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Individual Differences in Experiences of and Responses to Guilt and Shame: Examining the Lenses of Gender and Gender Role

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How are experiences of and reactions to guilt and shame a function of gendered views of the self? Individual differences in guilt and shame responses were explored in a sample of 104 young adults, most of whom were European American. Results indicated that, although women reported greater proneness to guilt and shame, men reported more trait guilt. Heightened levels of guilt- and shame-proneness were observed among both men and women with traditionally feminine gender roles, whereas a more traditionally masculine self-concept was associated with decreased shame-proneness for women. Gender schematic women favored verbal responses to ameliorate the experience of guilt, whereas gender schematic men preferred action-oriented responses. These results are discussed as gendered outcomes of schematic versus aschematic gender role socialization.

KEY WORDS: gender differences; gender role; guilt; shame.

Research has documented that individual differences in gender role development predict numerous psychological phenomena, including cognitive skills, relational capacities, and behavioral scripts (see Eckes & Trautner, 2000; Matlin, 2004, for comprehensive reviews). Gendered views of the self also serve to organize the individual's communication behavior (Athenstaedt, Haas, & Schwab, 2004), emotional responsivity, and level of emotional intelligence (Guastello & Guastello, 2003). How do these gendered lenses influence perceptions of and reactions to guilt and shame? Guilt and shame-eliciting situations may be perceived quite differently as a function of gender schematic or aschematic self-definitions. For some individuals, responses to ameliorate feelings of guilt and shame may reflect stereotypical response patterns and gendered scripts; those with more aschematic gender roles may be less bound by gendered conventions and norms (Bem, 1993). The present study was designed to examine how gender and gender role influence the readiness to experience these negative emotions and the differential use of various responses to alleviate feelings of guilt and shame.

Conceptualizations of Guilt and Shame: Constructs and Definitions

Although the terms guilt and shame are often used interchangeably, Lewis (1971) emphasized the importance of differentiating between these two affective states in terms of both theory and measurement. Guilt and shame are internal affective states that often arise from similar situations, but have different effects on the individual. Guilt is defined as an unpleasant emotion accompanied by beliefs that one should have thought, felt, or acted differently (Kubany & Watson, 2003). The evaluation of the guilt feeling is directed outward at a particular behavior committed by the individual; there is negative assessment of a particular action without self-blame. An individual experiencing guilt may respond to a

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situation by saying, "I should have done something else," or "That behavior of mine was unnecessary."

In contrast, shame is defined as an unpleasant and sometimes debilitating emotion accompanied by a global negative evaluation of the entire self, characterized by an internal self-doubt and chastisement (Kubany & Watson, 2003; Tangney, 1996). A shamed individual feels insignificant and incompetent, and responds to negative events by saying such things as "I feel like a failure," or "I am a bad person." Research also suggests that guilt arises primarily in relation to moral events, whereas shame may result from both moral transgressions as well as nonmoral situations, such as feelings of inferiority (Ferguson & Stegge, 1995).

Reactions to the experience of shame and guilt feelings may also differ. To alleviate the experience of shame, an individual will often attempt to alter some aspect of the self; a change in behavior is a more frequent response to alleviate guilt feelings. Niedenthal, Tangney, and Gavanski (1994) asked participants to imagine themselves in distressing situations and then prompted them to state how events could have unfolded differently. Those who were prompted to mutate the self, or who responded in ways that suggested changes in oneself, experienced more shame. Participants who experienced greater guilt were those who were prompted to mutate aspects of their behavior or whose responses reflected behavioral alternatives.

Research on the associations among guilt, shame, and psychopathology indicates that shame, but not guilt, is associated with poorer mental health. The different phenomenological experiences of guilt and shame may help to explain why this is so. Many researchers espouse the adaptive nature of guilt. Guilt feelings seem to serve a reparative function for the individual, prompting apologies, confessions (Bybee & Quiles, 1998; Niedenthal et al., 1994), and empathic responsiveness (Tangney, 1991). Shame appears to serve no such adaptive function and has been empirically linked to psychological maladjustment. Shame has been positively correlated with suspiciousness, resentment, irritability, self-oriented personal distress reactions, anger, and externalization (Tangney, 1991; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992).

Gender, Gender Role, and the Experience of Guilt and Shame

Several researchers have explored gender differences in the experience of guilt and shame using a range of measures. Researchers who study adult samples often find that women report greater feelings of both shame and guilt than men do when scenario-based measures are used (Evans, 1984; Ferguson & Crowley, 1997; Ferguson, Eyre, & Ashbaker, 2000; Lutwak & Ferrari, 1996). These differences appear to be less consistent when alternative instruments are employed to assess feelings of shame and guilt; in fact some have reported that men experience greater degrees of chronic shame than women do (Harder, 1995).

Method variance may explain this variability in findings, as the assessments used to measure guilt and shame vary greatly. Much of the research on gender differences in the experience of these emotions has employed the use of scenario-based measures, specifically the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992). Scores on the TOSCA do not typically correlate with self-report frequency measures such as the Guilt Inventory (GI; Kugler & Jones, 1992). Responses to hypothetical guilt and shame arousing situations may be better conceptualized as indicating guilt- and shame-proneness, rather than chronic feelings of dispositional guilt or shame following transgressions. Others have used the term *empathic guilt* to define a distinct construct assessed by vignette measures, such as the TOSCA, and *anxious guilt* to refer to the construct assessed by the GI (Einstein & Lanning, 1998). These different facets of guilt may indeed show different patterns of association with other individual differences variables.

These gender differences may be brought into greater relief by simultaneously assessing the participants' gender role. According to Bem (1981a, 1993), the gender schema is the lens through which individuals process incoming stimuli, including information about the self. Adoption of a particular gendered self-concept is influenced by society's emphasis on gender dichotomy and the specific roles and personality attributes associated with each gender. As children come to understand the concepts of femininity and masculinity and all that these terms imply, they begin to develop gender schemas. They learn to align their own attitudes and behaviors to these cultural prescriptions. Schematic individuals who identify themselves with traditional gender stereotypes often fulfill traditional gender roles.

Gender role may influence the emergence of a shame-prone or guilt-prone pattern of response (Ferguson & Stegge, 1995), which may, over time, develop into a readiness to respond in habitual ways to certain stimuli and interpersonal situations. Guilt

and shame are distressing emotional reactions to self-determined or culturally-determined undesirable behaviors. It follows that guilt and shame may result from behaviors or situations that are incongruent with one's gender role. The experience of shame for schematic men and women may reflect a perceived violation of stereotypical gender role norms. For schematic women, shame may be associated with relational failures, whereas failures in instrumental achievement may be more shame inducing for schematic men. Ferguson and Crowley (1997) reported a relationship between shame and a passive/dependent orientation for women, as well as an association with communal values and self-punitive internalization. Others have found that regardless of gender, feminine gender-typed individuals exhibited higher levels of guilt than did their masculine gender-typed counterparts (Evans, 1984).

Gender role stress has also been associated with shame-proneness for both men and women (Efthim, Kenny, & Mahalik, 2001). Specifically, men were found to experience shame in relation to the gender role stress dimensions of intellectual inferiority and emotional expression. Men experienced guilt, as well as shame and externalization, in response to situations that involve physical inadequacy and performance failures in work and sexual activity. For women, shame-proneness was related to victimization, lack of assertiveness, emotional detachment, failed nurturance, and the failure to attain the gender role expectation of physical attractiveness. Similarly, Thompkins and Rando (2003) found that men report higher levels of shame when they experience gender role conflict about expression of emotion or the balancing of work/school and family relations. Researchers have not explored how gender role influences response patterns to ameliorate these negative emotional states.

We sought to examine how the readiness to experience shame and guilt varies with gender role, and also explored whether differential responses to guilt and shame-eliciting situations would emerge as a function of gender role. To this end, a series of guilt and shame vignettes was developed; participants were asked to describe how they would attempt to alleviate the emotions generated by the hypothetical guilt and shame scenarios.

Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature, we hypothesized gender differences in the reporting of guilt-proneness and shame-proneness; women were expected to report greater levels than men on both scenario measures. Based on previous research, it was less clear whether a gender difference would be found for the measure of dispositional guilt, and thus we predicted that this frequency measure would not correlate with the scenario measures. We also predicted that of all the gender role groups, individuals with a feminine gender role would experience the highest levels of guilt-proneness and shame-proneness. Individuals with a masculine gender role were predicted to provide more action-oriented responses in their attempts to alleviate guilt and shame feelings, whereas those with a feminine gender role were predicted to use more verbal responses to ameliorate feelings of guilt and shame.

METHOD

Participants

The sample included 104 undergraduate students (53 women and 51 men) from a private, urban university on the east coast of the United States. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 26 years ($M = 19.05$, $SD = 1.47$). The race/ethnicity of the participants was as follows: 85% European American/White, 6% African American/Black, 4% Hispanic/Latino/a, 3% Asian American, and 2% mixed race. Participation in this study represented partial fulfillment of a psychology course research requirement.

Procedure

Data were collected in small group sessions. One of the primary researchers was present at each session to provide instructions and answer questions. Participants read and signed a consent form before completing the packet of questionnaires. The packet required approximately 1 h to complete.

Measures

Demographic Data Sheet

This measure was designed to obtain each participant's personal information, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, and religious affiliation.

Gender Role

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1981b) consists of 60 items that describe personality characteristics that are stereotypically masculine, feminine, or gender neutral. A masculinity mean score is derived by averaging the 20 items on the masculinity scale; a femininity mean score is derived by averaging the 20 items on the femininity scale. Norm group medians on the masculinity and femininity scales (4.95 and 4.90, respectively) are used to classify participants into one of four gender role groups: traditionally masculine (above the median on masculinity, below the median on femininity), traditionally feminine (above the median on femininity, below the median on masculinity), androgynous (above the medians for both masculinity and femininity), or undifferentiated (below the medians for both scales).

Guilt and Shame

Several measures were used to assess guilt and shame. Dispositional guilt was assessed using the 20-item trait guilt subscale of the Guilt Inventory (Jones, Schratter, & Kugler, 2000; Kugler & Jones, 1992). Participants indicate how strongly they endorse items such as "I have made a lot of mistakes in my life" and "I have recently done something that I deeply regret." Responses are made on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1, *strongly agree*, to 5, *strongly disagree*, such that higher numbers demonstrate greater chronic guilt. Specific items are reverse scored. Reported internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the trait subscale is .89 (Kugler & Jones, 1992); in the present study, $\alpha = .84$.

Guilt- and shame-proneness were assessed using two scenario-based measures. The Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992) consists of 10 negative and 5 positive scenarios taken from personal accounts of shame, guilt, and pride from several hundred college students and other older adults. Participants are asked to imagine themselves in scenarios such as, "You make plans to meet a friend for lunch. At 5 o'clock you realize you stood him up" and "You make a mistake at work and find out a co-worker is blamed for the error"; they then rate their likelihood of responding to each scenario with shame and guilt on a scale of 1, *not likely*, to 5, *very likely*. Reponses are summed across scenarios to obtain scores for the guilt and shame subscales. The authors reported that the measure has both internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of .74 for shame, .69 for guilt) and test-retest reliability (.84 for shame, .74 for guilt) (Tangney et al., 1992). Obtained internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's α) were .68 for shame and .69 for guilt.

The Guilt and Shame Vignettes (GSV; Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2002) prompt participants to imagine themselves in each of six hypothetical scenarios. The scenarios were developed to depict both communal conflicts, such as interpersonal neglect, infidelity, and confidence violation, as well as agentic conflicts, such as personal standard violation, ethical violation, and unjust reward (see Appendix for text of scenarios). Participants are instructed to rate how much guilt and shame they would experience on separate Likert scales, where 1 represents *no guilt or shame* and 7 represents *an extreme amount of guilt or shame*. Guilt ratings for the six vignettes were highly intercorrelated. Despite the fact that the scenarios were developed to have communal or agentic themes, analyses indicated the presence of a single factor. Thus, the guilt ratings were summed across the six vignettes for a single guilt-proneness aggregate score. Empirical examination of the shame ratings indicated a similar pattern of intercorrelations and the presence of a single underlying factor. The ratings of shame-proneness for each of the six vignettes were summed to create an aggregate shame-proneness variable. Internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for these two aggregates were .74 for total guilt-proneness and .77 for total shame-proneness.

Participants were also asked to list three things they would do to alleviate feelings of guilt and shame for each scenario on the GSV. A content analytic coding system was developed for scoring the open-ended responses, and responses were categorized into three domains: actions, verbalizations, or cognitions. Responses such as "study more regularly," "meet them after class," and "work harder" were coded as action responses. Verbalizations included responses such as "tell someone about it," "apologize to them," and "explain why I did it." Responses that describe inner processes and self-reflections, such as "ponder my motives," "rationalize it to myself," and "try to understand myself," were coded as cognitive responses. Two raters coded a subset of 10 protocols to establish inter-rater reliability. Category agreement across the six vignettes ranged from 72–85%, with an overall category agreement of 80%.

The total number of actions, verbalizations, and cognitions generated to alleviate feelings of guilt and shame was summed across the six vignettes to create aggregate totals of each type of response. Internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for these three aggregates were .73 for actions, .76 for verbalizations, and .80 for cognitions.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analyses

For this sample of college students, men scored higher on BSRI masculinity ($M = 5.10$, $SD = .75$) than women did ($M = 4.78$, $SD = .80$), $t(102) = 2.12$, $p < .05$. Women scored higher on BSRI femininity ($M = 5.13$, $SD = .50$) than men did ($M = 4.52$, $SD = .79$), $t(102) = -4.74$, $p < .001$. Gender role classification was as follows: traditionally masculine, 14 men and 9 women; traditionally feminine, 7 men and 23 women; androgynous, 18 men and 13 women; and undifferentiated, 12 men and 8 women.

Intercorrelations of the vignette measures revealed positive relationships between GSV guilt and TOSCA guilt, $r = .61$, $p < .01$, and between GSV shame and TOSCA shame, $r = .23$, $p < .05$. GI trait guilt was negatively correlated with both TOSCA and GSV guilt, although not significantly (see Table I). As noted by other researchers (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2000), these correlations suggest that the GI is assessing a different construct from that assessed by the scenario measures. The GI appears to be assessing the experience of chronic, dispositional guilt feelings, whereas the TOSCA and GSV scenario measures assess guilt- and shame-proneness. Correlations of the GSV response variables revealed a significant negative relationship between cognitive responses and both action responses, $r = -.42$, $p < .01$, and verbal responses, $r = -.38$, $p < .01$. Action responses were not significantly related to verbal responses, $r = -.05$, which provides further support for the independence of these variables.

Table I. Intercorrelations of the Guilt and Shame Measures

	GI trait guilt	TOSCA guilt	TOSCA shame	GSV guilt	GSV shame
GI trait guilt	—				
TOSCA guilt	−.03	—			
TOSCA shame	.17	.20*	—		
GSV guilt	−.18	.61**	.26**	—	
GSV shame	−.17	.41**	.23*	.76**	—

Note. GI: Guilt Inventory; TOSCA: Test of Self-Conscious Affect; GSV: Guilt and Shame Vignettes.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table II. Gender Comparisons for Measures of Guilt and Shame

Variable	Men *M* (*SD*)	Women *M* (*SD*)	*F*	*p*
Guilt inventory				
Trait guilt	62.04 (10.02)	55.58 (12.34)	8.87	<.01
TOSCA				
Guilt	54.96 (8.29)	61.11 (5.54)	14.56	<.001
Shame	36.51 (8.42)	40.68 (8.14)	4.54	<.05
GSV				
Guilt	27.42 (7.00)	34.78 (3.63)	45.03	<.001
Shame	23.27 (7.81)	29.73 (6.09)	24.51	<.001
GSV Responses				
Actions	13.08 (5.96)	11.51 (4.29)	1.05	*ns*
Verbalizations	10.37 (5.18)	13.28 (4.90)	3.98	<.05
Cognitions	7.84 (5.83)	9.60 (5.82)	2.02	*ns*

Note. For men on the Guilt Inventory measure, $n = 50$. For all other measures, $n = 51$ for men and $n = 53$ for women. TOSCA: Test of Self-Conscious Affect. GSV: Guilt and Shame Vignettes.

Gender and Gender Role Comparisons in the Experience of Guilt and Shame

It was hypothesized that women would report greater guilt-proneness and shame-proneness than would men. Both men and women with a feminine gender role were anticipated to experience the most trait guilt, as well as the highest levels of guilt- and shame-proneness. These hypotheses were examined using 2 (gender) × 4 (gender role) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) on each of the guilt and shame measures.[3]

For GI trait guilt, the analysis revealed an unexpected significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 95) = 8.87$, $p < .01$ (see Table II for means and standard deviations); men reported significantly more trait guilt than women did. Although the main effect for gender role did not reach significance, there was a trend for those with an androgynous gender role to report less dispositional guilt. The gender × gender role interaction was not significant.

For TOSCA guilt, the ANOVA revealed a main effect for gender, $F(1, 96) = 14.56$, $p < .001$. As predicted, women ($M = 61.11$) reported significantly more guilt-proneness than men did ($M = 54.96$). The analysis also revealed a significant main

[3]Performing a gender × gender role MANOVA on the four guilt and shame subscales from the TOSCA and the GSV did not alter the pattern of results or their significance.

Table III. Gender Role Comparisons for Measures of Guilt and Shame

Variable	Masculine *M* (*SD*)	Feminine *M* (*SD*)	Androgynous *M* (*SD*)	Undifferentiated *M* (*SD*)	*F*	*p*
Guilt Inventory						
Trait Guilt	58.57 (8.77)	58.43 (11.86)	55.81 (12.32)	64.11 (12.40)	2.37	.07
TOSCA						
Guilt	54.30a (9.20)	61.53b (5.23)	59.10bc (6.43)	55.75ac (8.26)	3.85	<.05
Shame	35.09a (7.54)	42.97b (6.90)	37.10a (9.11)	38.60a (8.57)	3.01	<.05
GSV						
Guilt	28.52 (8.41)	32.91 (4.69)	32.58 (5.88)	29.41 (7.02)	1.92	.13
Shame	24.68 (5.35)	27.47 (6.81)	27.27 (7.69)	26.51 (8.20)	.42	*ns*
GSV Responses						
Actions	14.39 (4.14)	11.40 (3.29)	11.03 (6.28)	13.10 (6.21)	2.17	.09
Verbalizations	9.22a (5.38)	14.90b (5.02)	11.32a (4.60)	11.15a (4.27)	4.37	<.01
Cognitions	9.09 (7.30)	8.50 (4.15)	8.57 (6.78)	8.90 (5.10)	.09	*ns*

Note. For Masculine, $n = 23$; Feminine, $n = 30$; Androgynous, $n = 31$; Undifferentiated, $n = 20$. Means with different subscripts differ at $p < .05$, Student-Newman-Keuls comparison. TOSCA: Test of Self-Conscious Affect, GSV: Guilt and Shame Vignettes.

effect for gender role, $F(3, 96) = 3.85$, $p < .05$ (see Table III for means and standard deviations). Post hoc comparisons (Newman-Keuls) indicated that, as predicted, individuals with a feminine gender role reported more guilt-proneness than did the masculine and undifferentiated gender role groups ($p < .05$).

For TOSCA shame, the analysis yielded a similar significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 96) = 4.54$, $p < .05$. As hypothesized, women ($M = 40.68$) reported significantly more shame-proneness than men did ($M = 36.51$). The analysis also yielded a significant main effect for gender role, $F(3, 96) = 3.01$, $p < .05$. Post hoc comparisons indicated that individuals with a feminine gender role reported significantly more shame-proneness than those in the other gender role groups ($p < .05$). The gender × gender role interaction was also significant, $F(3, 96) = 3.29$, $p < .05$. As Fig. 1 illustrates, increased masculinity was related to lower shame-proneness for women; for men, increased femininity was associated with heightened shame-proneness.[4]

For the GSV, the analysis revealed a highly significant main effect for gender on guilt-proneness, $F(1, 96) = 45.03$, $p < .001$, and shame-proneness, $F(1, 94) = 24.51$, $p < .001$. As predicted, women scored significantly higher than men on both variables. There were no other significant main or interaction effects for either guilt-proneness or shame-proneness.

[4]We also analyzed these data using a series of hierarchical regressions for each of the guilt and shame outcomes, entering gender on Step 1 and the continuous masculinity and femininity scores on Step 2. In all cases, the reported gender role effects remained after we controlled for gender.

Gender and Gender Role Comparisons in Responses to Guilt and Shame

Gender and gender role comparisons of reactions to the experience of guilt and shame were examined by performing a 2 (gender) × 4 (gender role) ANOVA on each type of response: actions, verbalizations, and cognitions. For action responses, the main effects did not reach statistical significance; however, the highest mean was for the masculine gender role group (see Table III). For verbal responses, the analysis yielded a main effect for gender, $F(1, 96) = 3.98$, $p < .05$. As predicted, women ($M = 13.28$) reported significantly more verbal responses than men did ($M = 10.37$). The ANOVA also yielded a main effect for gender role, $F(3, 96) = 4.37$, $p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons (Newman-Keuls) indicated that individuals with a feminine gender role reported significantly more verbal responses than the other gender role groups ($p < .05$). The gender × gender role interaction was also significant, $F(3, 96) = 2.75$, $p < .05$. As depicted in Fig. 2, women with a masculine gender role provided significantly more verbal responses than did men with a masculine gender role. The ANOVA for cognitive responses yielded no significant main or interaction effects.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate the importance of considering both gender and gender role to understand the proclivity for or proneness to

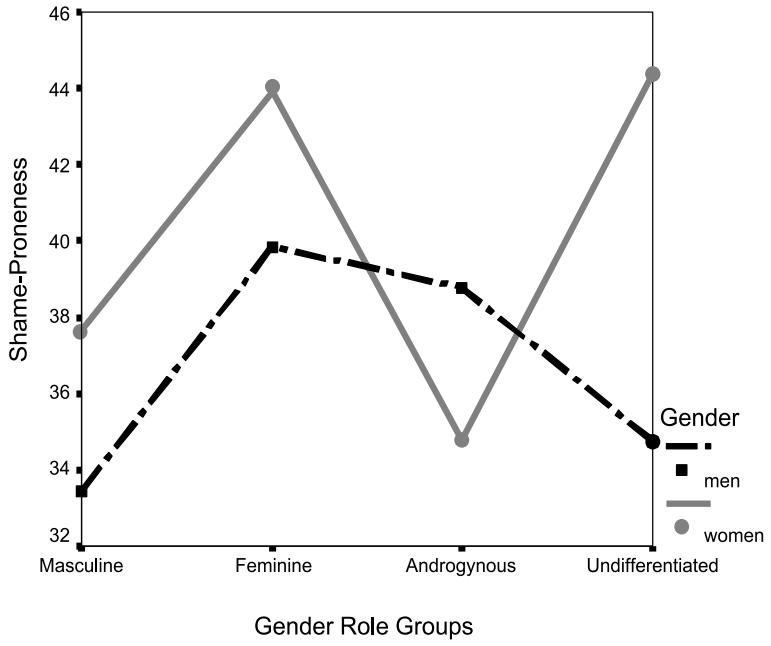

Fig. 1. Gender × Gender role interaction for shame-proneness.

experience guilt and shame. Further, individual differences in these interpretive lenses predicted the differential use of responses to ameliorate these negative emotional states.

The observed gender and gender role differences in guilt and shame are consistent with both theory and research on gendered patterns of socialization (Bem, 1981a, 1993). Women in this study, as

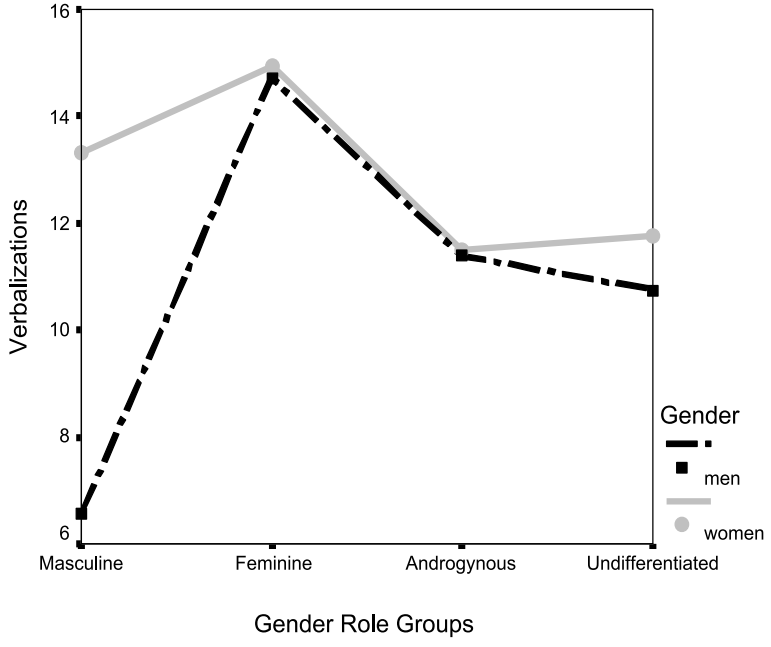

Fig. 2. Gender × Gender role interaction for verbalizations.

in previous research with scenario-based measures, reported a higher propensity for guilt and shame feelings than men did. Guilt has been thought of as primarily an interpersonal emotion, and previous research has related the capacity for guilt to the ability to empathize (Tangney, 1991). Both interpersonal connection and an awareness of others' mood states fall within the parameters of traditional socialization of young girls. Girls, more than boys, are taught to defer to friends, make amends with friends, and put themselves in the service of others. The enhanced ability of girls to be attuned to the effects of their actions on others may lead them to anticipate others' reactions to their behavior, as well as their own resultant dysphoria, thereby preventing them from committing a guilt-inducing act.

Many men, on the other hand, are not primed for interpersonal connectedness, but are supported in their attempts for independence. In this process, they develop a higher threshold of sensitivity to others' emotions, and therefore may not always be consciously aware of the impact of their behavior on others. Without a more sensitive internalized mechanism to alert them to the potential for guilt and shame consequences, men may be more apt to find themselves in situations that induce actual guilt. As a result, men report greater dispositional guilt, whereas women report greater empathic guilt or guilt-proneness.

A more comprehensive conceptualization of these dysphoric states is gained by viewing them from the perspective of gender schema theory. Regardless of gender, individuals with a feminine gender role reported more guilt-proneness than did those with masculine, androgynous, or undifferentiated gender roles. Individuals who are exposed to traditional gendered-influences, and choose to adopt traditional gendered attitudes, behave according to the traditional gendered prescriptions. Aschematic socialization exposes an individual to both traditional and nontraditional attitudes and behaviors, thereby encouraging the development of both traditionally feminine and traditionally masculine characteristics, regardless of gender. In this study, men who expressed femininity exhibited heightened guilt-proneness (empathic guilt), an adaptive characteristic that has been found to be associated with relationship maintenance, reparations, and apologies (Bybee & Quiles, 1998; Niedenthal et al., 1994; Tangney et al., 1992).

In contrast, previous studies have linked shame with poorer psychological outcomes, such as depression, irritability, anger, and externalization (Tangney, 1991; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992). Similarly, gender role researchers have found the traditional feminine gender role to be associated with depression, lower self-esteem, and poorer coping skills (Bursik, 1991; Whitley, 1983). Schematic socialization may not only be priming girls for intense levels of guilt- and shame-proneness, but by doing so may also be predisposing them to psychological maladjustment in adulthood. Previous researchers have explained that when guilt is overwhelming or chronic (Bybee & Quiles, 1998), or when it is fused with shame (Tangney et al., 1992), it can be detrimental to an individual's mental health. In the present study, individuals with a feminine gender role reported more shame-proneness than did those with other gender role classifications. In addition, increased masculinity for women was associated with lower shame-proneness. Women with an androgynous gender role enjoyed both a high proclivity for empathic guilt and a low propensity for shame. Thus, these results provide additional evidence for the advantages of an aschematic approach to gender socialization.

Responses to dysphoric feelings also varied according to gender role. As expected, individuals with a masculine gender role preferred more action-oriented strategies to alleviate guilt and shame feelings, whereas individuals with a feminine gender role relied more heavily on verbal responses. Although the feminine stereotype includes a characterization of women as more verbose and chatty than men, the depiction may be more limited to those women with a schematic gender role. Similarly, the stereotype of the action-oriented and energetic man who avoids lengthy discussions, particularly on emotionally salient issues, may ring truer for some men than for others.

Although our data support individual differences in the propensity for and experience of guilt and shame, the results must be considered in light of several methodological limitations. First, the present sample consisted of college students, most of whom were European American, and thus caution is advised when generalizing these findings to other ethnic and racial groups as well as to older adults. Second, our attempts to script plausible yet distinctive agentic and communal scenarios proved unsuccessful in terms of distinguishing differential patterns of response. Additional research is needed to map the conceptual and empirical overlap

among the existent guilt and shame measures and constructs.

Overall, these findings lend support to both theory and research in this area (Efthim et al., 2001; Thompkins & Rando, 2003). Differential patterns of gender role socialization inform the anticipation and experience of guilt and shame. Aschematic socialization may increase individuals' self-tolerance and acceptance of multiple world views, in addition to freeing them from strict adherence to gender stereotypes. In doing so, it is made acceptable and desirable for aschematic men to endorse traditionally feminine characteristics and maintain rich and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Likewise, aschematic women may benefit from adopting and expressing more agentic characteristics, ones that may buffer them from both shame-proneness and poorer psychological health.

APPENDIX

Guilt and Shame Vignettes

In the next section you will be reading several fictional scenarios. As you read each scenario, imagine yourself as the individual in the situation. While answering the questions that follow each scenario, please keep the following definitions in mind:

Guilt: an emotion resulting from the negative evaluation of a specific behavior; a feeling associated with the perception that one has done something bad

Shame: an emotion involving self-condemnation resulting from a negative evaluation of the self; a painful feeling associated with the perception that one is a bad person

Scenario # 1: Since starting a new relationship, you haven't had much time to spend with your friends. A few of them have called, but it takes you several weeks to call them back. You finally make plans to meet with one of them for lunch on Tuesday. That morning your partner surprises you by taking the day off from work and requests to spend it with you. You gladly accept and have a great afternoon. At the end of the day you realize that you neglected to cancel your lunch date with your friend.

Please circle your answers to the following questions:

1. If you were the individual in this situation, how much guilt would you experience?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
no guilt			a moderate amount of guilt			an excessive amount of guilt

2. Regardless of the amount of guilt that you would experience, what three things might you do to reduce the feeling of guilt?
   1._____
   2._____
   3._____
3. If you were the individual in this situation, how much shame would you experience?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
no shame			a moderate amount of shame			an excessive amount of shame

4. Regardless of the amount of shame that you would experience, what three things might you do to reduce the feeling of shame?
   1._____
   2._____
   3._____
5. How likely is it that you would find yourself in this situation or one very similar to it?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not likely	not very likely	somewhat likely	moderately likely	likely	very likely	highly likely

(These same questions follow each of the remaining scenarios.)

Scenario 2: You and your partner have been seeing each other for six months. One night while you are at a club with friends, you eye someone in particular. Toward the end of the evening, that someone approaches you and asks you to dance. You accept and discover that there is a definite attraction between the two of you. You agree to go out with this person the following evening. After all, your partner is away for the weekend.

Scenario 3: A good friend of yours has shared something important with you in confidence. You had no intention of betraying your friend's trust, but find yourself revealing the content of your friend's secret while out with another friend. You realize that

you have let the information out and request that the friend act as if you had not said anything.

Scenario 4: You have a midterm exam Monday morning and plan to spend the weekend studying. Friday morning you find out that your favorite band is putting on a free concert on Saturday night. It will take you six hours to drive to the pavilion, so you plan to leave that afternoon, spend a couple of nights in a hotel, and return home on Sunday evening. As a result, you do not study for the exam and do not score as well as you would have liked, which brings down your average in the class.

Scenario 5: After class one day you notice the professor drop something on the way out the door. You pick it up to return it when you realize it is the answer key to next week's exam. The exam is worth 50% of your overall grade and you haven't been doing very well in the class thus far. Although you are aware of the school's policy on cheating, you decide to memorize the answer key, rather than studying, and do very well on the exam. Your professor never realizes that the answer key was missing.

Scenario 6: You and a co-worker were paired together to work on a project. Your co-worker was planning to go on vacation shortly before it was due and got a head start on the project. It was nearly finished when you took over. When you presented the project alone, because the co-worker was still on vacation, you were congratulated by the department and given a bonus. Your co-worker was not.

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