The Development and Validation of the Gender Role Conflict Scale for Irish Adolescent Boys

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ABSTRACT

Ó Beaglaoich and associates (2013, 2015a, 2015b) report that the Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (GRCS-A, Blazina et al. 2005) may not be suitable for use with Irish boys. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to develop a culturally appropriate measure of gender role conflict (GRC). The resultant 26-item scale was entitled the Gender Role Conflict Scale for Irish Adolescents (GRCS-IA). It had satisfactory scale score reliability and a unidimensional factor structure. Evidence of convergent validity was adduced through statistically significant correlations between participants’ gender role conflict and indices of psychological functioning (i.e., self-esteem and state as well as trait anxiety). The divergent validity of the GRCS-IA also was demonstrated (i.e., participants’ gender role conflict did not correlate significantly with their endorsement of masculine norms). Limitations of the current study are outlined and directions for future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS

boys, gender role conflict, Ireland, masculinity, psychometrics

Gender role conflict (GRC), defined as a “psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences for the person or others” (O’Neil 2015: 42), prevents individuals from realizing their full potential as human beings. Furthermore, findings from more than 350 studies suggest that GRC may compromise men’s psychological and physical health (O’Neil 2015). To illustrate: GRC correlates positively with depression, stress, anxiety, shame, body dissatisfaction, alexithymia, substance use/misuse, and suicide probability, and negatively with self-esteem. The associations between GRC and both depression and self-esteem are particularly robust, having been found with samples that are diverse in terms of their cultural, racial, and sexual identity composition (O’Neil 2015).
The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O’Neil et al. 1986) has been used extensively to assess GRC, with James O’Neil (2015) reporting that the measure has been employed in hundreds of published empirical studies and doctoral dissertations. Importantly, the scale has been completed by participants residing in various countries outside of the United States (e.g., Australia, Germany, and Hong Kong) and, in more recent years, has been distributed to samples that fall outside the typical parameters of white, heterosexual college students (O’Neil 2015). Currently, three elaborations of the GRCS have been published: Gender Role Conflict Scale-Short Form (GRCS-SF; Wester et al. 2012), which has recently been translated for use with Chinese men (Zhang et al. 2015); Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (GRCS-A; Blazina et al. 2005); and the Korean Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (K-GRCS-A; Kim et al. 2009).

Cormac Ó Beaglaoich, Kiran Sarma, and Todd Morrison (2013) outlined various concerns with the psychometric integrity of these measures. Of particular note are the following: 1) the researchers did not particularize how scale items were developed; 2) the content validity of scale items was not ascertained; 3) there were mismatches between certain items and their response format (e.g., agreement/disagreement does not suit items that refer to conflict occurring “often” or “sometimes”); and 4) not all items clearly denote conflict (e.g., “Moving up the career ladder is important to me”). In his recent review, O’Neil asserted that Ó Beaglaoich and colleagues’ critiques are “highly relevant to the future validation of any new GRCS in other cultures and countries” (2015: 93).

The issue of content validity is particularly relevant when considering the GRCS-A. Using a subset of items extracted from the original GRCS, a measure designed for use with adult men, Christopher Blazina and colleagues (2005) instituted minor changes to ensure that all items were developmentally appropriate for an adolescent population (e.g., “When I am sexually involved with others, I do not express my strong feelings,” was modified to read, “When I am personally involved with others, I do not express my strong feelings”). Moreover, the authors implemented unspecified alterations to simplify the reading level of the GRCS-A (i.e., its Flesch-Kincaid grade level was 5.8).

Ó Beaglaoich and colleagues (2013) suggest that these minor revisions may not be sufficient. Specifically, in a series of personal interviews and focus groups (all of which were conducted by a young male researcher trained in qualitative methodology), adolescent participants were instructed to comment on the GRCS-A. Three themes emerged from the resultant transcripts. First, some items were seen as inappropriately worded/phrased (e.g., “Ver-
bally expressing my love to another man is hard for me”). Participants were unclear whether the word “love” should be interpreted in a romantic or platonic sense and also found the inadvertent double entendre “hard for me” to be amusing, as they associated this expression with getting an erection. Second, various items were regarded as possessing questionable relevance to the lived experience of heterosexual boys (e.g., “Hugging other men is difficult for me”). In response to this question, participants felt it was important to specify the context in which the hug occurs: “If you're hugging after you score a goal or you’re hugging because … you want a bit of loving (laugh).” The former was regarded as a normative action and, thus, devoid of conflict while the latter behavior was seen as denoting gay male intimacy. Third, participants believed that the potentially inappropriate and irrelevant content of various items on the GRCS-A would decrease boys’ likelihood of completing the scale or answering its questions in a thoughtful manner. To illustrate this point, one of the focus group discussants asserted that the GRCS-A is “all about loving men; who’s going to take that serious [sic],” and another remarked bluntly that he “wouldn’t do it” (i.e., answer the items on the GRCS-A). Overall, participants’ concerns about the GRCS-A underscore the importance of ensuring that members of the targeted population (in this case, adolescent boys) inform the development of scale items.

Recently, Ó Beaglaoich and colleagues (2015a) assessed the psychometric properties of the GRCS-A, when completed by Irish adolescent boys. Using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with two separate samples ($N_s = 317$ and 199), the researchers failed to replicate the four-factor structure identified by Blazina and colleagues (2005). Alternate models were then tested (e.g., one-factor and three-factor models); however, across both samples, none met standard fit criteria (i.e., any model that was satisfactory with Sample 1 was unsatisfactory when tested with Sample 2 and vice versa, suggesting that the models were idiosyncratic and non-reproducible). Based on their CFA findings, Ó Beaglaoich and colleagues concluded that 12 of the 29 items appearing on the GRCS-A were problematic,1 a finding that underscores the need to revise this measure of gender role conflict, at least when distributed to Irish adolescents.

**Purpose**

Adhering to O’Neil’s (2015) recommendation that establishing culturally sensitive indicators of gender role conflict reflects an important avenue for
future inquiry, the objective of the current study was to create a measure that captured gender role conflict, as experienced by adolescents living in the Republic of Ireland. For clarity, the present article is divided into three sections. The first briefly describes the steps taken to generate and refine items for the Gender Role Conflict Scale for Irish Adolescents (henceforth, the GRCS-IA). The next section (i.e., Study 1) details the criteria used to guide item reduction and furnishes evidence in support of the measure’s scale score reliability and convergent validity. The final section (i.e., Study 2) offers additional strands of both convergent and divergent validation support.

Development and Refinement of Items on the GRCS-IA

In accordance with “best practice” scale development guidelines (DeVellis 2003), potential items were informed by the transcripts generated from a series of focus groups and personal interviews (N = 54) in which adolescent boys investigated “the expectations, stressors, and masculine norms” (Ó Beaglaoich et al. 2015b: 313) that they or other members of their gender experienced. As noted earlier, these data were collected by a young man trained in qualitative methods. To ensure that the items captured the sensibilities of the adolescent boys, their phraseology, beliefs, and feelings—as expressed in the transcripts—were used to assist with the creation of scale items.

Initially, no constraints were placed on the item development process (i.e., the authors independently generated questions without taking into consideration matters such as item length or complexity). The separate item pools were then collated (k = 463) and inspected. Concise and unambiguous items were prioritized, as were items that were not double-barreled or negatively keyed. Items were also scrutinized to ensure that they “fit” with the chosen response format (i.e., indicators of prevalence: Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never), and that they reflected conflict linked to a hegemonic masculine expectation. The application of these criteria resulted in the initial pool being winnowed to 231 items.

Three content experts reviewed the items. To address Ó Beaglaoich and colleagues’ (2013) critiques of extant measures of GRC (in particular, the GRCS-A), feedback also was solicited from a small group of adolescent boys (N = 5). The involvement of these “lay experts” ensured that the targeted population contributed to all phases of item development (i.e., item creation stemming from reviews of the transcripts to item refinement stemming from
consultation and review). Both groups recommended various changes (i.e., several double-barreled items were identified, the linkage between select items and GRC was questioned, and numerous items were regarded as repetitious). Based on this feedback, 101 items were removed, with the remaining 130 being subjected to psychometric testing.

Study 1: Item Reduction and Psychometric Testing of the GRCS-IA

The purposes of this study were fourfold. First, item reduction criteria were used to reduce the initial pool of GRCS-IA statements to a more practical number, one that would require a limited time commitment on behalf of adolescents. As per Peter Benson and Steven Vincent’s (1980) recommendations, items were removed if: a) more than 50 percent of responses fell into one category on the 5-point Likert scale (1 = never; 5 = almost always); b) two combined responses were less than 10 percent; and c) four response categories did not have a minimum endorsement rate of 10 percent. Items also were eliminated if they were skewed (skewness/standard error of skew > |3.29|) or kurtotic (kurtosis/standard error of kurtosis > |3.29|) (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). Second, following the elimination of items that failed to meet the aforementioned criteria, the dimensionality of retained items was investigated using exploratory factor analysis (specifically, principal axis factoring [PAF] with oblique rotation: Fabrigar et al. 1999). No specific factor structure was anticipated. As our targeted sample and item development and refinement processes differed from those employed by the creators of the GRCS-A, we did not use their (ostensible) four-factor structure as a benchmark to gauge the soundness of the GRCS-IA’s dimensionality. It was anticipated that the PAF would result in additional items being removed (i.e., items that loaded on more than one factor at .32 or higher and/or items that did not have factor loading values of at least .50 [Worthington and Whittaker 2006] were removed). Third, following steps 1 and 2, the scale score reliability of the retained GRCS-IA items was examined using a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. Fourth, and finally, one test of construct validity was conducted. O’Neil (2015) reports that 18 out of 20 studies have found that gender role conflict correlates negatively with self-esteem. Further, this inverse association has been demonstrated cross-culturally. Thus, as a test of convergent validity, it was hypothesized that a negative correlation would emerge between self-esteem and scores on the GRCS-IA.
Method

Participants

Three hundred and one boys aged 13 to 19 took part in the research ($M_{AGE} = 15.7$, $SD = 1.45$). They attended a coeducational secondary school situated in the west coast of Ireland and were enrolled in 2nd through 6th year. Eighty-nine percent of participants identified as Irish, 8 percent identified as “any other white background,” and 1 percent identified as “African” or “Other.” Approximately 89 percent ($n = 268$) reported being “exclusively heterosexual,” 3 percent ($n = 9$) as “more heterosexual than gay,” 0.3 percent ($n = 1$) as “bisexual,” 1 percent ($n = 3$) as “more gay than heterosexual,” and 1.3 percent ($n = 4$) identified as “exclusively gay.” Seventeen participants (5.6 percent) did not report their sexual orientation.

Measures

Gender-Role Conflict Scale for Irish Adolescents

The development and refinement of this measure is detailed in the Results section.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The RSES (Rosenberg 1965) is a widely adopted 10-item unifactorial trait measure of global self-esteem (e.g., “I take a positive attitude toward myself”). Higher total scores reflect greater levels of self-esteem (scores can range from 10 to 40). The RSES uses a 4-point Likert-type response format (i.e., Not at All, Somewhat, Moderately So, Very Much So). In a comprehensive assessment of the RSES’s psychometric properties, David Schmitt and Jüri Allik distributed this measure to approximately 17,000 respondents located in 53 nations. The authors concluded that the “internal reliability and factor structure of the RSES is psychometrically sound” (2005: 639). Validation evidence also was obtained (i.e., scores on this measure of self-esteem correlated in anticipated directions with personality variables such as extraversion and neuroticism).

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained through the Research Ethics Committee at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Schools were contacted by letter, which detailed the protocol involved in the research study. Two secondary schools (Samples 1 and 2) in western Ireland agreed to take part and, following approval from the boards of management of each school, the principal asked the guidance counselors to oversee the data collection procedure.
Consent forms were distributed to boys during class time, and prospective respondents were asked to bring the information sheets and consent forms to their parent(s) or guardian(s). Participants whose parents did not want their child to take part in the research were asked to bring the signed consent form to the guidance counselor. Approximately seven days later, the guidance counselor went to each class to remind participants to bring the consent forms home. Two weeks later, questionnaires were distributed to all students. Participants took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey.

**Results**

*Item Reduction*

The application of Benson and Vincent’s (1980) criteria resulted in 50 items being removed. An additional 31 items were skewed, and 21 items were kurtotic. Thus, the total number of items subjected to principal axis factoring (PAF) was 28.

*Exploratory Factor Analysis*

To ensure the data were suitable for PAF, two diagnostic statistics were evaluated: 1) the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, which evaluates whether the partial correlations among variables are small, was .92; and 2) Bartlett’s test of sphericity was statistically significant at \( p < .001 \) (\( \chi^2 = 2471.228 \)), allowing one to reject the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix (Ferguson and Cox 1993). Both of these indices suggest the data are factor analyzable (Worthington and Whittaker 2006).

Traditional parallel analysis (T-PA), in conjunction with the scree plot, was used to assist with factor retention. The application of these criteria suggested that a one-factor solution appeared to be most reasonable. To illustrate: for the real data, the eigenvalue for the first factor was 10.82 (38.65 percent variance accounted for), which exceeded the 95 percent percentile eigenvalue for the random data (1.61); the eigenvalue for the next factor in the real data was 1.66 (5.93 percent variance accounted for), which was only marginally greater than the second 95 percent percentile eigenvalue for the random data (1.52). Factor loadings ranged from .46 to .73, with two items failing to meet the loading threshold of .50; thus, 26 items were retained. These items were factor analyzed again, with the final eigenvalue equaling 10.43 (40.11 percent variance accounted for) and factor loadings ranging from .52 to .73.

*Scale Score Reliability*

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were: GRCS-IA (.94, 95 percent CI = .93 – .95) and RSES (.77, 95 percent CI = .73 – .81). These values denote (in order) excellent and satisfactory levels of scale score reliability.
Construct Validity
As predicted, adolescent boys’ level of self-esteem correlated negatively with their experience of gender role conflict, $r = -.45, p < .001$.

Discussion
The results of this study suggest that a 26-item gender role conflict scale designed for use with Irish adolescents (GRCS-IA) possessed a unidimensional factor structure and superior scale score reliability. In addition, one test of construct validity was examined, with results suggesting that, akin to most studies on gender role conflict, those evidencing greater GRC also reported lower self-esteem. As psychometric testing is an incremental process, additional studies are needed to expand the nomological network of the GRCS-IA. Thus, a second study was conducted with a new sample of Irish adolescents.

Study 2: Convergent and Divergent Validation of the GRCS-IA

The central objective of this study was to conduct multiple tests of construct validity. First, O’Neil (2015) reports that a robust relationship has been identified between gender role conflict and anxiety (i.e., the greater the conflict, the greater the anxiety). We similarly predicted that scores on the GRCS-IA would correlate positively with scores on indices of state and trait anxiety. Second, we attempted to replicate the inverse association between self-esteem and GRC that has been demonstrated repeatedly in the literature and also in Study 1. Third, O’Neil (2015) indicates that, across 20 studies, correlations between the original GRCS and four indices of masculine ideology endorsement ranged from .20 to .45. The modest nature of these correlations suggests that the GRCS “measures a different construct” (2015: 86). Thus, in the current study, the divergent validity of the GRCS-IA was tested by correlating scores on this measure with scores on a scale assessing adolescents’ endorsement of traditional male roles. A modest correlation was predicted, suggesting that the two constructs are interrelated yet conceptually distinct.

Method
Participants
The participants were 284 boys aged 13 to 19 ($M_{AGE} = 15.25, SD = 1.63$) attending 1st year through 6th year at a coeducational secondary school.
along the west coast of Ireland. Ninety-three percent of participants identified as Irish, 6 percent identified as “any other white background,” and less than 1 percent identified as “African,” “Chinese,” or “Other.” Approximately 92 percent \((n = 252)\) of respondents identified as “exclusively heterosexual,” 4.7 percent \((n = 13)\) as “more heterosexual than gay,” 1.1 percent \((n = 3)\) as “bisexual,” 1.1 percent \((n = 3)\) as “more gay than heterosexual,” and 1.4 percent \((n = 4)\) identified as “exclusively gay.” Nine participants (3.2 percent) did not report their sexual orientation.

**Measures**

*Gender Role Conflict Scale for Irish Adolescents (GRCS-IA)*

This 26-item measure examines the extent to which male adolescents residing in Ireland experience gender role conflict in various life domains (e.g., interpersonally with other boys, girls, parents, and their teachers). The GRCS-IA uses a 5-point frequency response format \((1 = \text{never}; \ 5 = \text{almost always})\). A complete version of the scale is provided in Appendix A.

*The Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (MAMS)*

The MAMS is a multidimensional instrument that assesses the degree to which adolescent boys “endorse or reject traditional male roles” (Oransky and Fisher 2009: 59). The scale contains 27 items, which fall into one of four subscales: constant effort (CE: 7 items; i.e., boys must maintain a confident, tough, and strong image in order to perform masculinity); emotional restriction (ER: 7 items; i.e., boys need to be stoic and refrain from sharing their feelings with others in order to be masculine); heterosexism (H: 8 items; i.e., one must not show any attitudes and behaviors associated with femininity or homosexuality); and social teasing (ST: 5 items; i.e., in order to be masculine, boys must be able to tease other boys and stand up to teasing from other boys). For all items, a 4-point Likert type response format is used: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Total scores can range from 27 to 108, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of masculine norms. Individual subscale scores also can be computed. Matthew Oransky and Celia Fisher (2009) reported satisfactory scale score reliability coefficients for three of the four subscales: CE \((\alpha = .79)\); ER \((\alpha = .80)\); and H \((\alpha = .80)\). The ST scale, however, yielded a lower Cronbach’s alpha \((.61)\). The authors furnished evidence attesting to the measure’s convergent validity. For example, CE correlated positively with peer popularity; ER was negatively associated with intimate exchange among friends; H was positively associated with anti-femininity; and ST was positively correlated with normative beliefs about aggression.
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)
A description of this measure is provided above, in Study 1.

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC)
The STAIC (Spielberger 1973) is a widely used instrument and consists of two 20-item measures for state and trait anxiety. State anxiety is regarded as a person's current level of anxiety, with items instructing respondents to rate how they feel at the present moment in time using a 3-point response format (e.g., “I feel … very upset, upset, not upset”). Trait anxiety is related to personality and refers to a general level of stress that is characteristic of an individual. Respondents are instructed to rate the frequency with which they experience anxiety symptoms (e.g., “I am secretly afraid”) using a 3-point response scale (i.e., Hardly Ever, Sometimes, and Often). For both the state and trait anxiety scales, total scores can range from 20 to 60, with higher scores representing more of the construct.

Procedure
The method of data collection used in this study was identical to the one employed in Study 1, as described above.

Results
Scale Score Reliability
Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were: GRCS-IA (.94, 95 percent CI = .92 – .95); MAMS (.90, 95 percent CI = .88 – .92); RSE (.77, 95 percent CI = .73 – .82); and STAIC (state anxiety: .86, 95 percent CI = .83 – .88; trait anxiety: .60, 95 percent CI = .52 – .67). With the exception of the trait anxiety subscale, these alpha values denote satisfactory to excellent scale score reliability.

Construct Validity
As predicted, scores on the GRCS-IA correlated positively with state ($r = .43$, $p < .001$) and trait anxiety ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), and negatively with self-esteem ($r = -.30$, $p < .001$). The latter finding had also been reported in Study 1. No statistically significant correlation was observed between gender role conflict and participants’ endorsement of traditional male roles, as measured by the MAMS ($r = -.03$).

Discussion
The results of Study 2 offer additional strands of psychometric support for the GRCS-IA. Scale score reliability was, again, excellent. Moreover, signif-
icant associations were observed between the self-reported experience of gender role conflict and two indices of anxiety (state and trait), as well as self-esteem. The latter finding replicates the inverse relationship noted in Study 1 and suggests that, as adolescent boys’ experience of gender role conflict increases, their self-esteem is attenuated. Taken together, these correlations underscore the critical role that this type of conflict seems to play in adolescent boys’ psychological well-being. Further, the direction of all of these correlations is congruent with O’Neil’s (2015) recent summary of the literature.

One finding did not map onto our expectations. We had anticipated a modest correlation between scores on the MAMS and the GRCS-IA; however, a correlation coefficient of approximately zero, suggesting no relationship, was obtained. In hindsight, we might have overstated the likelihood that these constructs would be even nominally interrelated. For example, previous research suggests that, among Irish adolescent boys, indices of masculinity and gender role conflict may not correlate. Using Blazina and associates’ GRCS-A (2005), Ó Beaglaoich and colleagues (2015a) found that scores on this measure of gender role conflict did not correlate in an interpretable manner with scores on either the MAMS or its subscales. To illustrate: both the MAMS and the GRCS-A contain subscales that ostensibly measure “emotional restriction,” yet the correlation coefficient between the two measures was only .07. According to Ó Beaglaoich and colleagues, this type of relationship suggests that “the endorsement of cultural standards of masculinity relating to emotional expression do not necessarily imply conflict on this dimension which, in turn, challenges the assumption that masculine ideology measures should be used to validate indicants of gender role conflict” (2015a: 38). Thus, neither the endorsement nor rejection of hegemonic masculine expectations ipso facto suggest that one does or does not, respectively, experience conflict related to one’s gender. It also is possible, however, that the MAMS—which was developed for US adolescents—does not capture the unique trajectory of masculinity within an Irish context. In the recent past, Irish masculinity was depicted as being “essentially rural, based heavily around family, marriage and celibacy” (Ferguson 2001: 120), a view maintained by key social institutions such as the state, the Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA), and the Catholic Church. Rapid, interlocking changes within Ireland such as the weakening of the Church and the removal of strictures on divorce and gay/lesbian equality, in conjunction with dramatic economic changes (i.e., from prosperity in the late 1990s to recession in 2007 to current recovery), challenge the view of a monolithically national masculinity. Thus, at this point, it is unclear whether a
measure of masculinity, created in partnership with and reflecting the unique sensibilities of Irish adolescent boys, would similarly be unrelated to gender role conflict.

**General Discussion**

In the current study, an extensive list of scale items was created to reflect gender role conflict. This process was informed by personal interviews and focus groups with adolescent boys in which they examined “the expectations, stressors, and masculine norms” associated with being a male person living in Ireland (Ó Beaglaoich et al. 2015b: 313). It was also informed by current research on masculinity and gender role conflict (e.g., Ó Beaglaoich et al. 2015a, 2015b; Oransky and Fischer 2009; Oransky and Marecek 2009; Stoudt 2006) and by item development guidelines (DeVellis 2003). Importantly, after the researchers created an initial pool of items, this pool was then subject to refinement by content experts and a small sample of adolescent boys. Several item reduction criteria were used, with the remaining items being subject to an exploratory factor analysis. Underscoring the differences between our measure (GRCS-IA) and Blazina and colleagues’ GRCS-A (2005), we obtained a one-factor, rather than multifactorial, solution. This result suggests that, for the Irish adolescent boys in our study, gender role conflict may be experienced in a more global fashion rather than partitioned on the basis of different foci (e.g., parents versus peers) or types of conflict (e.g., school versus work).

Across two samples, scale score reliabilities for the GRCS-IA were excellent, with lower-bound estimates for the 95 percent confidence intervals suggesting that Cronbach's alpha values less than .92 were unlikely to occur. The construct validity of the GRCS-IA was tested by examining the association between scores on this measure of conflict and self-esteem as well as state and trait anxiety. As predicted, and consistent with past GRC research, higher scores on the GRCS-IA, denoting greater gender role conflict, were associated with lower levels of self-esteem (across samples tested in Studies 1 and 2) and with higher levels of trait/state anxiety (tested in Sample 2 only). O’Neil (2008) explains that men’s gender roles have been conceptually linked to anxiety through “discrepancy strain,” which is posited to occur when men fail to meet the expectations placed upon them by masculine ideologies (Pleck 1995). As noted earlier, the available literature suggests that GRC and anxiety are associated (O’Neil 2015).
We also tested the GRCS-IA’s divergent validity by examining its relationship with a measure assessing endorsement of masculine norms (i.e., the MAMS). Based on O’Neil’s reviews (2008, 2015) of the GRC literature, we anticipated that scores on the GRCS-IA and the MAMS would be modestly correlated implying that the two constructs are interrelated yet distinct. However, no statistically significant correlation emerged, a finding that is also consistent with an earlier study in which Ó Beaglaoich and associates (2015) used Blazina and colleagues’ GRCS-A (2005). We propose two possible explanations for this null finding. First, endorsement or rejection of masculine ideology may be unrelated to the experience of gender role conflict. To illustrate: a male adolescent may reject statements such as “a guy should be able to take teasing from his friends” (an item on the MAMS) while also report that he is bothered because “lads don’t expect you to be annoyed when someone takes the piss [colloquialism for being teased] out of you” (an item on the GRCS-IA). Second, the relationship between GRC and masculine ideology may highlight issues with the conceptualization of masculinity, as measured by US-based instruments such as the MAMS, within an Irish context. To further investigate the relationship between GRC and masculine ideology, an indicator of the latter should be developed specifically for use within the Republic of Ireland.

With respect to future research, the unidimensionality of the GRCS-IA should be examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and the test-retest reliability of the scale also needs to be determined. With respect to the latter, the temporal stability of an instrument across multiple time points, during which the influence of measurement error on participants’ responses is assessed (Weng 2004), is a critical, though routinely overlooked (see Charter 2003), element of a scale’s psychometric robustness.

Further tests of validation also are required. For example, O’Neil outlines the gender role journey paradigm whereby individuals assess “how gender roles and sexism have affected [their lives] personally, professionally, and politically” (2015: 48). This knowledge is then utilized for self-improvement and, ultimately, for the betterment of society. The gender role journey is characterized by three phases: 1) acceptance of traditional gender roles (i.e., stereotypes about masculinity and femininity are embraced); 2) gender role ambivalence, confusion, anger, and fear (i.e., vacillation occurs between accepting gender stereotypes and acknowledging their deleterious impact); and 3) personal and professional activism (i.e., there is full commitment to reducing sexism, both in one’s own life and in society at large). The Gender Role Journey Measure (O’Neil et al. 1993) assesses each of these phases. It
might be anticipated that, as boys and men progress through this journey, the ability of masculine roles to induce conflict is attenuated, resulting in these men becoming less affected by the expectations placed upon them because of their gender. Programs designed to instill a multifaceted understanding of masculinity (e.g., the Boy’s Forum, which targets male adolescents: O’Neil et al. 2013) may facilitate this journey and, in so doing, be utilized to validate the GRCS-IA (i.e., levels of conflict should decrease as boys proceed through the program).

Conclusion

Based on these findings, it would appear that the GRCS-IA possesses a uni-dimensional factor structure and yields scores with excellent reliability. Consistent with GRC theory, higher levels of gender role conflict were related to lower levels of self-esteem and greater levels of state and trait anxiety in boys. The relationship between GRC and masculinity remains unclear and further investigation, using measures that take an Irish context into account, is needed. Finally, numerous directions for future research were articulated, with the possible relationship between an individual’s gender role journey and his experience of gender role conflict being viewed as particularly intriguing.

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References


THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE GENDER ROLE CONFLICT SCALE


Appendix A

**Gender Role Conflict Scale for Irish Adolescents**

*Response Format: Almost Always = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2, Never = 1.*

1. It bothers me that people are harder on boys than they are on girls just because they think boys can take it.
2. It annoys me that people automatically think boys are going to cause trouble.
3. It bothers me that if I were with a girl other lads considered ugly they would think less of me.
4. It bothers me that, because I am a lad, I find it hard to talk to my father about my personal problems.
5. Because of the demands that are placed on lads, it is difficult to balance the pressures from parents, friends, schoolwork, and sports training.
6. It bothers me that, under most circumstances, lads don’t respect a lad for showing his emotions.
7. It bothers me that when you’re with a group of lads, you are expected to be up for anything.
8. It bothers me that most lads have to change themselves to fit the situation they are in.
9. It bothers me that lads expect you to be good craic [great fun] even when you're in bad form.
10. It bothers me that lads don't expect you to be annoyed when someone takes the piss out of you.
11. It bothers me that a group of lads can put pressure on you to do things you don't want to do.
12. I pretend I don't care what other lads think about me even when I really do.
13. When I am with a group of lads, I feel pressure to be entertaining.
14. It bothers me that most lads are expected to show different sides of themselves when they are around different groups of people.
15. It bothers me that a lad can be emotional in front of other lads only under rare circumstances (e.g., a funeral).
16. It bothers me that if a lad is overly sensitive, other lads will think he is gay.
17. It bothers me that lads are pressured by other lads to take the piss out of people.
18. It bothers me that boys will think less of you if you act “soft” around them.
19. It bothers me that you can’t be the same person around lads as you would be around girls.
20. It bothers me that people expect boys to able to do well in both sports and school.
21. It annoys me that a lad is expected to help out his mates even if he knows they are in the wrong.
22. If you get in trouble people come down a lot harder on boys than they do on girls.
23. It’s difficult to find the balance between how to act around a group of lads and girls.
24. It really gets to me when some lads slag you when you are around girls.
25. It frustrates me that my father doesn’t understand the amount of pressure that young lads are under.
26. The demands that are placed on lads such as sports training, homework, social life, and family life negatively affect the quality of my life.
Notes

1. Due to concerns about the psychometric properties of the GRCS-A (Ó Beaglaoich et al. 2013; 2015a), we did not regard this measure as a “gold standard” and, thus, did not use it to assess the concurrent validity of the measure we developed (the GRCS-IA).

2. Another possibility, however, is that a deepened understanding of masculinity—both its benefits and pitfalls—may increase awareness of the myriad ways in which male behavior is policed resulting in higher scores on the GRCS-IA (i.e., participants may be “bothered” more often by exposure to gendered expectations).