, and guilt and embarrassment were simultaneously inputted as mediators. When using satisfaction as an outcome variable, no moderated-mediation was found when looking at the indirect effect of guilt (index =  $-.02$ , 95% CI  $[-.18, -.07]$ ), nor at the indirect effect of embarrassment (index =  $.04$ , 95% CI  $[-.09, .21]$ ). Similar results were established when using word-of-mouth as a dependent variable, since the confidence intervals from the index of moderated-mediation also included zero for both indirect effects, through guilt (index =  $.05$ , 95% CI  $[-.13, -.26]$ ) and through embarrassment (index =  $-.02$ , 95% CI  $[-.17, .06]$ ). These results are aligned with the results from the independent models, where the moderated-mediation indexes were also not significantly different from zero (Table 3-3 presents a summary of the results).

Table 3-10.

*Mediation Results of Parallel Mediation (Study 3)*

Antecedent	Y = Satisfaction					
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.48	.26	1.87	.06	-.03	.98
SB → Embarrassment	.12	.25	.49	.62	-.37	.62
BI → Guilt	1.05	.25	4.14	< .001	.55	1.55
BI → Embarrassment	.73	.25	2.89	< .05	.23	1.22
SB x BI → Guilt	.22	.36	.61	.54	-.48	.92
SB x BI → Embarrassment	.47	.35	1.33	.19	-.23	1.16
SB → Satisfaction	.91	.18	5.05	< .001	.56	1.27
Guilt → Satisfaction	.16	.08	2.08	< .05	.01	.32
Embarrassment → Satisfaction	-.05	.08	-.63	.53	-.21	.11
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Guilt)</b>	<b>-.04</b>				<b>-.09</b>	<b>.21</b>
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Embarrassment)</b>	<b>-.02</b>				<b>-.18</b>	<b>.07</b>
Antecedent	Y = Word-of-mouth					
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [lower]	CI [Upper]
SB → Guilt	.47	.25	1.87	.06	-.02	.97
SB → Embarrassment	.14	.25	.54	.59	-.36	.63
BI → Guilt	1.05	.25	4.16	< .001	.56	1.55
BI → Embarrassment	.73	.25	2.89	< .05	.233	1.22
SB x BI → Guilt	.20	.35	.58	.57	-.50	.90
SB x BI → Embarrassment	.43	.35	1.24	.22	-.25	1.12
SB → WOM	.91	.18	5.11	< .001	.56	1.26
Guilt → WOM	.24	.08	3.14	< .05	.09	.39
Embarrassment → WOM	-.05	.08	-.66	.51	-.21	.10
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Guilt)</b>	<b>.05</b>				<b>-.13</b>	<b>-.26</b>
<b>Index of Moderated Mediation (Embarrassment)</b>	<b>-.02</b>				<b>-.17</b>	<b>.06</b>

Note: SB = Self-Blame (0: Low Customers' Self-Blame, 1: High Customers' Self-Blame).

**Discussion.** The results from Study 3 showed that there is no interaction effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency on satisfaction and word-of-mouth. However, participants in the high self-blame condition reported higher satisfaction and word-of-mouth than the participants in the low self-blame condition, while participants in the high behavioral inconsistency condition reported lower satisfaction and less willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth than participants in the high self-blame condition. Also found was that higher levels of self-conscious emotions were reported for the participants in the high self-blame condition compared to the ones in the low self-blame condition. There was no interaction effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency on guilt and embarrassment. More specifically, regardless of the level of behavioral inconsistency, the participants in the high self-

blame condition experienced similar high levels of guilt and embarrassment to the participants in the low self-blame condition who experienced lower and non-significant different levels of self-blame.

The moderated mediation analysis indicated that even if there were indirect effects of customers' self-blame on service outcomes through guilt (only in the high behavioral inconsistency condition), there were not significant differences between the indirect effects in the high behavioral inconsistency and low behavioral inconsistency conditions (Not supporting moderated mediation - H<sub>5a-b</sub>).

A possible explanation for why there is not an interaction effect of customers' self-blame and behavioral inconsistency (nor moderated mediation) can be provided by the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. According to Festinger (1957), dissonant relationships have different magnitudes depending on the importance and value of the elements that are being dissonant. When using the level of behavioral inconsistency as a moderator, the manipulations only compared dissonance (i.e., higher behavioral inconsistency) versus consonances (i.e., lower behavioral inconsistency) relationships, which are not necessarily good indicators of the magnitude of the dissonance between the actual behavior and the personal behavioral standards. For example, a person can think that yelling at people is not right (behavioral inconsistency). However, yelling at a family member (high dissonance) makes them experience higher dissonance levels than yelling to a service employee during a service failure (low dissonance). In the case of people who think tipping is an important social norm, if they do not leave a tip, knowing that tips are the primary source of income for servers, they will experience higher dissonance (behavioral inconsistency), than if they do not leave a tip, knowing that the servers get paid a fixed salary for their job. Future research should explore the importance of the

inconsistent behaviors as a moderator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and guilt and embarrassment.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The three studies conducted in this essay provide evidence that when participants experience high levels of self-blame, they feel significantly stronger levels of embarrassment and guilt, compared to when they experience low self-blame. Furthermore, Studies 1 and 3 revealed that guilt and embarrassment have a positive effect on satisfaction and word-of-mouth, such that when people feel more embarrassed or guilty, they exhibit higher satisfaction with the service, and they are more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth. Study 1 showed that the effect of self-attributed service failures on service outcomes could be explained by guilt and embarrassment emotions, such that higher levels of customers' self-blame aroused higher levels of guilt and embarrassment, which lead to higher customers' satisfaction and repurchase intentions.

To account for circumstances where guilt or embarrassment serves as unique explanatory mechanisms of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes (Study 2 and 3), two different contexts were tested. Study 2 focused on a situation in which respondents were put in a position where other customers were aware of a failure (i.e., error message in a check-out process) for which they were or were not responsible. Consistent with expectations, results from this study suggested embarrassment works as the only mediator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes. Study 3 manipulated the respondent's feelings of behavioral inconsistency with results suggesting that in this case guilt provided the only explanation of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes.

Study 2 demonstrated that when participants felt others were aware of the service failure,

they felt guiltier and more embarrassed than when no other people were aware of the incident. Yet, participants' embarrassment and guilt were similarly high when customers perceived others were aware of their mistakes, whether they highly blame themselves for their errors or not. In other words, the presence of others during an incident being provoked or not by the customers produced equally high levels of guilt and embarrassment. However, when a failure occurred in the absence of others, participants experienced significantly greater levels of guilt and embarrassment when they attributed the service failure to themselves than when they had low attribution. Moreover, this study indicated that when participants experienced higher levels of embarrassment, they tended to feel less satisfied with the service and reported less willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth.

Moderated mediation was found when using embarrassment as a mediator. This analysis revealed that when participants did not perceive others were aware of the failure, they exhibited significantly lower levels of satisfaction and expressed less likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth when they felt highly responsible for the incident, compared to when they feel less accountability for the event. This negative effect was explained by the fact that participants feel more embarrassed when they experience high levels of self-blame, which negatively affect the overall evaluation of the service, and implying a possible inverted V-shape effect. Conversely, when customers perceived others were aware of an incident, there was not a significant difference in the levels of satisfaction or likelihood of spreading word-of-mouth between the participants that were experiencing low self-blame or high self-blame.

Study 3 provides evidence that when people feel that their behaviors do not match their personal standards, they feel guiltier and more embarrassed than participants that perceived their behaviors are aligned with the norm. However, there was no interaction between customers' self-

blame and behavioral inconsistency, nor a moderated mediation. It is believed behavioral inconsistency does not do a good job as a moderator, as it does not properly characterize the magnitude of the difference between the actual behaviors and personal standards. Further research should test for the importance and value that the outcome of the misdeeds has for the individuals, as a moderator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and guilt.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

From a theoretical point of view, this research contributes to the literature in three ways: First, it is one of the few studies that focus on understanding the effect of customers' self-attributed failures on service outcomes. Second, it expands upon the knowledge about emotions in service settings and the effects that they have on the way customers evaluate their service experiences. Third, it provides a better understanding of the differentiation of embarrassment and guilt and how these two emotions not only have different antecedents, but also can be affected differently by specific circumstances, which means they require service employees to approach them in different ways.

### **Practical Implications**

From a practical standpoint, this research seeks to provide service organizations with a better understanding of customers' emotional reactions to self-attributed service failures, along with the effect that these emotions (guilt and embarrassment) may have on customers' satisfaction and likelihood to spread positive word-of-mouth. More specifically, this research showed that even if higher levels of embarrassment and guilt can produce more positive service outcomes, in some circumstances, certain variables can change the valence of this effect. That is the case of the presence of others, which moderates the relationship between customers' self-blame and embarrassment, and that it may be indicating that when a situation for which they do

not feel responsible is made public, it can negatively affect the way customers evaluate the service. Also, one other aspect to consider is the way the service employees approach the customers to let them know about the mistake. It is possible that in circumstances where customers are responsible for a service failure, where the mistake is pointed out by a service employee, the levels of embarrassment reach a level (regardless of the presence of others or not) that creates a negative effect from the emotion to service outcomes (Inverted V-shape effect). It is important to clarify, this inverted V-shape effect was not tested in this essay, and it would need further research. However, if true, this indicates that service employees need to avoid making customers' mistakes public or point them out since when reaching high levels, it can be detrimental to the service outcomes. Also, this study has shown that when making public an incident for which they do not feel responsible, the levels of embarrassment can be as high as when customers highly blame themselves for a service failure. This means that bringing the customers unwanted attention even if they are not responsible for a failure, is something that service employees should try to avoid.

### **Directions for Future Research**

This research focused on understanding the effect that customers' self-attributed service failures have on customers' satisfaction and willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth, as well as the mechanisms that explain this effect (i.e., embarrassment and guilt). The results from the three studies conducted in this essay, leave open a list of questions that will be interesting to explore in the future. First, further research needs to be done in order to understand if the effects of embarrassment on service outcomes can become negative when embarrassment reaches high levels (Inverse V-shape effect). Second, it will be interesting to explore if the fact that service employees are the ones that point out to the customers that they caused an incident, can have an

effect on the way customers evaluate the service (There are contradictory studies about it; see research from Grace, 2009 and Wu and Mattila, 2013). Third, an additional study should be conducted to evaluate if the importance of customers' misdeed outcomes would work as a better moderator of the relationship between customers' self-blame and guilt.

Lastly and most importantly, this research should be expanded to understand how service employees can develop service recovery strategies for situations where customers attribute a service failure to themselves. Service recovery has been defined as the actions that organizations and service employees perform to respond to service failure (Bell & Zemke, 1987; Grönroos, 1984). These actions can take different forms, such as compensation, positive service employee behaviors, and organizational procedures (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011). Also, the type of compensation and recovery effort may depend on the magnitude of failure (Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999), and certain recovery efforts are more suitable for specific service failures. For example, if a flight is overbooked, it is not enough to offer an apology to the customer. It is expected that the company will provide a quick response to rectify the mistake. As failures become more significant, it may be that firms will have to offer some form of tangible compensation (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). However, when it comes to customers' self-attributed service failures, there is currently little guidance regarding the type of actions frontline employee should execute to ameliorate customers' service experiences (see Menon & Dubé, 2000, 2004; Pounders et al., 2018).

To identify when a service failure occurs, organizations and service employees often rely on customers' behaviors and emotions (e.g., complains, voice raised). Specific emotions result from particular events (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and people tend to cope with these emotions in distinctive ways (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). For example, anger is aroused

when a failure is attributed to external factors (Averill, 1983; Roseman, 1991; Weiner, 1985) (e.g., service provider or service employee) and triggers confronting behaviors, including complaining or spreading negative word-of-mouth (Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2003; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009). Being aware of how customer's behaviors are connected to specific emotions and events can help service employees initiate service recovery efforts that coincide with customers' needs. For example, Menon and Dubé (2004) showed that providing customer support (e.g., apologizing, attempting to calm down the customer, providing the information) is more effective when customers are anxious than when they are angry. Following an unsatisfactory experience, customers tend to experience anxiety when they realize they have insufficient resources to respond (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which can increase their willingness to accept help (i.e., external resources).

In regards to stressful events resulting from self-blame, Yi and Baumgartner (2004) found that if customers attribute a stressful event to their own actions and they do not perceive that the situation is subject to change, they will use acceptance and positive reinterpretation to cope (e.g., they will try to reduce the stress by themselves (internally), by looking at the situation from another perspective). However, when customers are worried, and they feel that the situation is malleable, they are likely to cope using an emotion-based approach, like mental disengagement and self-control (e.g., they will try to forget about the issue); or a problem-focused approach, by engaging in planful problem solving and by seeking social support (e.g., they will try to undo what they have done wrong, or they will ask for help). Here, service employees should be prepared to respond to customers who blame themselves for service failure. Engagement in planful problem solving, and when seeking social support, they may increase the salience of the incident to frontline employees.

Frontline employees' behaviors can impact the influence of guilt on service outcomes (Pounders et al., 2018). For example, Pounders et al. (2018) reported that in order to increase the positive impact of guilt on repatronage intentions, frontline employees should try to minimize customers' perception of the strength of the norm they violated. If violated norms are emphasized, this increases guilt, and can negatively impact repatronage intentions. What emerges is the critical importance of identifying the behaviors frontline employees should avoid or execute when these incidents occur. For example, when a failure occurs, it is common to hear service employees using phrases such as, "it's not all your fault," "it's our fault," or "we accept responsibility for this." These may not be the most functional approaches to address customers' self-attribution for service failure. These actions may lead customers to make different causal attributions, moving from a self-attribution to a firm-attribution event. This is a very dangerous strategy, in light of the fact that when customers attribute failure to others, this can generate anger (Weiner, 1985).

### **Limitations**

The main limitation of this study is related to the testing of mediation models than include only one moderator at a time. While there are arguments for and against testing mediators separately or jointly, there is general agreement that parallel testing is preferred, when possible. For example, Hayes (2018, p. 147) states that the use of only one mediator oversimplifies the subject of study, and ignores the explanatory role of others mechanisms in a model. However, Hayes (2018) also notices that one challenge with parallel mediation, is collinearity (e.g., highly correlated mediators), which can widen confidence intervals for indirect effects. Unfortunately, the correlation between guilt and embarrassment was generally strong among all the three studies conducted, ranging from .55 to .76. As a result, future research on

these emotions may need to target larger sample sizes to increase power and the chances of detecting indirect effects when modeling both guilt and embarrassment jointly.

## REFERENCES

- Aguinis, H., & Bradley, K. J. (2014). Best practice recommendations for designing and implementing experimental vignette methodology studies. *Organizational Research Methods, 17*(4), 351-371.
- Argo, J. J., Dahl, D. W., & Manchanda, R. V. (2005). The influence of a mere social presence in a retail context. *Journal of Consumer Research, 32*(2), 207-212.
- Averill, J. R. (1983). Studies on anger and aggression: implications for theories of emotion. *American Psychologist, 38*(11), 1145-1160.
- Baumeister, R. F., Stillwell, A. M., & Heatherton, T. F. (1994). Guilt: An interpersonal approach. *Psychological Bulletin, 115*(2), 243-267.
- Bell, C. R., & Zemke, R. E. (1987). Service breakdown: the road to recovery. *Management Review, 76*(10), 32-35.
- Biggs, A., Brough, P., & Drummond, S. (2017). Lazarus and Folkman's psychological stress and coping theory. In C. L. Cooper & J. C. Quick (Eds.), *The handbook of stress and health* (pp. 349-364). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing, 56*(2), 57-71.
- Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Mohr, L. A. (1994). Critical service encounters: The employee's viewpoint. *The Journal of Marketing, 58*(4), 95-106.
- Bougie, R., Pieters, R., & Zeelenberg, M. (2003). Angry customers don't come back, they get back: The experience and behavioral implications of anger and dissatisfaction in services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 31*(4), 377-393.
- Campbell, W. K., & Sedikides, C. (1999). Self-threat magnifies the self-serving bias: A meta-analytic integration. *Review of general Psychology, 3*(1), 23-43.
- Cheng, Y. H., Chang, C. J., Chuang, S. C., & Liao, Y. W. (2015). Guilt no longer a sin: The effect of guilt in the service recovery paradox. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice, 25*(6), 836-853.

- Choi, S., & Mattila, A. S. (2008). Perceived controllability and service expectations: Influences on customer reactions following service failure. *Journal of Business Research*, *61*(1), 24-30.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences, 3rd ed.* Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Costa, M., Dinsbach, W., Manstead, A. S., & Bitti, P. E. R. (2001). Social presence, embarrassment, and nonverbal behavior. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, *25*(4), 225-240.
- Dahl, D. W., Honea, H., & Manchanda, R. V. (2005). Three Rs of interpersonal consumer guilt: Relationship, reciprocity, reparation. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *15*(4), 307-315.
- Dahl, D. W., Manchanda, R. V., & Argo, J. J. (2001). Embarrassment in consumer purchase: The roles of social presence and purchase familiarity. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *28*(3), 473-481.
- De Hooge, I. E., Zeelenberg, M., & Breugelmans, S. M. (2007). Moral sentiments and cooperation: Differential influences of shame and guilt. *Cognition and Emotion*, *21*(5), 1025-1042.
- Devine, P. G., Monteith, M. J., Zuwerink, J. R., & Elliot, A. J. (1991). Prejudice with and without compunction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*(6), 817.
- Duhachek, A. (2008). Summing up the state of coping research. *Marketing and Consumer Psychology Series*, 1057.
- Duhachek, A., Agrawal, N., & Han, D. (2012). Guilt versus shame: Coping, fluency, and framing in the effectiveness of responsible drinking messages. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *49*(6), 928-941.
- Eisinga, R., te Grotenhuis, M., & Pelzer, B. (2013). The reliability of a two-item scale: Pearson, Cronbach, or Spearman-Brown? *International Journal of Public Health*, *58*(4), 637-642. doi:10.1007/s00038-012-0416-3
- Etgar, M. (2008). A descriptive model of the consumer co-production process. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(1), 97-108.
- Feinberg, M., Willer, R., & Keltner, D. (2012). Flustered and faithful: Embarrassment as a signal of prosociality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *102*(1), 81.
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*: Stanford University Press.

- Folkes, V. S. (1984). Consumer reactions to product failure: An attributional approach. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(4), 398-409.
- Folkes, V. S., Koletsky, S., & Graham, J. L. (1987). A field study of causal inferences and consumer reaction: the view from the airport. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(4), 534-539.
- Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R. S. (1980). An analysis of coping in a middle-aged community sample. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 21(3), 219-239.
- Gelbrich, K. (2010). Anger, frustration, and helplessness after service failure: coping strategies and effective informational support. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(5), 567-585.
- Gelbrich, K., & Roschk, H. (2011). A meta-analysis of organizational complaint handling and customer responses. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(1), 24-43.
- Goodwin, C., & Ross, I. (1992). Consumer responses to service failures: Influence of procedural and interactional fairness perceptions. *Journal of Business Research*, 25(2), 149-163.
- Gountas, J., & Gountas, S. (2007). Personality orientations, emotional states, customer satisfaction, and intention to repurchase. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(1), 72-75.
- Grace, D. (2009). An examination of consumer embarrassment and repatronage intentions in the context of emotional service encounters. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 16(1), 1-9. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2008.02.004
- Grégoire, Y., Laufer, D., & Tripp, T. M. (2010). A comprehensive model of customer direct and indirect revenge: Understanding the effects of perceived greed and customer power. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(6), 738-758.
- Grégoire, Y., Tripp, T. M., & Legoux, R. (2009). When customer love turns into lasting hate: The effects of relationship strength and time on customer revenge and avoidance. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(6), 18-32.
- Grönroos, C. (1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications. *European Journal of Marketing*, 3(4), 384 - 398.
- Grove, S. J., & Fisk, R. P. (1983). The dramaturgy of services exchange: An analytical framework for services marketing. In L. L. Berry, G. L. Shostack, & G. D. Upah (Eds.), *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing* (pp. 45-49). Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Han, D., Duhachek, A., & Agrawal, N. (2014). Emotions Shape Decisions through Construal Level: The Case of Guilt and Shame. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(4), 1047-1064. doi:10.1086/678300

- Han, D., Duhachek, A., & Rucker, D. D. (2015). Distinct threats, common remedies: How consumers cope with psychological threat. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(4), 531-545.
- Hayes, A. F. (2018). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (2 ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Heidenreich, S., Wittkowski, K., Handrich, M., & Falk, T. (2015). The dark side of customer co-creation: Exploring the consequences of failed co-created services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(3), 279-296.
- Kane, L., & Ashbaugh, A. R. (2017). Simple and parallel mediation: A tutorial exploring anxiety sensitivity, sensation seeking, and gender. *The Quantitative Methods for Psychology*, 13(3), 148-165.
- Keltner, D., & Buswell, B. N. (1997). Embarrassment: Its distinct form and appeasement functions. *Psychological Bulletin*, 122(3), 250-270.
- Klass, E. T. (1990). Guilt, shame, and embarrassment. In H. Leitenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of social and evaluation anxiety* (pp. 385-414). New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Krishna, A., Herd, K. B., & Aydınoğlu, N. Z. (2019). A review of consumer embarrassment as a public and private emotion. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 29(3), 492-516.
- Kristjánsson, K. (2010). *The self and its emotions*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist*, 36(4), 343-356.
- Latané, B., & Wolf, S. (1981). The social impact of majorities and minorities. *Psychological Review*, 88(5), 438.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). Progress on a cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion. *American Psychologist*, 46(8), 819-834.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Lewis, H. B. (1971). Shame and guilt in neurosis. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 58(3), 419-438.
- Lewis, M. (1995). *Shame: The exposed self*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Lewis, M. (2008). Self-conscious emotions: Embarrassment, pride, shame, and guilt. In M. Lewis, J. M. Haviland-Jones, & L. F. Barrett (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (3 ed., pp. 742-756). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Lusch, R. F., & Vargo, S. L. (2006). Service-dominant logic: reactions, reflections and refinements. *Marketing Theory*, 6(3), 281-288.

- Mano, H., & Oliver, R. L. (1993). Assessing the dimensionality and structure of the consumption experience: Evaluation, feeling, and satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(3), 451-466.
- Marschall, D., Sanftner, J., & Tangney, J. P. (1994). The state shame and guilt scale. *Fairfax, VA: George Mason University*.
- Maxham III, J. G. (2001). Service recovery's influence on consumer satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and purchase intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 54(1), 11-24.
- Maxham III, J. G., & Netemeyer, R. G. (2002). A longitudinal study of complaining customers' evaluations of multiple service failures and recovery efforts. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(4), 57-71.
- Maxham III, J. G., & Netemeyer, R. G. (2003). Firms reap what they sow: the effects of shared values and perceived organizational justice on customers' evaluations of complaint handling. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(1), 46-62.
- McCull-Kennedy, J. R., Patterson, P. G., Smith, A. K., & Brady, M. K. (2009). Customer rage episodes: Emotions, expressions and behaviors. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(2), 222-237.
- Menon, K., & Dubé, L. (2000). Ensuring greater satisfaction by engineering salesperson response to customer emotions. *Journal of Retailing*, 76(3), 285-307.
- Menon, K., & Dubé, L. (2004). Service provider responses to anxious and angry customers: different challenges, different payoffs. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(3), 229-237.
- Miller, R. S., & Leary, M. R. (1992). Social sources and interactive functions of emotion: The case of embarrassment.
- Miller, R. S., & Tangney, J. P. (1994). Differentiating embarrassment and shame. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 13(3), 273-287.
- Ntoumanis, N., & Myers, N. D. (2016). *An Introduction to Intermediate and Advanced Statistical Analyses for Sport and Exercise Scientists*. West Sussex: United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Oliver, R. L. (1993). Cognitive, affective, and attribute bases of the satisfaction response. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(3), 418-430.
- Oliver, R. L. (1994). Conceptual issues in the structural analysis of consumption emotion, satisfaction, and quality: Evidence in a service setting. In C. T. Allen & D. Roedder J. (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer research* (Vol. 21, pp. 16-22). Provo, UT: ACR North American Advances.
- Parasuraman, A., Berry, L. L., & Zeithaml, V. A. (1991). Refinement and reassessment of the SERVQUAL scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 67(4), 420-450.

- Patterson, P. G., McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Smith, A. K., & Lu, Z. (2009). Customer rage: Triggers, tipping points, and take-outs. *California Management Review*, 52(1), 6-28.
- Philp, M., & Ashworth, L. (2013). Concealing your consumer stupidity: how the fear of appearing as an incompetent consumer reduces negative word-of-mouth. *ACR North American Advances*.
- Pounders, K. R., Moulard, J. G., & Babin, B. J. (2018). Examining customer-created guilt in a service context. *Psychology & Marketing*, 35(11), 830-844.
- Roseman, I. J. (1991). Appraisal determinants of discrete emotions. *Cognition & Emotion*, 5(3), 161-200.
- Sabini, J., & Silver, M. (1997). In defense of shame: Shame in the context of guilt and embarrassment. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 27(1), 1-15.
- Silpakit, P., & Fisk, R. P. (1985). *Participatizing the service encounter: A theoretical framework*. Paper presented at the Services marketing in a changing environment, Chicago, IL.
- Smith, A. K., & Bolton, R. N. (2002). The effect of customers' emotional responses to service failures on their recovery effort evaluations and satisfaction judgments. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(1), 5-23.
- Smith, A. K., Bolton, R. N., & Wagner, J. (1999). A model of customer satisfaction with service encounters involving failure and recovery. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(3), 356-372.
- Söderlund, M., & Rosengren, S. (2007). Receiving word-of-mouth from the service customer: An emotion-based effectiveness assessment. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 14(2), 123-136.
- Tangney, J. P. (1991). Moral affect: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(4), 598-607.
- Tangney, J. P. (1995). Recent advances in the empirical study of shame and guilt. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38(8), 1132-1145.
- Tangney, J. P. (1999). The self-conscious emotions: Shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride. In T. Dalgleish & M. J. Power (Eds.), *Handbook of cognition and emotion* (pp. 541-568). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tangney, J. P., & Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and guilt*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral Emotions and moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58(1), 345-372.

- Tangney, J. P., & Tracy, J. L. (2012). Self-conscious emotions. In J. P. Tangney (Ed.), *Handbook of Self and Identity* (2 ed., pp. 446-478). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2004). Putting the self into self-conscious emotions: A theoretical model. *Psychological Inquiry*, *15*(2), 103-125.
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2006). Appraisal antecedents of shame and guilt: Support for a theoretical model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *32*(10), 1339-1351.
- Van Vaerenbergh, Y., Orsingher, C., Vermeir, I., & Larivière, B. (2014). A meta-analysis of relationships linking service failure attributions to customer outcomes. *Journal of Service Research*, *17*(4), 381-398.
- Verbeke, W., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2002). A situational analysis on how salespeople experience and cope with shame and embarrassment. *Psychology & Marketing*, *19*(9), 713-741.
- Verschuere, B., Brandsen, T., & Pestoff, V. (2012). Co-production: The state of the art in research and the future agenda. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *23*(4), 1083-1101.
- Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review*, *92*(4), 548-573.
- Weiner, B. (1994). Integrating social and personal theories of achievement striving. *Review of Educational Research*, *64*(4), 557-573.
- Weiner, B. (2000). Attributional thoughts about consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *27*(3), 382-387.
- Westbrook, R. A. (1987). Product/consumption-based affective responses and postpurchase processes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *24*(3), 258-270.
- Wu, L. L., & Mattila, A. (2013). Investigating consumer embarrassment in service interactions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *33*(2), 196-202.
- Yi, S., & Baumgartner, H. (2004). Coping with negative emotions in purchase-related situations. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *14*(3), 303-317.
- Zeithaml, V. A. (1981). How consumer evaluation processes differ between goods and services. In J. H. Donnelly & W. R. George (Eds.), *Marketing of Services* (pp. 200-204). Chicago: American Marketing Association.

## **CHAPTER 4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This dissertation attempts to provide an overview of the nature of two negative self-conscious emotions in service settings, namely, embarrassment and guilt. This work also tries to understand their unique antecedents and the way organizations and service employees can help customers to deal with these emotions. To meet these objectives, Chapter 1 offered an introduction to the dissertation and organization of the document. Chapter 2 provides a qualitative investigation of the antecedents of guilt and embarrassment, in addition to a categorization of the service employee behaviors that can help or harm customers' service experience when feeling embarrassed or guilty. Chapter 3 takes some of the knowledge learned the existent literature, and from Essay 1 to test if customers' self-attributed service failures (one of the antecedents detected in Essay 1), can have an effect on service outcomes (i.e., satisfaction and word-of-mouth), and if embarrassment and guilt can serve as explanatory agents of these main effects. Also, it looked into the specific situations where only embarrassment or guilt are the mediators of the relationship between customers' self-blame and service outcomes, along with possible moderators that can increase or decrease the effect of customers' self-blame on embarrassment and guilt. Lastly, this chapter (Chapter 4) summarizes the contributions of each one of the essays.

## **Essay 1 Implications**

Essay 1 mainly contributes to the understanding of self-conscious emotions in service settings. First, it ratifies previous categorizations of embarrassing events (e.g., Grace (2007) ) and proposed a categorization for guilt antecedents in service encounters. Second, it tries to determine guilt and embarrassment antecedents in the same essay, with the aim of identifying and comparing the different circumstances that elicit each one of them. Third, and the most important of the contributions, is that it tries to determine the behaviors that service employees should exhibit or avoid in order to help customers to deal with guilt and embarrassment during a service interaction. This is particularly an important contribution since service employees are traditionally trained to respond to situations that provoked anger or disappointment (e.g., service failures attributed to service employee, or external factors), but there are not too many studies that guide their behavior when it comes to deal with embarrassment and guilt.

## **Essay 2 Implications**

Essay 2 makes its more important contribution by exploring the effect of customers' self-attributed service failures on service outcomes, more specifically, satisfaction and word-of-mouth. Also, it tries to understand better how embarrassment and guilt work as one of the mechanisms that explain the effect that customers' self-attributed service failures have on the way customers evaluate the whole service experience. Moreover, this essay tries to comprehend the circumstances where customers' self-attributed service failures elicit specifically embarrassment or guilt, with the aim of providing service employee insights about how to detect the emotions customers' are experiencing and implementing service recovery strategies. While this essay does not delve in the service recovery topic, it paves the way for further research on

this topic, since embarrassment and guilt should be addressed in different ways, to avoid a negative effect of these emotions on service outcomes.

## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX 2A: GUILT ANTECEDENTS CODEBOOK

Codes	Description	Key words, concepts
<b>Customer Behavior</b>	The events grouped under this category are those that elicited the emotions as a consequence of customer's actions that occurred in service settings, but where not elicited as a product of an interaction with a service employee, or are events that happened without being noticed by service employees.	
Personal Transgressions	This category includes all the events where people feel guilty as a result of actions that do not meet their personal behavioral standards.	
<i>Cheating, stealing, lying</i>	This code was used to categorize the service encounters where customers described situations where they purposely used deception or displayed dishonest behaviors to take advantage of the circumstances.	Cheating, stealing, lying, moral, values, ethics, transgressions.
<i>Inappropriate spending of money</i>	The incidents included in this code, portrayed situations where the customers overspend money.	Compulsive spending, unplanned buying, impulse buying.
<i>Unintentional Inappropriate behaviors</i>	The situations coded under this node, described circumstances where, unintentionally, the customers felt they exhibited misdeed behaviors that do not fit with their personal behavioral standards (e.g., feeling of taking advantage of the circumstances when was not).	Mistake, error, incident, misbehavior.
<b>Interactive Behavior Customer Behavior</b>	This category included those encounters where the self-conscious emotions were attributed to customers or their companions' behaviors that affected a service employee. The incidents included in this category describe active communication between customers and service employees, where the actions of the customers impact the service employees.	
Customers Reactions to Service Failures	The situations contained in this category illustrate events in which customers react to service failures.	
<i>Complaining / Correcting</i>	The events coded under this node, where situations where the customer had to complain or correct the service employee in order to adjust the service being provided to their expectations.	Complaining, correcting.
<i>Inappropriate reactions</i>	This node includes situations where the customers recalled having reacted inappropriately to service failures, and exhibited behaviors that do not meet their personal behavioral standards.	Yelling, rudeness, meanness, anger, upset, raise voice, frustration, lying, cheating, and annoyance.

<i>Monetary penalties</i>	The situations classified under this node, where events where the costumers mentioned having to implement monetary penalties or require compensation as a response to a service failure.	Under tipping, compensations requests, demands.
Customers Reactions to Service Failure Recovery	The events included in this node, are situations in which customers experience guilt after a service failure recovery takes place.	
<i>Inappropriate reactions</i>	This node groups the events where customers indicated feeling guilty after a service employee or organization implemented a service recovery strategy, such as, an apology or a compensation.	Apology, patience, understanding, compensating.
Customers Failure to Reciprocate Service Employee Behavioral Expectations	This subcategory groups the service interactions where the customer was unable to reciprocate service employee treatment, requests, or expectations.	
<i>Failure to reciprocate service employee interpersonal treatment</i>	The events clustered in this node, represent situations where the customers felt that they do not appropriately treat the service employee, even if the service employee treat them with respect and courtesy.	Meanness, disrespect.
<i>Customers Inappropriate use of Resources/Service</i>	The situations coded as customers inappropriate use or resources/services, picture customers' behaviors where they intentionally or unintentionally use employees or organization resources without reciprocating them or giving something in return or exchange.	Misused of time, space, service, under tipping.
Customers Provoked Service Failures	The events included in this subcategory are situation in which customers experienced guilt after service employees had to intervene or fix something due to customers' intentional or unintentional behaviors.	
<i>Customers' mishaps</i>	This node groups the events where customers indicated feeling guilty after making a mistake that required service employee's time and effort, in order to be fixed.	Mistakes, blame, error, mishaps.
Customer Companions Interactions	The customer-companions interactions subcategory includes service interactions where the customers experience guilt as a result of a companion behavior (e.g., family, friends).	
<i>Others in one's group transgressions</i>	In this node, it is included all the events recalled by customers where a companion exhibited a behaviors that is inconsistence with their personal behavioral standards.	Companions misdeeds, others' transgressions, and guilt for association.
<b>Interactive Behavior Service Employees</b>	This category includes incidents that elicited self-conscious emotions in a service encounter, and that can be credited directly to the frontline employee behaviors. The events included in this category describe active communication between customers and service employee, where the actions of the service employees impacted the customers.	
Service Employee Reactions to Real and Not Real Transgressions	This subcategory includes the events where the service employee displays behavioral reactions to customers' perceived misdeeds.	
<i>Service employee judge customer transgressions</i>	The events grouped under this node, are situations where the customers felt their behaviors where judge by service employees.	Intrusive behavior, harassment, feeling observed, watched, judged.

Service Employee/Organizational Citizenship Behaviors	The events grouped in this category, described situations where the service employees/organizations exceeded customers' expectations by doing things that were perceived as outside of their job basic responsibilities.	
<i>Above and beyond behaviors</i>	The situations included in this node pictured service experiences where the service employees or organizations display behaviors that were outside their regular job to help/meet the customers' needs.	Above and beyond, extra-mile, unnecessary behaviors.
<b>Bystander Behavior</b>	Incidents under the bystander behaviors category included situations where participants felt the emotion after seeing others' inappropriate actions (not companions, not service employees).	
Empathic Guilt	The incidents categorized under this node, are those where customers indicated having felt guilty after seeing others exhibiting behaviors that do not meet their personal behavioral standards.	Pity, sadness, empathy.

## APPENDIX 2B: EMBARRASSMENT ANTECEDENTS CODEBOOK

Codes	Description	Key words, concepts
<b>Customer Behavior</b>	The events grouped under this category are those that elicited the emotions as a consequence of customer's actions that occurred in service settings, but where not elicited as a product of an interaction with a service employee, or are events that happened without being noticed by service employees.	
Behavioral and Cognitive Shortcomings	This category grouped all the events where people indicated they made a mistake caused by behavioral or cognitive deficiencies that did not have a direct impact or harm a service employee.	
<i>Behavioral Shortcomings</i>	The situations coded as behavioral shortcomings, represent events where the customers provoke an incident as a result of an uncoordinated or unintentional body actions.	Clumsiness, incoordination, bumping, accident, mess, tripping, spilling, loss of control, bodily functions.
<i>Cognitive Shortcomings</i>	The events coded under this node, are situations where customers made a mistake or as a result of a temporal deficiency in their cognitive abilities.	Forgetfulness, distraction, absent mind, learning, memory, comprehension, misunderstanding, foolish, unintelligent, stupid.
Other Customers Shortcomings	This subcategory includes incidents where customers experience embarrassment as a result of other customers behavioral and cognitive shortcomings that put them on the spotlight, or make them feel judge.	
<i>Other Customers Shortcomings</i>	The events under this node, represent situations where customer felt embarrassed after other customers behavioral and cognitive shortcomings affect them directly.	Upset, annoyance, disbelief, shock.
<b>Interactive Behavior Customer Behavior</b>	This category included those encounters where the self-conscious emotions were attributed to customers or their companions' behaviors that affected a service employee. The incidents included in this category describe active communication between customers and service employees, where the actions of the customers impact the service employees.	
Customers' Reactions towards Service Employees Shortcomings	The situations contained in this category illustrate events in which customers react to service failures.	
<i>Customers judge a service employee</i>	The events coded under this node, where situations where the customer explicitly emitted a judgment related to service employees' perceived mistakes, or real or unreal appearance flaws or characteristics.	Judging, evaluating, shunned, scrutinize.

<i>Customers correct a service employee</i>	The events coded under this node, where situations where the customer explicitly correct service employees' perceived mistakes, or real or unreal appearance flaws or characteristics.	Correcting, fixing, explaining, scolding.
<i>Customers tease a service employee</i>	The events coded under this node, where situations where the customer explicitly tease service employees about their perceived mistakes, or real or unreal appearance flaws or characteristics.	Teasing, laughing, making fun of, mocking, and scoffing.
Customer Companions Interactions	The customer-companions interactions subcategory includes service interactions where the customers experience guilt as a result of a companion behavior (e.g., family, friends).	
<i>Others in one's group transgressions</i>	In this node, it is included all the events recalled by customers where a companion exhibited a behaviors that is inconsistency with their personal behavioral standards reacted inappropriately to service failures, and exhibited behaviors that do not meet their personal behavioral standards.	Companions misdeeds, others' transgressions, and guilt for association.
<b>Interactive Behavior Service Employees</b>	This category includes incidents that elicited self-conscious emotions in a service encounter, and that can be credited directly to the frontline employee behaviors. The events included in this category describe active communication between customers and service employee, where the perceived real or imaginary actions of the service employees impacted the customers.	
Service Employee Reactions towards Customers' Shortcomings	This subcategory includes the events where the service employee displays behavioral reactions to customers' perceived mistakes (behavioral and cognitive shortcomings), or real or unreal appearance flaws.	
<i>Service employee judge customers</i>	The situations included in this node pictured events where service employees explicitly emitted a judgment related to customers' perceived mistakes, or real or unreal appearance flaws.	Judging, evaluating, shunned, scrutinize.
<i>Service employee correct customers</i>	The situations included in this node pictured events where service employees explicitly emitted a judgment related to customers' perceived mistakes, or real or unreal appearance flaws.	Correcting, fixing, explaining, scolding.
<i>Service employee tease customers</i>	The situations included in this node pictured events where service employees tease a customers, based on their perceived mistakes, or real or unreal appearance flaws.	Teasing, laughing, making fun of, mocking, and scoffing.
<i>Intentionally or not, service employee attracts attention to the customer</i>	The incidents grouped in this node, were situations where the service employee publicly displayed customers' flaws or mistakes, or attract unwanted attention to them by being the target of service employees' cognitive or behavioral shortcomings (e.g.. spilling a drink in the customer).	Making a scene, publicizing, attracting attention, putting in the spotlight.
Service Employee Perceived Judgment	This subcategory includes the events where the service employee displays behavioral reactions to customers' mistakes (behavioral and cognitive shortcomings), or perceived real or unreal personal flaws.	
Service employee virtual judgment of customers' flaws	This node includes the events where customers experienced embarrassment as a result of feeling <i>virtually</i> judge by a service employee.	Feeling judge, observed, evaluated.

## APPENDIX 2C: CRITICAL BEHAVIORS THAT AFFECT GUILT CODEBOOK

Codes	Description	Key words, concepts
<b>Positive Behaviors</b>	The service employee behaviors grouped under this category are those that customers considered can help them to reduce their guilt.	
Prosocial Behaviors	The actions coded as prosocial behaviors, are the ones where service employees acts aimed to help customers to amend, correct or fix a mistake.	
<i>Providing help</i>	The service employees' actions grouped in this node, are the ones where they assist the customers' after a guilt-eliciting situation occurs (e.g., give indications, correct the issue, explain a situation, compensate for a failure).	Help, suggestions, aid, indications, assist, compensate.
Accept responsibility	The situations coded in this subcategory are the ones were service employees accept the responsibility or take the blame for the event where the customers' felt guilty.	
<i>Taking the blame</i>	The service employees' actions grouped in this node, are the ones where they accept the responsibility for the guilt-eliciting situation (e.g., It is my fault, I apologize).	Take the blame, account for, be responsible for, and apologize.
Empathetic Behaviors	The behavior grouped under empathy, are situations where the service employees verbally indicate that they understand customers' position.	
<i>Sympathy</i>	The behavior grouped under empathy, are situations where the service employees indicate customers that they understand their situation, they listen to them, and encourage them (e.g., tell me about what happened, I am sorry, I understand you).	Comfort, support, kindness, caring, pity, sorry, reassuring, listening closely, sympathy, compassion, comprehension, being there, consideration, understanding, place in another's position.
<i>Relate to the situation</i>	The service employees' behaviors under this node, are the ones where they normalize the guilt-triggering situation, by making it feel like a common event (e.g., It happens all the time).	Prevalent, common, ordinary, usual, frequent, conventional, recurrent.
Prudence	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee respond to a guilt-eliciting situation without attracting attention from others (e.g., other customers, companions, service employees) to the incident.	
<i>Being discrete</i>	The service employees' actions grouped under this code, are behaviors were the service employee privately deal with the guilt-eliciting situation.	Quiet, discrete, prudence, discretion, caution, tact, carefulness.
Humor	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee respond to a guilt-triggering situation with non-judgmental humor.	

<i>Courtesy laugh/ smile</i>	The service employees' actions grouped under this code, are the ones where the frontline employees gracefully laugh about the guilt-triggering situation.	Laugh gently, graceful laugh, smile.
<i>Joking</i>	The service employees' behaviors coded as jokes, are the ones where they graciously made a comment, or gave funny response to the guilt-evoking situation.	Joking, being funny, playful.
Letting go	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee ignore or disregard the guilt-eliciting situation.	
<i>Diminishing</i>	The service employees' behaviors coded as diminish, are situations where service employees reduce customers' guilt by reducing the importance of the guilt-eliciting event (e.g., it is not a big deal, it is ok).	Diminish, reduce, decrease, insignificant, not a big deal, ok.
<i>Being Indifferent</i>	The behaviors included in this node, are the ones where service employees were indifferent to the guilt-evoking situation, for example, by not saying anything about it, ignoring the event, or pretending that nothing happened.	Indifferent, uninvolved, ignoring, pretention, not a big deal.
Professional Treatment	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee exhibited a professional conduct, by being respectful and keeping their composure after a guilt-eliciting event occurs.	
<i>Being patient</i>	The behaviors grouped under this code, are service employees reactions mainly described as calmed, relaxed, cool, to a situation that was guilt-triggering for the customers.	Calm, relaxed, cool, patient, not mad, not angry.
<i>Being polite</i>	The behaviors under this category are the ones where service employee remained friendly, respectful and pleasant after the guilt-triggering situation occurred, even in instances where they needed to point out the customers' mistake, or help them to fix them.	Friendly, respectful, courteous, pleasant, cordial, nice, hospitable, politeness, seriousness, competence, moderation.
Unable to reduce customers' guilt	This subcategory includes the responses where customers indicated the service employees cannot do anything to reduce their guilt.	
<i>Avoiding the failure</i>	The responses coded under this node, are the ones where customers mentioned that the only think the service employees could do, is to prevent the guilt-triggering situation of happening in the first place.	Avoiding the failure, doing things better from the beginning.
<i>Not possible to help</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that they think service employees could not do anything to reduce their guilty feelings.	Could not do anything.
<b>Negative Behaviors</b>	The service employee behaviors grouped under this category are those that customers considered can help them to increase their guilt.	
Unhelpfulness	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee do not assist or make special efforts to help the customer after a guilt-triggering situation occurs.	
<i>Being uncooperative</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees showed not willingness to help, or	Uncooperative, disobliging, unhelpful.

	to cooperate in order to reduce their guilt, or to fix, amend a mistake.	
Being obliging	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee continue proving a good and professional service despite of customers' misdeeds or transgressions.	
<i>Obliging</i>	The behaviors included in this node, are situations where the service employee continue proving a good and professional service despite of customers' misdeeds or transgressions.	Obliging, considerate, accommodating, and generous.
Overlooking	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees leave them get away with a misdeed or transgression.	
<i>Oversight</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees did not find out about customers' transgressions, or oversight them, letting them get away with a behavior or situation.	Oversight, overlook, slip, neglect.
Pointing out the mishap	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee point out customers' mishaps / transgressions, by calling-out the customers once or multiple times.	
<i>Pointing out customers' wrongdoings</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees blame them for an event, or point out their wrongdoings.	Blame, pointing out, call-out.
<i>Dwelling upon</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees kept going over the guilt-triggering event.	Dwell on, prolonging the situation, repeating, persistence.
Attracting attention to customers	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are actions were the service employee make the incident noticeable by others (e.g., customers, companions, service employees).	
<i>Drawing attention</i>	The service employees' actions grouped in this code, are behaviors were the service employee intentionally or unintentionally exposes to others or draws attention to the customers' guilt-inducing event.	Making a scene, announcing others, letting other know, say loudly, call-out in front of others, draw attention, notoriety, causing a scene, center of attention, putting in the spotlight, imprudence, impropriety, overreaction.
Service employees' self-pity	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are actions were the service employee evoke empathy from the customers, either for their wrongdoings or the impact that customers' misdeeds had on them.	
<i>Asking for sympathy</i>	The service employees' responses coded under this node, are the ones were they react to an event or guilt-triggering situation by asking customers' compassion or sympathy with their states, circumstances, mistakes or wrongdoings.	Sympathy, pity, sorry, victim.
<i>Recognizing their mistakes</i>	The service employees' responses coded under this node, are the ones were they react to an event or guilt-triggering situation by recognizing a mistake or apologizing for a situation.	Apologizing, owned up a mistake, take responsibility.

Show displeasure	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are service employees' emotional and attitudinal negative reactions to the guilt-evoking event.	
<i>Being angry/annoyed</i>	The service employees' responses coded under this node, are the ones where they reacted to the guilt-triggering situation with anger, or where they got mad or upset with the customer or the situation itself.	Anger, mad, upset, yelling, complaining, disgust.
<i>Being disappointed</i>	The service employees' responses coded under this node, are the ones where they reacted to the guilt-triggering situations with disappointment with the customer or the situation itself.	Disappointed, sad, unhappiness.
<i>Having an attitude</i>	The behaviors included in this node, are actions from the service employee that are perceived by the customers as sarcastic, mean and in general disrespectful.	Sarcastic, having an attitude, arrogant, giving a look, rolling eyes, rude, mean.
Demeaning	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are actions where the service employee make the customers feel ridiculed and patronized.	
<i>Shaming</i>	The service employees' behaviors under this node are the ones where they scold the customers (e.g., making them feel like a bad person or what they did was wrong).	Criticize, reproach, reprimand.
<i>Being critical</i>	The service employees' behaviors under this node are the ones where they exhibited judgmental behaviors towards customers' actions/decisions/behaviors.	Judging, captious, critical, reproaching.
<i>Being condescending</i>	The service employees' behaviors under this node, are the ones where they indicate that they disapprove the customers' behaviors and mishaps, by making them feel inferior (e.g., feeling dumb, incapable).	Patronizing, reprove, bring down, humiliate, give a hard time, dumbing down, deprecating, disapproving

## APPENDIX 2D: CRITICAL BEHAVIORS THAT AFFECT EMBARRASSMENT

### CODEBOOK

Codes	Description	Key words, concepts
<b>Positive Behaviors</b>	The service employee behaviors grouped under this category are those that customers considered can help them to reduce their embarrassment.	
Prosocial Behaviors	The actions coded as prosocial behaviors, are the ones where service employees acts aimed to help customers to amend, correct or fix a mistake.	
<i>Providing help</i>	The service employees' actions grouped in this node, are the ones where they assist the customers' after an embarrassing situation occurs (e.g., give indications, help cleaning).	Help, suggestions, aid, and indications, assist.
Accept responsibility	The situations coded in this subcategory are the ones were service employees accept the responsibility or take the blame for the embarrassing event, in an effort to reduce the embarrassment produced by the situation.	
<i>Taking the blame</i>	The service employees' actions grouped in this node, are the ones where they accept the responsibility for the embarrassing situation (e.g., It is my fault, I apologize).	Take the blame, account for, be responsible for, and apologize.
Empathetic Behaviors	The behavior grouped under empathy, are situations where the service employees verbally indicate that they understand customers' position.	
<i>Sympathy</i>	The behavior grouped under empathy, are situations where the service employees indicate customers that they understand their situation, they listen to them, and encourage them (e.g., tell me about what happened, I am sorry, I understand you).	Comfort, support, kindness, caring, pity, sorry, reassuring, listening closely, sympathy, compassion, comprehension, being there, consideration, understanding, place in another's position.
<i>Relate to the situation</i>	The service employees' behaviors under this node are the ones where they normalize the embarrassing situation, by making it feel like a common event (e.g., It happens all the time).	Prevalent, common, ordinary, usual, frequent, conventional, recurrent
Prudence	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee respond to an embarrassing situation without attracting attention from others to the incident.	
<i>Being discrete</i>	The service employees' actions grouped under this code, are behaviors were the service employee privately deal with the embarrassing situation.	Quiet, discrete, prudence, discretion, caution, tact, carefulness.
Humor	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee respond to an embarrassing situation with non-judgmental humor.	

<i>Courtesy laugh/ smile</i>	The service employees' actions grouped under this code, are the ones where the frontline employees gracefully laugh about the embarrassing situation.	Laugh gently, graceful laugh, smile.
<i>Joking</i>	The service employees' behaviors coded as jokes, are the ones where they graciously made a comment, or made funny response to the embarrassing situation.	Joking, being funny, playful.
Letting go	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee ignore or disregard the embarrassing situation.	
<i>Diminishing</i>	The service employees' behaviors coded as diminish, are situations where service employees reduce the embarrassment by reducing the importance of the embarrassing event (e.g., it is not a big deal, it is ok).	Diminish, reduce, decrease, insignificant, not a big deal, ok.
<i>Being Indifferent</i>	The behaviors included in this node, are the ones where service employees were indifferent to the embarrassing situation, for example, by not saying anything about it, ignoring the event, or pretending that nothing happened.	Indifferent, uninvolved, ignoring, pretention, not a big deal.
Professional Treatment	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee exhibited a professional conduct, by being respectful and keeping their composure after an embarrassing event occurs.	
<i>Being patient</i>	The behaviors grouped under this code, are service employees reactions to an embarrassing situation that are mainly described as calmed, relaxed, cool.	Calm, relaxed, cool, patient, not mad, not angry.
<i>Being polite</i>	The behaviors under this category are the ones where service employee remained friendly, respectful and pleasant after the embarrassing situation occurred, even in instances where they needed to point out the customers' mistake, or help them to fix them.	Friendly, respectful, courteous, pleasant, cordial, nice, hospitable, politeness, seriousness, competence, moderation.
Unable to reduce the embarrassment	This subcategory includes the responses where customers indicated the service employees cannot do anything to reduce the embarrassment.	
<i>Avoiding the failure</i>	The responses coded under this node, are the ones where customers mentioned that the only think the service employees could do, is to prevent the embarrassing situation of happening in the first place.	Avoiding the failure, doing things better from the beginning.
<i>Not possible to help</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that they think service employees could not do anything to reduce their embarrassment.	Could not do anything.
<b>Negative Behaviors</b>	The service employee behaviors grouped under this category are those that customers considered can help them to increase their embarrassment.	
Unhelpfulness	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee do not assist or make special efforts to help the customer after an embarrassing situation occurs.	
<i>Being uncooperative</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees showed not willingness to help, or	Uncooperative, disobliging, unhelpful.

	to cooperate in order to reduce their embarrassment, or to fix, amend a mistake.	
Blaming the customer	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are situations where the service employee highlights customers' embarrassing events, by placing the blame on them once or multiple times.	
<i>Pointing out customers' wrongdoings</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees blame them for the embarrassing situation, or point out to them that they made a mistake.	Blame, pointing out.
<i>Dwelling upon</i>	The situations included in this nodes, are the ones where customers mentioned that service employees kept going over the embarrassing situation.	Dwell on, prolonging the embarrassing situation, repeating, persistence.
Attracting attention	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are actions were the service employee make the incident noticeable by others (e.g., customers, companions, service employees).	
<i>Drawing attention</i>	The service employees' actions grouped in this code, are behaviors were the service employee intentionally or unintentionally exposes to others or draws attention to the customers' embarrassing event.	Making a scene, announcing others, letting other know, say loudly, call out, draw attention, notoriety, causing a scene, center of attention, putting in the spotlight, imprudence, impropriety, overreaction.
Show displeasure	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are service employees' emotional and attitudinal reactions to the embarrassing event.	
<i>Being angry/annoyed</i>	The service employees' responses coded under this node, are the ones were they reacted to the embarrassing situation with anger, or where they got mad or upset with the customer or the situation itself.	Anger, mad, upset, yelling, complaining, disgust.
<i>Having an attitude</i>	The behaviors included in this node, are actions from the service employee that are perceived by the customers as sarcastic, mean and in general disrespectful.	Sarcasm, having an attitude, arrogant, giving a look, rolling eyes, rude, mean.
Demeaning	The behaviors included in this subcategory, are actions were the service employee make the customers feel ridiculed and patronized.	
<i>Mockery</i>	The incidents coded in this node, are service employees behaviors that are perceived as either laughing, mocking, ridiculing or degrading customers after an embarrassing situation.	Laughing, mocking, ridiculing, and gawking.
<i>Being condescending</i>	The service employees' behaviors under this node, are the ones where they indicate that they disapproves the customers' behaviors and mishaps, by making them feel inferior (e.g., feeling dumb, incapable, feel judged).	Patronizing, reprove, bring down, humiliate, give a hard time, dumbing down, deprecating, and disapproving.

### APPENDIX 3A: SCENARIOS STUDY 1

Table 4A.

*Scenarios Used to Manipulate Customers' Self-Blame*

---

Imagine you and one of your friends decide to go to dinner at a restaurant that recently opened in town.

You arrive at the restaurant, and fortunately there is no line. You notice that there is a hostess station, but no one is there, so you stand next to it waiting for the hostess to come back. You and your friend wait for a few minutes and begin to get agitated that no one is coming to seat you. Finally, you catch the attention of one of the servers who comes over and, after asking how they can help, takes you to a table.

After being seated, a server comes to your table with menus and asks if they can get you something to drink. In a minute they return with your drinks at which point the waiter patiently answers some questions about the menu, and eventually takes your order. Your food arrives in a timely fashion and you and your friend begin your meal.

As you are finishing your food the manager stops by your table and asks about your experience. You immediately complain about the lengthy wait to be seated and the fact there was no hostess.

- (a) The manager apologizes and you eventually pay your bill and prepare to leave. As you are leaving the restaurant, you pass the hostess stand and notice a very visible sign that says, "Please seat yourself". You realize the sign had been there when you arrived, in a very visible place, which means your initial wait was your fault since you did not see the sign.
- (a) The manager apologizes and points out that the restaurant's policy is that customers should take any seat they want upon arriving. You eventually pay your bill and leave. As you do, you look for a "Please Seat Yourself" sign but do not see one. You realize there is no sign to indicate you can seat yourself, which means your initial wait was not your fault.

---

(a) Scenario provided to people assigned to the high self-blame condition.

(b) Scenario provided to people assigned to the low self-blame condition.

## APPENDIX 3B: SCALES

---

### Attributions of Blame

*Adapted from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002)*

1. To what extent were you responsible for (failure) \_\_\_\_\_?
2. (The failure) \_\_\_\_\_ was entirely the (providers') \_\_\_\_\_ fault.\*
3. To what extent do you blame yourself for (failure) \_\_\_\_\_?

### Satisfaction

*Adapted from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003)*

1. I am satisfied with my overall experience with (provider) \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I am satisfied overall with the quality of the (providers') \_\_\_\_\_ service.

### Word-of-mouth

*Adapted from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003)*

1. I am likely to spread positive word-of-mouth about the (provider) \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I will recommend the (provider) \_\_\_\_\_ services to my friends.
3. If my friends are looking for a similar service, I will tell them to try the (provider) \_\_\_\_\_.

### Behavioral Inconsistency

1. My reaction to the situation was acceptable.
2. My reaction to the event does not reflect how one should behave in a similar situation
3. My reaction to the event does not match my personal behavioral standards.

### Guilt

*Adapted from Han, Duhachek, and Agrawal (1994)*

1. Not guilt-ridden / Guilt-ridden.
2. Not culpable / Culpable.
3. Not remorseful / Remorseful.

### Shame

*Adapted from Marschall, Sanftner, and Tangney (1994)*

1. I wanted to sink into the floor and disappear.
2. I felt small.
3. I felt like I am a good person.\*
4. I felt humiliated.
5. I felt disgraced.
6. I felt worthy.
7. I felt powerful.

### Embarrassment

*Adapted from Verbeke and Bagozzi (2002)*

1. I felt embarrassed.
2. I blushed.
3. I got the feeling that I looked like a fool.
4. I felt ridiculous.
5. I felt smart.\*
6. I felt sheepish.
7. I averted my eyes from the service employees.

### Perceived Social Evaluation

1. To what extent do you think other customers noticed (the failure) \_\_\_\_\_?
2. (The failure) \_\_\_\_\_ went unnoticed by other customers. \*

---

\* Reverse items

## APPENDIX 3C: SCENARIOS PRE-TEST STUDY 2

Table 4B.

*Scenarios Used to Evaluate the Manipulation of Customers' Self-Blame*

---

Imagine you decided to go grocery shopping. You arrive at the supermarket and gather the items you were planning to purchase. Once it is time to pay, you decide to use the self-checkout registers.

You start scanning your items and there are no problems. However, when you scan some fresh vegetables the following message appears on the screen "Sorry, the code scanned is not valid. Please scan a valid code". You try a couple of more times, and with different vegetables, but you keep getting the same message.

Eventually, the following message appears: "A service employee will be with you shortly, please wait."

- (a) In a short time, a service employee arrives and says, "Oh, it looks like there is a problem. This is the first time I have seen this error message today. It suggests you made a mistake. You are the first one that has not been able to successfully scan the products today." The employee then states "I will need to do it for you".

The service employee then signs into the machine with their employee ID, and then clicks on a button on the screen that says, "To scan any vegetables, please click here." You then realize the problem was your fault since you did not see the button in the first place.

- (b) In a short time, a service employee arrives and says, "Oh, it looks like there is a problem. The system has been showing the same error message to some customers. They have not been able to successfully scan the products today." The employee then states "I will need to do it for you".

The service employee then signs into the machine with their employee ID, and then clicks on a button on the screen that says, "To scan any vegetables, please click here." You then realize the problem was not entirely your fault since usually customers have problems seeing the button in the first place.

---

- (a) Scenario provided to people assigned to the high self-blame condition.  
(b) Scenario provided to people assigned to the low self-blame condition.

## APPENDIX 3D: SCENARIOS STUDY 2

Table 4C.

*Scenarios Used to Evaluate the Manipulation of Customers' Self-Blame*

---

Imagine you and your colleague decide to go out for lunch at a local restaurant.

You arrive at the restaurant and after a short wait you are seated. In a few minutes, a server comes to your table with menus and asks if they can get you something to drink. In a minute, they return with your drinks at which point the waiter patiently answers some questions about the menu, and takes your order.

Your food arrives in a timely fashion, and you and your colleague begin your meal. While you are eating, you realize the food you ordered has onions.

- (a) Even though you clearly told the server that you were allergic to them.  
You immediately call the server over and mention the problem, asking if they can redo your order without onions. After mentioning the incident to your server, you notice your colleague looks at you in a way that suggests they are unsurprised by your reaction.  
After a period of time, the server brings your new order.  
You finish your meal, pay your bill, and leave.
  
- (b) And you realized you forgot to tell the server that you were allergic to them.  
You immediately call the server over and mention the problem, asking if they can redo your order without onions. After mentioning the incident to your server, you notice your colleague looks at you in a way that suggests they are unsurprised by your reaction.  
After a period of time, the server brings your new order.  
You finish your meal, pay your bill, and leave.

- (c) Even though you clearly told the server that you were allergic to them.  
You immediately call the server over and yell at them, requesting to redo your order without onions. After yelling at the server, you notice your colleague looks at you in a way that suggests they are surprised by your reaction.  
After a period of time, the server brings your new order.  
You finish your meal, pay your bill, and leave.
- (d) And you realized you forgot to tell the server that you were allergic to them.  
You immediately call the server over and yell at them, requesting to redo your order without onions. After yelling at the server, you notice your colleague looks at you in a way that suggests they are surprised by your reaction.  
After a period of time, the server brings your new order.  
You finish your meal, pay your bill, and leave.
- 

- (a) Scenario provided to people assigned to the low self-blame and low behavioral inconsistency conditions.
- (b) Scenario provided to people assigned to the high self-blame and low behavioral inconsistency conditions.
- (c) Scenario provided to people assigned to the low self-blame and high behavioral inconsistency conditions.
- (d) Scenario provided to people assigned to the high self-blame and high behavioral inconsistency conditions.

## APPENDIX: IRB APPROVAL



May 1, 2020

Maria Jaramillo Echeverri  
Dept. of Marketing  
College of Business  
Box 870225

Re: IRB # 20-01-3227 "Understanding the Role of Self-Conscious Emotions in Service Encounters"

Dear Maria Jaramillo Echeverri:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver for use of deception/concealment. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

The approval for your application will lapse on April 28, 2021. If your research will continue beyond this date, please submit the Continuing Review form to the IRB as required by University policy before the lapse. Please note, any modifications made in research design, methodology, or procedures must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please submit a final report form when the study is complete.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covers the signature of Carantato T. Myles. A blue ink scribble is visible to the right of the redaction.

Carantato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP  
Director & Research Compliance Officer