
Factors Related to the Gender Difference in Adaptive Guilt

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Jordan Kenemore

Mentor: Dr. Ann Eisenberg

University of Texas at San Antonio College of Liberal and Fine Arts

ABSTRACT

Guilt is a self-conscious and moral emotion that involves feelings of regret and remorse over a negative behavior. Adaptive guilt, or guilt that focuses on specific transgressions, is important for strengthening and maintaining relationships, as it motivates the transgressor to engage in reparative action. Previous research has found that women tend to report more adaptive guilt than men do, but to date, the reason for this difference is not well understood. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to explore variables that have a logical association with adaptive guilt to determine which factors may help explain gender differences in this domain. Variables of interest included empathy and perspective-taking, which had a known association with adaptive guilt, and self-reflection, which correlates positively with empathy and perspective-taking but had an unexplored relationship with gender or adaptive guilt.

The study tested the following hypotheses: (1) Women and individuals with higher levels of femininity would express higher levels of adaptive guilt, while those with higher levels of masculinity would express lower levels of adaptive guilt, (2) Individuals who express higher levels of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection would express higher levels of adaptive guilt. (3) Women and individuals with higher levels of femininity would express higher levels of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection. Participants were 367 students, enrolled in PSY 1013, "Introductory Psychology" who completed questionnaires that measured the variables of interest. Data were analyzed using correlational analyses and t-tests to determine which measures contributed to gender differences in guilt.

As predicted, there were strong relationships between femininity, empathic concern, and perspective-taking, suggesting that socialization plays a stronger role in the development of adaptive guilt than biological gender. Additionally, stereotypic masculinity was found to be negatively correlated with adaptive guilt, personal distress, and rumination. Results also indicated a stronger social basis for the development of guilt, such that high-feminine individuals reported higher levels of guilt, perspective-taking, and self-reflection regardless of gender.

KEY WORDS: Guilt, shame, masculinity, femininity, empathy, perspective-taking, self-reflection

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the development of adaptive guilt, specifically, the general finding that women experience higher levels of adaptive guilt than men do (Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2005; Eisenberg & Triana, 2005; Silfver & Helkama, 2007; Tangney, 1994). Guilt is defined as a self-conscious and moral emotion that involves feelings of regret and remorse over a particular negative behavior (Lewis, 1971; Tangney, 1991; Tangney et al., 1992). It is accompanied by the belief that one should have acted, felt, or thought differently in a particular situation (Kubany & Watson, 2003). Most psychologists who study guilt distinguish between two forms of guilt: adaptive guilt and maladaptive guilt, often called shame. With maladaptive guilt, the individual who experiences the negative feelings associated with a transgression focuses on the self and blames enduring characteristics of the self for those transgressions, believing, for example, "I am a bad person" (Fedewa et al., 2005; Tangney & Dearing, 2014; Tangney, 1994). Maladaptive guilt is typically associated with chronic rumination, an excessive sense of responsibility, and a tendency to feel guilt when that emotion is not an appropriate response (Bybee & Quiles, 1997; Ferguson et al., 2000). Adaptive guilt, on the other hand, plays an important role in social relationships because it motivates an individual to engage in reparative action to fix the relationship with the offended individual (Baumeister et al., 1994; Tangney et al., 1992). Those who experience adaptive guilt appear to accept responsibility for negative interpersonal events more readily, are better at perspective-taking, experience higher levels of empathy, and report a general preoccupation with transgressions (Tangney & Dearing, 2014). Thus, adaptive guilt is considered a prosocial emotion.

In most studies of both adaptive and maladaptive guilt, women report stronger feelings of guilt than males do (Eisenberg &

Triana, 2005; Tangney & Dearing, 2014; Tangney, 1994). That consistent finding has led psychologists to ask why women report stronger feelings of guilt in response to transgressions than men do. Experiencing the feeling of guilt seems to depend on several processes. First, one must be aware that one has transgressed against another person. That is, one must be able to take the other person's perspective to understand that one has caused harm. Second, one must feel badly about the harm one has caused. That is, one must be able to empathize with the other person and feel concern for that individual's distress. Along with the need for both perspective-taking and empathy, feelings of guilt (and the actions that follow the emotion) depend on the individual engaging in a level of self-reflection that leads to the motivation not to be the kind of person who would cause harm, at least without attempting to rectify the situation. For an individual to be motivated to respond in positive ways to one's own transgression, one has to have a level of self-consciousness that leads one to be concerned with how others perceive them (Gilbert, 2004; Leary, 2007). In other words, feelings of adaptive guilt should depend on empathy, perspective-taking, and a tendency to engage in self-reflection.

Psychologists have suggested that women experience higher levels of adaptive guilt because they are socialized in ways that encourage their attentiveness to other people and that, thus, enhance their empathy and perspective-taking and concern with how others view them. Ferguson and Crowley (1997), for example, have theorized that women tend to define themselves based on relationships with others. Consequently, they are more likely to experience guilt when they believe they have failed to meet the standards of those relationships. Following Ferguson and Crowley's suggestion, Triana (2006) hypothesized that women's greater focus on others, which she measured in terms of collectivist and familistic orientations, should help to account for the gender difference in adaptive guilt. Triana conducted a regression

analysis to determine if familism and collectivism could help to explain the gender difference in adaptive guilt. Although she found that collectivism (but not familism) did account for a significant portion of the variance in adaptive guilt, women's greater collectivism did not eliminate the gender difference in guilt.

Although women's greater collectivist orientation does not entirely appear to explain gender differences in guilt, explanations for the gender difference in guilt that are based on women's socialization also focus on women's greater empathy and perspective-taking as fueling the gender difference in guilt (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Rueckert & Naybar 2008). Traditional feminine gender roles include expressive traits, such as warmth, understanding, awareness of others' feelings, and a sensitivity to others' needs (Spence & Buckner, 2000). Two specific elements of empathy, empathic concern and perspective-taking also appear to be important predictors of guilt (Tangney & Dearing, 2002), and women, in general, typically score higher on both empathic concern and perspective-taking than men do (Bybee & Quiles, 1997; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Like guilt, empathy has multiple dimensions (Davis, 1994; Eisenberg, 2000). Empathy involves the cognitive ability to take another person's perspective as well as feelings of concern or compassion for a distressed individual, which is typically referred to as sympathy. Perspective-taking and sympathy can be distinguished from personal distress in response to other's distress, which is defined as a "negative, self-centered, vicarious reaction to somebody else's distress that motivates the person to avoid situations creating this negative emotion" (Silfver & Helkama, 2007, p. 240). Experiencing distress in response to others' distress leads to a focus on how the self feels and behavioral responses that alleviate one's own distress, while perspective-taking and empathic concern for others lead to responses that address how the other person feels. Thus, empathic concern and perspective-taking are typically associated

with prosocial behavior, while distress in response to others' suffering is not (Batson, 1991; Davis, 1994).

Silfver and Helkama (2007) directly assessed the relationship between empathy, perspective-taking, distress and adaptive guilt among a group of Finnish adolescents, ages 13 to 16. Following research that perspective-taking predicted prosocial moral judgments among boys but not girls and that other-oriented empathy predicted prosocial moral judgment for girls (Eisenberg, Zhou, and Koller, 2001), Silfver and Helkama predicted that empathic concern would mediate adaptive guilt for girls and that perspective-taking would mediate adaptive guilt for boys. While they found that empathic concern and perspective-taking were associated with adaptive guilt for both boys and girls, as predicted, they also found that empathic concern was more strongly linked to guilt for girls and perspective-taking was more strongly linked to guilt for boys. This finding was especially strong when they used scenario-based measures of guilt, which ask respondents to imagine how they would feel in a specific scenario involving an interpersonal transgression. Girls also scored higher than boys on both empathic concern and personal distress. Silfver and Helkama pointed out, however, that the relationship between guilt and the two prosocial measures of empathic concern might have been stronger had they considered gender roles and not solely gender.

Additional previous research also raises the possibility that Silfver and Helkama mention – that biological gender leads to gender differences in adaptive guilt by acting through gender roles. Research has shown that gendered views of the self have an impact on men's and women's emotional responsivity (Guastello & Guastello 2003), suggesting the possibility that gender schemas may affect interpretations of the types of situations that typically produce guilt. According to gender schema theory (Bem, 1981a; 1993), during development, young children learn about male and female roles from the culture in which they live. They

then try to align their behavior to fit those cultural norms. In this view, guilt is an unpleasant emotional reaction to a self- or culturally-determined assessment that transgression is incongruent with one's female gender role. In other words, women may report higher levels of guilt because, in transgressing against others, women violate stereotypical gender-role norms. Those stereotypical feminine traits include a value for maintaining interpersonal connections and awareness of others' moods. Acting in accordance with traditional gender roles may lead women to have a greater understanding of the effect of their actions on others and give them a greater proclivity to respond to violations of relationships with others. Women are encouraged from an early age to make amends, understand others' viewpoints, review instances of transgression, and put themselves in the service of others (Tangney, 1991). In contrast, men are supported in attempts to act independently, which results in lowered sensitivity to the needs and reactions of others. Thus, men may tend to feel guilty less frequently, as they may remain unaware of instances in which they have committed a transgression.

Using this framework, Benetti-McQuoid and Bursik (2005) tested the idea that gender roles can influence the emergence of a guilt-prone orientation in a sample of 100 undergraduate students and found that, regardless of gender, individuals with a feminine gender-role identity reported higher levels of adaptive guilt than those with a masculine gender-role identity. Individuals who expressed a combination of masculine and feminine traits (i.e., androgyny) also reported more adaptive guilt and lower levels of maladaptive guilt. Bennetti-McQuoid and Bursik concluded that, regarding guilt, "individuals who...choose to adopt traditional gendered attitudes behave according to traditional gendered prescription" (Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2005, p. 140). Although Benetti-McQuoid and Bursik did not consider whether gender and gender role contributed independently to levels of adaptive guilt, their study confirms the importance of considering

both gender and gender roles in understanding the tendency to experience feelings of guilt.

Although empathy, perspective-taking, and gender roles are likely contributors to gender differences in adaptive guilt, to date, psychologists have not yet considered that adaptive guilt, which is associated with efforts to make reparations, should also be associated with a greater tendency to reflect on the self and one's actions. After all, if one can easily let things go, one is unlikely to feel guilt following a transgression. Like guilt, self-focused attention can have both adaptive and maladaptive forms. Trapnell and Campbell (1999) have distinguished between two types of self-focused attention or private self-consciousness: self-rumination and self-reflection. Both rumination and reflection involve heightened attention to the self, but they differ in the motive underlying that self-attention. Self-rumination is the tendency to focus repetitively on distress and the causes and consequences of distress (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991) and is known to be a serious risk factor for depression, less effective problem-solving strategies, and increased recall of negative memories (Just & Alloy, 1997; Kuehner & Weber, 1999; Lyubomirsky et al., 1998; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1994; Takano & Tanno, 2009). In contrast, self-reflection is a contrasting type of self-focus that is motivated by epistemic interest in the self and an openness to experience that promotes self-knowledge (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). Self-reflection aims at gaining a greater understanding of the self, while moving to overcome problems and difficulties (Takano & Tanno, 2009). Self-reflection, as opposed to rumination, has been found to correlate positively with empathy and perspective-taking (Joireman et al., 2002; Teasdale & Green, 2004). These empirical findings suggest that self-reflection should have the same adaptive functions associated with self-regulation, as it should play a role in motivating one to self-regulate.

Although researchers have not yet examined the relationship between self-reflection and guilt or tested whether women

report higher levels of self-reflection than men do, it seems likely that self-reflection should predict guilt given its association with empathy and perspective-taking and given that self-conscious emotions, like shame and guilt, are a direct result of self-awareness (Beer et al., 2003; Tracy & Robbins, 2006). In addition, gender differences in self-reflection seem likely given that women appear to ruminate more than men do (Broderick, 1998; Butler & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1994; Mezulis et al., 2002). There is also evidence that gender roles appear to mediate the relationship between gender and self-rumination (Simonson et al., 2011), which reinforces the argument that studies that explore gender differences in behavior should attend to gender roles.

In summary, previous research has provided clear evidence of gender differences in adaptive guilt, particularly when guilt is measured using scenario-based measures. There is also evidence that gender roles are related to higher levels of adaptive guilt and that empathy and perspective-taking are associated with adaptive guilt. To date, however, no studies have explored all of these measures – gender, gender roles, perspective-taking, and empathy -- in the same study. In addition, studies of gender differences in adaptive guilt have not considered whether women have a greater tendency toward self-reflection and whether that tendency to reflect on the self contributes to gender differences in responses to transgressions. Thus, this study considered all of these elements in a single study: gender, gender roles, empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection. As Figure 1 demonstrates, we are expecting that gender differences in adaptive guilt exist because gender predicts gender-role socialization, which then acts through higher levels of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection to produce higher levels of adaptive guilt.

Specifically, the study tested the following hypotheses:

(1) Women and individuals with higher levels of femininity were expected to express higher levels of adaptive guilt, while those

with higher levels of masculinity were expected to express lower levels of adaptive guilt.

(2) Individuals who express higher levels of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection were expected to express higher levels of adaptive guilt.

(3) Women and individuals with higher levels of femininity were expected to express higher levels of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection, whereas we expected no relationship between masculinity and the variables of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection.

In addition, because the measures of perspective-taking, empathy, and self-reflection that we plan to use are positively associated with shame, distress, and rumination, we also tested a fourth hypothesis. That is, we hypothesized that higher levels of personal distress in response to others' distress and higher levels of rumination would be associated with maladaptive guilt (or shame), but not with adaptive guilt. Rumination was expected to be associated with shame because it, like shame, has both negative and chronic elements (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). Rumination was also expected to be associated with personal distress, which previous research has found to be associated with shame, but not with adaptive guilt (Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

METHODS

Participants and Procedures

Participants were 367 UTSA students between the ages of 17 and 24 (191 women, 176 men; $\mu = 19$, $SD = 1.27$) enrolled in PSY 1013, "Introductory Psychology." The sample included Asian (7.9%), Black/Non-Hispanic (8.2%), Caucasian (26.2%), Hispanic/Latino (46.6%), Native Hawaiian (0.3%), Native American (0.3%), and Multiracial (10.4%) participants. Participants signed up through the university's SONA system, completed the survey online, and received one-hour participation credit toward their requirements for PSY 1013.

Measures

After signing an informed consent form, participants completed a questionnaire packet containing the following questionnaires: (1) the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA-3; Tangney et al. 2000), (2) the Ruminative Reflection Questionnaire (RRQ; Trapnell & Campbell, 1999); (3) the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980); (4) Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1973); and (5) a demographic questionnaire that solicits information about age, gender, and ethnicity. The packet, which participants completed online through Qualtrics, took approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. To ensure that participants did not speed through the survey instruments, they were required to spend a minimum of 3 minutes per survey page. For the purposes of the present study, only the data from the TOSCA-3, the RRQ, the IRI, the PAQ, and the demographic questionnaire were analyzed, so only those instruments are described further below.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses:

Due to the substantial number of Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White participants, we first conducted t-tests comparing those two groups on the variables of interest. As Triana (2005) found, there were no significant differences between Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites on any of the measures. Therefore, all further analyses were conducted using participants from all ethnic groups.

Hypothesis 1: Gender, Gender Roles, & Adaptive Guilt

To test the first hypothesis - that women and those higher in femininity would report higher levels of adaptive guilt - we conducted two types of analysis. First, independent-samples t-tests were conducted with biological gender (male/female) as the independent variable and the various subscales from the TOSCA-3 as the dependent variables. Second, we conducted correlational analyses to assess relationships between the TOSCA-3

measure of adaptive guilt and the independent constructs of masculinity and femininity. Consistent with our first hypothesis, the t-tests indicated a significant gender difference in adaptive guilt, with women reporting higher levels of adaptive guilt than men did ($M = 42.7$, $SD = 6.91$; $M = 46.23$, $SD = 6.14$; $t(367) = 5.162$, $p < .001$). Levene's test indicated unequal variances ($F(367) = 3.955$, $p = .047$), so degrees of freedom were adjusted from 365 to 351. We also found a significant gender difference in maladaptive guilt (or shame), with women reporting higher levels of maladaptive guilt than men did ($M = 32.28$, $SD = 7.21$; $M = 36.35$, $SD = 6.97$; $t(367) = 5.493$, $p < .001$).

To test the second part of the hypothesis - that those with higher levels of femininity experience higher levels of guilt - we conducted the correlational analyses. As expected, analyses indicated a positive relationship between feminine-gender role and adaptive guilt ($r(367) = .402$, $p < .001$), and a negative correlation between masculine-gender role and adaptive guilt ($r(367) = -.019$, $p < .001$) as well as shame ($r(367) = -.174$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2: Relationships between Adaptive Guilt and Empathy, Perspective-Taking, & Self-Reflection

To test our second hypothesis - that individuals who express higher levels of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection would also express higher levels of adaptive guilt - we conducted another series of correlational analyses. As expected, the analysis yielded a positive association between adaptive guilt and self-reflection ($r(367) = .252$, $p < .01$), perspective-taking ($r(367) = .403$, $p < .01$) and empathic concern ($r(367) = .486$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 3: The Relationship between Gender and Gender-Roles and Empathy, Perspective-taking, & Self-Reflection

To test the third hypothesis - that women (in comparison to men) and individuals higher in femininity would express higher levels of empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection than men - we again conducted two sets of analyses. First, we

conducted independent samples t-tests with gender (male/female) as the independent variable and empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection as the dependent variables. We then conducted a series of correlational analyses with femininity, masculinity, empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection entered into the analysis. Consistent with the third hypothesis, the independent samples t-test yielded an effect for gender, such that women expressed higher levels of empathic concern than men did ($M = 27.8534$, $SD = 4.52$; $M = 25.39$, $SD = 4.846$; $t(367) = 5.048$, $p < .001$). Results did not, however, support the hypothesis that there would be a significant gender difference in self-reflection ($t(367) = -1.053$, $p < .295$) or perspective-taking ($t(367) = 6.996$, $p < .615$).

The correlational analyses also supported the hypothesis regarding the relationship between femininity and empathy, perspective-taking, and self-reflection. Specifically, the results indicated that femininity was positively correlated with empathy ($r(367) = .632$, $p < .001$), perspective-taking ($r(367) = .423$, $p < .001$), and self-reflection ($r(367) = .175$, $p < .001$). In addition, as predicted, there were no significant relationships between masculinity and empathic concern, perspective-taking, and self-reflection.

Hypothesis 4: Personal Distress, Rumination, and Adaptive vs. Maladaptive Guilt

To test our fourth hypothesis – that higher levels of personal distress and higher levels of rumination would be associated with maladaptive guilt (shame) but not adaptive guilt – we again conducted a series of correlational analyses. The results indicated that, as expected, shame correlated with higher levels of personal distress ($r(367) = .440$, $p < .001$) and rumination ($r(367) = .308$, $p < .001$). The analysis did not, however, support the hypothesis that there would be no relationship between personal distress and rumination and adaptive guilt. Instead, adaptive guilt was found to be correlated with both personal distress ($r(367) = .129$, $p < .05$) and rumination ($r(367) = .351$, $p < .001$).

Additional Findings

In addition, to explore gender and gender roles as separate factors in adaptive guilt and shame and the other variables we hypothesized would relate to adaptive guilt and shame, we conducted a median split for the variables of femininity and masculinity, designating individuals as either high or low on masculinity, and then conducted two ANOVAS – one a 2 (Gender: male/female) X 2 (Femininity: high/low) ANOVA and one a 2 (Gender: male/female) X 2 (Masculinity: high/low) both with adaptive guilt and maladaptive guilt as the dependent variables. Effect sizes were calculated for each ANOVA using partial eta-squared with small (.01), medium (.06), and large (.14) effects, respectively. Table 1 shows the total number of males and females who fell into the high vs. low masculinity and femininity

Table 1. Median Split for Male/Female on Masculinity/Femininity

	Gender-role Identity			
	Masculinity		Femininity	
	High	Low	High	Low
Male	116	60	83	93
Female	94	97	120	71

groups.

Note: Table indicates subject pool gender (male/female) within given degree of gender-role identity (masculinity/femininity). $N = 367$

The Gender X Feminine Gender Role analysis yielded main effects for both gender ($F(367) = 19.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .051$) and feminine gender role ($F(367) = 27.353$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .070$) for adaptive guilt, but no interaction effect. In other words, while females were higher in adaptive guilt than males, as mentioned previously, individuals high in femininity were also higher in adaptive guilt ($M = 46.31$, $SD = 5.63$) than those lower in femininity ($M = 42.335$, $SD = 7.37$), regardless of gender. The Gender X Feminine Gender Role analysis also yielded main effects for both gender ($F(367) = 25.745$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .066$) and feminine gender role ($F(367) = 4.198$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$) for shame, but no interaction effect. As mentioned before, women were higher in

shame than men, and those who ascribed to a more feminine gender role ($M = 35.364$, $SD = 7.162$) also were higher in shame than those with a lower score for feminine gender role ($M = 33.22$, $SD = 7.45$).

In regard to the other variables, feminine gender role contributed independently to higher scores on rumination ($F(367) = 5.462$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .015$; high fem: $M = 85.07$, $SD = 10.83$; low fem: $M = 82.15$, $SD = 12.41$). The Gender X Feminine Gender Role analysis yielded main effects for gender ($F(367) = 16.414$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .043$) and feminine gender role ($F(367) = 117.617$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .245$) for empathic concern, but no interaction effect. While gender did account for differences in empathic concern, those with higher scores in feminine gender role ($M = 28.89$, $SD = 3.77$) reported higher levels of empathic concern than those with low feminine gender role scores ($M = 23.92$, $SD = 4.588$). In addition, while there was no main effect for gender for perspective-taking, there was a main effect for femininity ($F(367) = 48.8$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .119$). Specifically, individuals high in femininity had higher scores on perspective-taking ($M = 26.14$, $SD = 4.96$) than individuals who scored lower in femininity ($M = 22.58$, $SD = 4.72$), regardless of gender.

In regard to adaptive guilt, the Gender X Masculine Gender Role analysis yielded a main effect only for gender ($F(367) = 24.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .064$), but not for masculine gender role or the interaction. That is, masculinity did not independently contribute to adaptive guilt. The Gender X Masculine Gender Role analysis did, however, yield main effects for both gender ($F(367) = 25.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .066$) and masculine gender role ($F(367) = 5.225$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$) for shame, but no interaction effect. As mentioned before, women were higher in shame than men, but, overall, individuals who ascribed to a more masculine gender role ($M = 33.37$, $SD = 7.18$) also were lower on shame ($M = 35.78$, $SD = 7.39$) than those with a lower masculinity score.

In regard to the other variables, masculine gender role ($F(367) = 18.687$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .049$) and gender ($F(367) = 21.382$, $p < .001$,

$\eta_p^2 = .056$) both contributed to scores on personal distress. Specifically, individuals with higher masculinity scores ($M = 17.50$, $SD = 4.72$) described themselves as experiencing less personal distress in response to another's distress individuals with lower masculinity scores ($M = 20.13$, $SD = 5.02$).

DISCUSSION

The goal of the current study was to determine which of the variables of interest had a relationship with gender and gender-role identity and, of those variables, which could help to explain gender differences in adaptive guilt. Our investigation yielded several findings of interest. First, we found a gender difference in reports of feelings of adaptive guilt for males and females such that females reported higher levels of guilt, which is consistent with results of several previous studies (Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2005; Eisenberg & Triana, 2005; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). We also found a positive relationship between femininity and guilt, as well as a negative relationship between masculinity and guilt, relationships previously considered, though not tested, by Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik (2005). These relationships suggest that not only do self-identifying male individuals report less guilt and shame than females do, but also, the higher an individual's masculine attributes are, the less guilt and shame that individual experiences.

Individuals who are male and who are higher in masculine attributes also engage less often in a number of other behaviors that are associated with guilt, and individuals who are female and who are higher in feminine attributes engage more often in many of those same behaviors. Focusing solely on gender, women empathize with others more than men do, which requires both the ability to understand another's perspective and care that the person is distressed. Women also report more personal distress than their male counterparts in response to situations involving transgression. Those higher in femininity engage in self-reflection,

perspective-taking, and empathic concern, which have been linked to increased feelings of adaptive guilt. Conversely, those with high masculinity only experience proportional relationships in feelings of shame and personal distress. In other words, those with high masculinity feel significantly less shame than those with low masculinity. Individuals who are higher in masculinity are also less likely to engage in self-rumination and experience less personal distress in response to others' distress. Although we found no significant relationship between personal distress and femininity, there was a significant main effect of femininity on the tendency to ruminate. This finding suggests that, in situations involving transgressions, individuals high in masculinity are less likely to focus on personal feelings of distress than those low in masculinity or high in femininity, though this relationship should be explored further to understand why this is the case.

In addition, femininity was found to be strongly correlated with adaptive guilt, perspective-taking and empathic concern, regardless of gender, although higher femininity was also correlated with shame, rumination, and self-reflection. Given these findings, it is possible that individuals with a stronger feminine gender identity who experience elevated levels of guilt may filter their interpersonal interactions through societally expected acts regarding understanding and caring for others' reaction to avoid possible transgressions. When we conducted the ANOVA, empathic concern was found to be related to feminine-gender role and gender, though the effect-size analyses indicated that the effect of feminine-gender role was stronger than that of gender, indicating the possibility that societal definition of feminine characteristics enforces the idea of caring about others' distress, even beyond anything that gender itself might carry. There was also a main effect of femininity on perspective-taking, but no effects for gender or masculinity, suggesting that the tendency to place oneself in another's position, or sympathize, is grounded in societal expectation and teachings. Women were found to have

higher levels of empathic concern, perspective-taking, and self-reflection, although only empathic concern was strongly tied to female gender and gender-role, suggesting possible biological causes of women's increased concern for others as well as a societal motivation.

We also found significant correlations between guilt, empathic concern, perspective-taking, and self-reflection, a previously unexplored contributor to adaptive guilt. Guilt and empathic concern displayed the strongest relationship, a relationship consistent with the findings of Silfver and Helkama's (2007) study on Finnish adolescents. The relationship between empathic concern and guilt may indicate the necessity of the ability to understand another's distress as well as the concern for the wellbeing of another in the development of guilt. This assumption is further supported by the strength of the relationship between guilt and perspective-taking, suggesting that the importance of understanding another's distress, secondary only to caring about such distress, is a primary factor in feelings of guilt resulting from interpersonal transgressions. Separately, self-reflection was found to be correlated with guilt, but not with shame, suggesting that the tendency to reflect on one's actions contributes to feelings of guilt by motivating an individual to overcome problems and increase self-knowledge.

Finally, we investigated the relationship between guilt, shame, personal distress, and rumination and found that high levels of personal distress and rumination correlated with shame as well as guilt. The high correlation between adaptive guilt and shame may explain some of this relationship, though Bybee & Quiles (1997) and Ferguson et al. (2000) have found correlations between shame, rumination and personal distress. Further analysis would be needed to determine if shame alone is related to personal distress and rumination.

There were, however, some limitations to the study that need to be considered. The sample was primarily Hispanic, and while there were no significant differences between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Whites

on any variable, these results may not reliably generalize to other groups. In addition, we could have assessed the relationship between gender-role and the variables of interest using an alternative index of gender roles, such as the Bem Sex-Role Inventory Scale (BSRI; Bem 1974). Previously, researchers have reached conflicting conclusions about the extent to which the PAQ and BSRI classify subjects in the same way. Fernandez (2010) found that the two did not fully classify subjects in the same way, while Spencer (1991) found the parallel masculine and feminine scales to be significantly correlated. Furthermore, the relationship between variables of interest and the PAQ versus the BSRI has not been studied. Given the interrelationships among the variables of interest in this study, further research should also employ the use of regression or mediation analysis to further explore the relationships between the variables of interest, gender, and gender-role to determine whether gender alone or gender-role attributes drive those relationships. Additionally, it is important to note that gender differences in shame and guilt have been found to be dependent on the measure used; therefore, findings cannot be generalized beyond the measure used (Silfver & Helkema, 2007).

In summary, this study has investigated relationships between socialization (gender role) and biological factors (gender) in moral judgement and emotions and has found indications of the importance of both in emerging adult's interpersonal interactions. We have also confirmed previously tested relationships and identified previously untested relationships between self-reflection, guilt, gender-role and gender. Guilt, as a self-conscious, moral emotion, is exceedingly important for the maintenance of interpersonal relationships and further knowledge of its role in human interaction is important in the treatment of guilt resulting from trauma and personal transgressions.

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Table 1. *Median Split for Male/Female on Masculinity/Femininity*

	Gender-role Identity			
	Masculinity		Femininity	
	High	Low	High	Low
Male	N = 116	N = 60	N = 83	N = 93
Female	N = 94	N = 97	N = 120	N = 71

Note: Table indicates subject pool gender (male/female) within given degree of gender-role identity (masculinity/femininity). $N_{\text{total}} = 367$

Table 2. Sample Means and Gender t-test significance

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	p-value
ADAPTIVE GUILT	M = 42.7045	M = 46.2251	M = 44.5368	P = .000***
MALADAPTIVE GUILT	M = 32.2898	M = 36.3560	M = 34.4060	P = .000***
EMPATHY	M = 25.386	M = 27.8534	M = 26.6703	P = .000***
PERSPECTIVE-TAKING	M = 24.4091	M = 24.6806	M = 24.5504	P = .615
SELF-REFLECTION	M = 40.7896	M = 39.9424	M = 40.3486	P = .293
RUMINATION	M = 83.4375	M = 84.0785	M = 83.7711	P = .017*
PERSONAL DISTRESS	M = 17.25	M = 19.90	M = 18.6294	P = .266

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 3. Correlations

	Guilt	Shame	Rumination	Self-Reflection	Perspective-Taking	Empathy	Personal Distress	Femininity	Masculinity
Guilt	-	.452**	.351**	.252**	.403**	.486**	.129*	.402**	-.019
Shame	.452**	-	.308**	.063	.121**	.228**	.440**	.148**	-.174**
Rumination	.351**	.308**	-	.800**	.247**	.296**	.167**	.187**	-.056
Self-Reflection	.252**	.063	.800**	-	.265**	.255*	-.043	.175**	.078
Perspective-Taking	.403**	.121*	.247**	.265**	-	.455*	-.099	.423**	.093
Empathy	.486**	.228*	.296**	.255**	.455**	-	.106*	.632**	.020
Personal Distress	.129**	.440*	.167**	-.043	-.099	.106*	-	.001	-.337**
Femininity	.402**	.148*	.187**	.175**	.423**	.632*	.001	-	.113*
Masculinity	-.019	-.174*	-.056	.078	.093	.020	-.337**	.113*	-

*p < .05 (2-tailed), **p < .01 (2-tailed)