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Gender role conflict is an influential construct in the area of adolescent boys’ studies with the Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (GRCS–A; Blazina, Pisecco, & O’Neil, 2005) the key tool used for assessment. Though commonly employed, the validity of the GRCS–A as well as the depth of understanding that can be derived from such a scale has been questioned. To address these concerns, a qualitative study—phenomenological in nature—was conducted to explore patterns of gender role conflict among a sample of adolescent boys residing in the Republic of Ireland. Through 1-on-1 interviews and focus groups, 54 adolescent boys, 12 to 18 years old, participated in this study. Four broad and interrelated overarching categories were identified: (1) expectations of masculine behavior, (2) masculine self-preservation, (3) restrictions on nonnormative gender expressions, and (4) penalties for being male. Themes and subthemes within these overarching categories also are discussed. Theoretical implications, limitations, and avenues for future research are then outlined.

Keywords: gender role conflict, masculinity, qualitative research, adolescence, Ireland

Within Western cultures, masculine gender socialization emphasizes characteristics such as stoicism, independence, physical toughness, dominance, restrictive emotional expression, competition, and antifemininity (Brannon & Juni, 1984; Connell & Mess- erschmidt, 2005; Levant et al., 2007; Mahalik et al., 2003). From a social constructionist vantage, “masculine” characteristics are culturally defined and reinforced (Muris, Mesters, & Knoop, 2005), and internalized to varying degrees by members of society (Kahn, 2009). Gender role conflict (GRC) may ensue when adherence to a culturally sanctioned model of masculinity results in the restriction, devaluation, and/or violation of self or others (O’Neil, 2008).

GRC is an influential construct in the field of men’s studies (O’Beaglaoich, Conway & Morrison, in press; O’Beaglaoich, Sarma, & Morrison, 2013; O’Neil, 2008; O’Neil, Good & Holmes, 1995) and has offered substantial insights into the negative aspects of masculine socialization (e.g., O’Beaglaoich et al., 2013). To date, researchers investigating men’s experiences of GRC have relied on the 37-item Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O’Neil, Helm, Gable, David & Wrightsman, 1986); a measure that is regarded as the “most well-known instrument within the traditional counseling literature” (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 360) that focuses on masculinity (Smiler & Epstein, 2010; Whorley & Addis, 2006). Correlational studies have revealed that higher scores on the GRCS, which is denotative of greater conflict, are associated with poor self-esteem (Mahalik et al., 2003), anxiety (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995), depression (Mahalik & Cournoyer, 2000), alexithymia (Fischer & Good, 1997), and substance abuse (Blazina & Watkins, 1996).

Originally, the GRCS was designed for adult men. Recognizing the need for a measure that was suitable for distribution to adolescents, Blazina, Pisecco, and O’Neil (2005) adapted the scale by taking items from the GRCS and modifying them to ensure they were “developmentally appropriate” (p. 40). For example, the statement “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.” The resultant measure, entitled the Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents (GRCS–A), then was distributed to a sample of 464 high-school students (13–18 years old) for psychometric assessment. Twenty-nine items were ultimately retained, with four factors emerging: Need for Success and Achievement (NSA, six items), Conflict Between Work, School, and Family (CWSF, seven items), Restrictive Emotionality (RE, nine items), and Restricted Affection Between Men (RAM, seven items). Test–retest and scale score reliabilities for these factors were satisfactory. As well, evidence of concurrent validity was obtained (i.e., scores on the GRCS–A correlated significantly with scores on the adult version, GRCS).

To date, this adolescent measure of gender role conflict has been subjected to a modest amount of psychometric testing (e.g., Blazina, Cordova, Pisecco & Settle, 2007; Jacobson, Marrocco, Kleinman & Gould, 2011; Steinfeldt & Steinfeldt, 2010). Although the scale has been adapted for use in countries such as Korea (Kim, Choi, Kim, & Park, 2009), the overwhelming majority of gender role conflict research has been conducted in North America (O’Neil, 2008). Thus,
further cross-cultural research is needed to acquire a more global understanding of gender role conflict among adolescent boys.

Despite the burgeoning use of the GRCS–A, recently, O’Beaglaoich and colleagues (2013) articulated various concerns about the development of this measure. First, dimensions of conflict that are salient to adult men may be less so for boys. In support of this point, Blazina et al. (2005) noted that scores on the NSA factor correlated negatively with self-reports of conduct problems. Due to this finding, the authors reconceptualized the NSA as measuring “positive aspects of masculine ideology” (p. 43) rather than gender role conflict per se. Second, boys may experience unique forms of gender role conflict; forms that, in the absence of phenomenological accounts of “lived experience,” may be left unexplored or unrealized. This concern is underscored by Cournoyer and Mahalik’s (1995) finding that men experience different patterns of GRC at different developmental stages. Third, and finally, boys may experience gender role conflict more intensely than their adult counterparts, as the former attend school—an environment that Connell (2000) described as a “masculinity-making device” (p. 131).

But what is masculinity? As a psychological construct, hundreds of studies have demonstrated significant correlations between individual difference variables and measures of masculinity (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010); however, the ontological and epistemological status of the term is rarely questioned. Indeed, Addis and colleagues (2010) argued that masculinity is an ambiguous, socially constructed term that should be carefully scrutinized. Qualitative research is able to leapfrog the substantial obstacles these authors posed with positivist studies on masculinity. For, from a social constructionist paradigm, masculinity is seen as fluid and flexible, rather than as a stable trait. The lacuna of cross-cultural research, the three concerns with the GRCS–A described earlier, and the potential fallbacks of quantitative work in this area, then, highlights the need for qualitative research that is designed to capture how boys interpret and experience gender role conflict.

Objective

This study had two main purposes: (1) to investigate the expectations, stressors, and masculine norms that Irish adolescent boys experience themselves and, more globally, believe are experienced by members of their gender; and (2) to use a phenomenological approach to the research to provide a deeper and more detailed assessment of the commonly used GRCS–A.

To meet these objectives, personal interviews and focus groups were conducted with samples of adolescent boys living in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). This country has experienced profound socioeconomic and cultural shifts, which, in turn, may serve to destabilize traditional Irish masculinity; however, “men as gendered subjects have remained largely outside of the gaze of critical inquiry” (Hearn et al., 2002, p. 393). Additional research that focuses on Irish adolescent boys’ gendered experiences is thus of timely importance.

Method

Participants

Fifty-four adolescent boys, whose mean age was 16 (range = 12 years 6 months to 18 years 11 months), were recruited from six secondary schools in the ROI. To maximize the representativeness of discussants’ experiences, boys from every school year were targeted (i.e., two focus groups were conducted with first year students; one focus group each with second and third year students; four focus groups with transition year students; one focus group with fifth year students; and two focus groups with sixth year students). Nine individual interviews also were conducted (i.e., four interviews were conducted with students attending first through fourth year, one interview per year; two interviews were conducted with fifth year students and three interviews with sixth year students).

Participants were recruited from six schools located throughout the ROI. Two schools were from Dublin city; one school was from a semiurban area (i.e., Tralee, CO Kerry) and three schools were situated in rural areas (i.e., counties Kerry, Clare, and Mayo). Two of the schools were English speaking, and four were Irish speaking; however, all of the participants were fluent in English. One of the schools was single sex (i.e., all boys); one was coeducational for senior years only (fifth and sixth year); the remainder were coeducational. All participants were White.

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee affiliated with the National University of Ireland Galway. Schools were contacted by post or by e-mail and were followed-up by phone or, when practical, a face-to-face meeting with the principal of the school. Following approval from the board of management of each school, times and dates were scheduled for Cormac O’Beaglaoich (CB) to come to the school and speak with students. Parental consent forms were distributed to students, who were instructed to give them to a parent/guardian to be signed. Only boys returning signed parental consent forms were permitted to take part in a focus group or interview.

CB, a White male in his mid-20s (fluent in both Irish and English), conducted the interviews. He received qualitative training and was involved in analyzing the text and writing the manuscript. Prior to the focus groups/interviews convening, key elements of informed consent were reviewed (e.g., right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason). Participants also were informed that conversations would be audiorecorded and transcribed, and pseudonyms would be used to mask their identity. Individual interviews lasted between 23 and 80 min ($M = 48$), whereas the focus groups ran from 39 to 120 min ($M = 59$). All conversations were conducted in English and transcribed verbatim, with the exception of any details that had the potential to identify participants.

Question Guide

The interview guide consisted of questions designed to identify the expectations, stressors, and masculine norms that boys experience and/or believe are experienced by members of their gender. Questions were open-ended and, initially, broadly framed (e.g., “I’m interested in the kinds of stress that young people experience and I was hoping you could say something about this”; see the Appendix). Any questions that participants did not understand and/or had difficulty answering were rephrased. Prompts also were used, when necessary.
Qualitative Methodology

Phenomenology—the methodology chosen for the current research—explores how individuals “make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Phenomenological research seeks to reach the essence of a fairly homogenous sample of participants’ lived experience (Gree newald, 2004). Because “persons’ awarenesses are concomitant with these lived experiences” (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008, p. 28), an analysis of these meanings from a psychological perspective can be highly revealing. This approach is particularly useful when researchers have identified a phenomenon to understand, and have articulated individuals who could provide a clear description of what they have experienced. Phenomenological studies emphasized depth over breadth of research (Smith & Osborn, 2008), which in turn provided a sensitive way to study adolescent boys discussing gender role conflict.

Analysis

CB reviewed all of the transcripts, with subsets being distributed to the coauthors (i.e., Todd G. Morrison: data from four focus groups and four interviews; Elly-Jean Nielsen: data from three focus groups and four interviews; Travis A. Ryan: data from three focus groups and five interviews). All researchers followed a series of steps to extracting themes outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a flexible approach (i.e., it is not wedded to any preexisting theoretical framework) that provides a rich, detailed, and complex account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six steps for conducting thematic analysis are as follows: (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) creating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing the derived themes, (e) defining the themes and giving each a name, and (f) writing up the results.

In Phase 1, the transcripts were read repeatedly as doing so increases familiarity with the data. Critical elements such as figures of speech and phraseology also were noted. Of relevance to the current study, in Phase 2, we read our assigned transcripts and developed codes for any text that concerned masculine ideologies, idealized representations of masculinity, masculine norms, and/or gender role conflict; that is, our familiarity in the area of GRC was advantageous as a framework for analysis and organization of the data. In all cases, we corresponded to ensure that our identified codes were similar. The remainder of the transcripts were coded independently and grouped into themes (Phase 3). In Phase 4, quotations were reviewed to determine the degree to which they fit identified themes. The names and definitions of themes were further consolidated in Phase 5. (Note: Phase 6 involved the writing up of results.)

Results

Through the analysis procedure, four interrelated, overarching categories were identified: (1) expectations of masculine behavior, (2) masculine self-preservation, (3) restrictions on nonnormative gender expressions, and (4) penalties for being male. Category 1 outlines a range of expectations that are perceived as being directed at adolescent boys because of their gender. It also explores the potential negative consequences related to: (over) endorsement of, and conformity to, masculine expectations; failing to meet masculine expectations; and inherent contradictions when trying to fulfill these various expectations. Expectations of masculine behavior include themes of (1) not caring, (2) displaying strength, (3) being heterosexual, (4) evidencing general competence, and (5) investing in physical appearance.

Masculine self-preservation (i.e., Category 2) describes how expectations specific to certain groups and/or people can conflict with the mandate for boys to be themselves, be consistent, and maintain their image resulting in contextual variations in self-presentation. This overarching category is organized into two themes: (1) intragroup regulation of masculinity (i.e., male peers) with subthemes of act tough, act, do not think, slugging, loyalty, and pressures to socialize; and (2) intergroup regulation of masculinity (i.e., nonmale peers) with subthemes of girls, parents, and authority figures.

The third overarching category, restrictions on nonnormative gender expressions, highlights the various limitations boys experience when confronted with masculine expectations. Category 3—the smallest of the four overarching categories—is divided into two themes: (1) emotional restriction and (2) behavioral restriction.

The fourth, and final, overarching category, penalties for being male, relates to the deleterious consequences associated with violating, failing to meet, and/or endorsing masculine expectations. This category also reveals how negative perceptions of boys at a group or societal level can have an effect on boys’ self-perceptions, working as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Themes include: (1) failing to meet masculine expectations; (2) violating masculine expectations, (3) conforming to masculine expectations, and (4) simply being boys with subthemes of this fourth theme being people think the worst of boys, boys cannot be boys, guilty until proven innocent, and gendered double standards. A description of all four overarching categories, the themes and subthemes within, as well as illustrative quotations designed to contextualize the themes, are delineated later.

Category 1: Expectations of Masculine Behavior

Participants reported that, as boys, they were subjected to certain expectations. The performance of Irish hegemonic masculinity necessitated possessing characteristics/skills such as (a) not caring, (b) displaying strength, (c) being heterosexual, (d) evidencing general competence (e.g., athletically, sexually), and (e) investing in physical appearance.

Under specific circumstances, these expectations may be functional (e.g., given the societal challenge that is presented by obesity, investing in one’s physical appearance may have greater benefits than costs). However, as is evident in the illustrative quotes, these expectations operate as a set of standards by which boys judge themselves and others to both establish and maintain hierarchies between boys and their peers. As the experience of gender role conflict depends on specific masculine expectations, each of the subthemes in the following sections will present a masculine expectation followed by the conflict (or conflicts) that potentially emanate from it.

Theme 1: Not caring. A masculine norm that emerged throughout the transcripts was that boys do not care about “anything” or “what people think of them.” This norm surfaced initially
when boys were asked to outline the differences between boys and girls. For example:

*Derrick* [Focus group, third year, 15–16 years old]:

You don’t care about half as much things as girls . . . you don’t care as much about anything.

*Liam* [Focus group, fourth year, 15 years old]:

Fellas don’t care, girls do. Fellas just do anything.

Contrary to this norm, however, some boys experienced and admitted that they care how others perceive them. For example, Graham, aged 15, explained in the following:

**Interviewer:** What are the most difficult things about being an adolescent fella? [Focus group, fourth year, 15–16 years old]

**Graham:** Looks, what people think [of you] . . . you kind of contradict yourself when you’re a teenager [because you’re saying you should be yourself and you don’t care what people think [about you] but, you do care.

**Interviewer:** Would that be true for everyone?

**All:** Yeah [all except for Bernard].

**Interviewer:** Would you agree with that? [Directed at Bernard]

**Bernard:** I dunno, I don’t . . . the lads probably know that I don’t really care what people think, most [of the time].

**Graham:** No he doesn’t, that is good though cause he’s.

**Danny:** Yeah.

**Graham:** Very funny.

**Alex:** Yeah.

**Bernard:** But I think most people care what people think anyway . . . especially girls.

It is ironic that some boys try to project confidence through masking an expression that often directly opposes their internal feelings. This underscores the contradictions inherent in the expectation that boys shouldn’t care. For instance, even Bernard, who initially appeared to go against the group, qualified his statement about not caring what people think with “most of the time.” Also worth noting was how Bernard positioned girls to the extreme end of the spectrum describing them as being “way worse” than boys.

Boys who indicated that they failed to meet this expectation also expressed feeling vulnerable to attack from others. Gary explained that it “draws the wrong type of attention to you” (Individual interview, fourth year, 16 years 11 months). In the following passage, Connor described the nuances of not caring and how the expression should ideally be projected within certain parameters (i.e., not in an ignorant way). Implicit in this statement is that breaching this protocol would be viewed as far from ideal and would result in devaluation by others.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe the ideal male adolescent?

**Connor** [Individual interview, fifth year, 16 years old]:

The ideal male adolescent I suppose . . . he’d be, the ideal, I suppose he’d be secure, like he wouldn’t give a shit about what other people think but you know not in an ignorant ‘I’ll do what I want’ kind of a way.

**Interviewer:** Would you agree with that? [Directed at Connor]

**All:** Yeah [all except for Bernard].

**Interviewer:** Are there certain ways a fella should act?

**Ciaran** [Individual interview, sixth year, 18 years and 4 months]:

Well, I suppose within society there would be, like people would expect males to like act a certain way, and if they didn’t act a certain way like, you’d, they’d be classed as maybe being gay or something because of the way they acted like.

Younger adolescents also suggested that being with girls was the principal means of proving one’s heterosexual status.

**Interviewer:** Is it important for a fella to have a girlfriend? [Focus group, first year, 13–15 years old]

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1. This information is given following the boy’s name when it only applies to this individual; when the information applies to all of the boys in the dialogue segment the biographical information follows the interviewer’s first statement.
Mark: Not really, people feel pressure to having them, like 'cause like everyone has them.

Oisín: So they think you’re manly.

Interviewer: So who thinks you’re manly?

Conal: It proves that you’re straight.

Oisín: [To] your friends.

Denis: Everyone.

Mark: To prove that you’re straight, yeah.

**Theme 4: Evidencing general competence.** For boys, proficiency in the realm of sports or academics was of particular importance for nurturing a sense of self-worth and gaining respect from others. Boys reported feeling pressure from a number of sources (namely, themselves, peers, parents, and teachers) to be successful at one or more of these activities.

**Interviewer:** I am interested in the expectations of young people. I was hoping you could say something about this. [Focus group, fourth year, 15–16 years old]

Fiún: They’re high . . . They expect you to get on well.

Bryan: They expect a lot from you.

Pádraig: They expect you to do as well as your other brothers and sisters . . . That came before you.

Interviewer: And other expectations?

Joe: To do well in school and sport.

Interviewer: And where do these expectations come from?

Joe: Parents.

Fiún: Parents.

Bryan: Teachers and stuff like that.

Joe: Friends.

Academic proficiency emerged as a priority for some of the boys, particularly those in exam years (i.e., third-year [junior certificate] and sixth-year [leaving certificate] students).

**Interviewer:** I’m interested in the kinds of stress young people experience and I was wondering if you could talk about that? [Focus group, fourth year, 16 years old]

Tadhg: You get stressed over anything like.

Ian: Yeah.

Tadhg: Even small things . . . school.

Ian: Sports, girls, the main stuff, sports, girls, and school.

Tadhg: D’you know, any of them like, anything that you think.

**Damien:** When you’re younger you kind of compare yourself to everyone else like and like some people get over exams because they think they have to be as good as like, the best person in the year, their older brother or something like that, and like, general things [too].

Worth noting were the prevalence of disinterest and negative connotations associated with doing well in school whereas, with sport, there were no instances of negativity related to success (other than being boastful). As Ciarán explained,

**Interviewer:** Why do you think lads aren’t as competitive academically?

Ciarán [Individual interview, sixth year, 17 years and 5 months]: I suppose lads don’t really see it as much of an importance to be competitive academically. They see it as more important to themselves to be competitive physically and in sports like than they would academically.

In Ireland, sports such as Gaelic football, hurling, rugby, and soccer are predominantly played by males. Within the context of these masculine-dominated activities, a number of possible gender role conflicts were reported: boys not feeling talented enough, boys under performing, not being picked for a team, and striving to achieve balance between athletic training and school/social requirements.

**Eoin** [Focus group, third year, 15–16 years old]: Football teams are stressful too, like if you don’t think you’re good enough.

**Derick:** Yeah.

**Eoin:** Because teams get older you know, people get dropped and stuff or . . . afraid of being dropped [from the team].

Sport-related stressors were reported more often by participants than stressors related to academics. However, boys who participated in competitive sports and who had ambitions to achieve at school reported experiencing the most pressure.

**Interviewer:** Is it difficult to balance school with other activities outside of school?

**Joe** [Individual interview, sixth year [exam year], 18 years old]: Ah yeah, say [with] football in the evenings like, after school you’d be knackered [tired] and you’d just want to eat and you’d go to training and you’d come back and you wouldn’t do your homework . . . . There [are] some fellas that can but most lads would just kind of put it [schoolwork] aside to play football.

One of the primary characterological ways in which boys connoted proficiency was through displays of confidence. This characteristic, which surfaced across all interviews, was often expressed as being in control. Similar to not caring, confidence functions within specific parameters; that is, confidence is ideally expressed through activity (doing something) combined with modesty. Advertising one’s achievements or appearing overly confident were
deemed incompatible with this masculine ideal and were likely to result in devaluation (i.e., slagging) from others. Joe explained,

**Interviewer:** Are there certain ways a fella should act?

**Joe** [Individual interview, sixth year (exam year), 18 years old]: I suppose most fellas would want to be the best at everything and other fellas would be like, the opposite . . . modest. It would nearly be split down the middle: half the lads wouldn’t say much about d’you know “I scored 10 goals in the last match” and other fellas would be telling everybody and, the fellas that do say it you think they are a fucking eejit.

**Interviewer:** They shouldn’t be bragging is that it?

**Joe:** Yeah, just take it in your stride type of way.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Joe:** It looks cooler anyway like [laughing] . . . if you’re saying it to everyone . . . they’d think he’s an eejit [idiot].

**Theme 5: Investing in physical appearance.** Being concerned with one’s appearance, and striving to be as attractive as possible, which was defined primarily in terms of possessing a muscular physique, emerged as a prominent masculine expectation.

**Interviewer:** If you were to describe the ideal fella, how would you describe him?

**Cathal** [Individual interview, third year, 15 years 11 months]: I suppose a funny lad, ah, truthful lad I suppose, a good-looking lad as well.

**Interviewer:** What’s difficult about being a fella?

**Liam** [Focus group, third year, 15–16 years old]: Your body.

**Interviewer:** Your body?

**Liam:** Yeah, like it’s more like they expect us to be more toned and in shape now than out of shape so people are, more fellas are joining gyms now, trying to stay in shape, to look their best for everybody.

Some boys experienced these standards as stressful and noted that the criteria used to denote attractiveness were more stringent now than in the past. Further, boys were required to strive to be as attractive as possible, while simultaneously hiding the effort that goes into their appearance.

**Interviewer:** Do fellas think about their image?

**All** [Focus group, sixth year, 17–19 years old]:

**Tadhg:** They say they don’t but they do.

**Dáithí:** Yeah.

**Category 2: Masculine Self-Preservation**

Participants articulated certain behavioral and attitudinal expectations of boys when in the presence of specific groups. Competing expectations may be evident as well: Some of these expectations were perceived as compromising boys’ ability to be themselves. This theme identifies and outlines the global expectations and pressures boys experience to perform masculinity when in the presence of certain groups and/or within certain social contexts. Central elements of masculine self-preservation are that boys experience conflict when functioning in an environment that they perceive as inimical to their true self; striving to conform to the different expectations placed on them by peers, parents, and institutions (e.g., school); and negotiating incompatible expectations in the presence of opposing groups. Category 2 is discussed in relation to (1) male peers (i.e., intragroup regulation of masculinity) and (2) nonmale peers (i.e., intergroup regulation of masculinity).

**Theme 1: Intragroup regulation of masculinity (male peers).** Boys described that in the presence of other boys certain attitudes and behaviors were either promoted or discouraged. For example, competitiveness relating to the ideal performance of various expectations outlined in Category 1, served to maintain these expectations and fuel exaggerated displays along given continua (e.g., displays of strength or confidence). In general, boys who violated male group expectations and/or norms were sanctioned strictly (see category penalties for being male). Subthemes included (a) act tough; (b) act, do not think, (c) slagging, (d) loyalty, and (e) pressures to socialize.
Subtheme 1: Act tough. Boys described that in the presence of same-sex peers they were expected to “act tougher” (Danny, focus group, fourth year, 15–16 years old) than would be required around other social groups (i.e., girls). Further, Bernard described that “you can’t really act sensitive” because other boys “might think you are weird” (focus group, fourth year, 15–16 years old). Acting tough in the presence of other boys was often described as a playful exercise albeit one that served a regulatory function within the group and served to maintain a standard level of toughness. Some boys described this behavior as a way of exerting dominance and impressing others. Toughness also was framed as essential for boys’ development.

Interviewer: What are other important characteristics about being a fella? [Focus group, sixth year, 18 years old]
Tadhg: Don’t be overly sensitive about things and . . . just take stuff on the chin.
Interviewer: Okay, and if you were overly sensitive?
Dáithí: You wouldn’t be in a group basically.
Ian: You wouldn’t even say that.
Tadhg: Ah, there are lads that are oversensitive, you know.
Aidan: People get sick of you if you can’t take a joke.
Dáithí: Joke, yeah.
Damien: Yeah, I suppose.
Dáithí: If you’re in a huff all the time and everything they’d be like, ah, fuck him.
Tadhg: Probably, the chances are, if you’re overly sensitive, people will turn around and say you’re gay.
Dáithí: [Laughing].
Tadhg: That’s it like, there’s one lad in our year and he’s very sensitive and people think he’s gay.

This focus group extract vividly displays the need for masculine self-preservation and simultaneously traces back to the theme being heterosexual from Category 1, for homonegative ideation and discourse are readily apparent in the boys’ conversation.

Subtheme 2: Act, do not think. Discussants indicated that when in the presence of other boys they are expected to “do” (Oisín, focus group, first year, 13 years old); not to “over think” (Dáithí, focus group, sixth year, 18 years old); and to show “no fear” (Fergal, focus group, fourth year, 15 years old). This relates to other descriptions of boys, such as “boys would do anything” (Anthony, focus group, fifth year, 17 years old), “boys are blunt” (Dáithí, focus group, fourth year, 16 years old), and “boys do things without thinking” (Alex, focus group, fourth year, 16 years old). Showing emotions such as fear and being overly cautious were associated with femininity. As noted earlier, boys were expected to focus on the now and worry about consequences later. Tadhg, for instance, pointed out “it’s only after [that] they regret it and think I shouldn’t have done it” (focus group, sixth year, 18 years old). GRC is reflected in this subtheme when conformity to this masculine norm results in negative consequences such as regretting your actions or engaging in risk-taking behavior (O’Neil, 2008). Risk taking, which appears to be amplified within male groups, and is often accorded social currency (i.e., respect from peers), conflicted with expectations disseminated by other groups (i.e., parents and teacher).

Subtheme 3: Slagging. Boys framed slagging (i.e., teasing) behavior as an activity that was not meant to hurt others; however, it was acknowledged that when taken too far, it could affect people’s sense of self. This intramale group dynamic is particularly relevant to GRC theory as it may be the chief process through which boys internalize others’ judgments of the appropriateness of certain behaviors (i.e., gender role norms and rules).

Ciaran [Individual interview, sixth year, 17 years old]: I dunno if it’s something about that lads kind of, they’d slag a lot more than girls would; girls would be a lot more kinda understanding of the type of person that you are than lads would . . . lads kinda don’t, they are kinda narrow-minded; they wouldn’t see anything deeper than what they see, the way you act like, you know.

Slagging played a regulatory role in boys’ behavior; indeed, many acknowledged that one of the reasons they don’t talk about their problems is because they don’t want to be slagged.

Interviewer: Why do you think boys don’t talk about their problems?
David [Individual interview, sixth year, 18 years old]: I suppose it’s, well number one is they don’t want anyone else to know I suppose and . . . they don’t want to get a slagging over that.

Differences in slagging between younger and older adolescents also emerged in the transcripts.

Anthony [Focus group, fifth year, 17 years old]: When you’re older . . . there’d be less, there wouldn’t be as bad slagging . . . whereas before, like in second year, reckless altogether like; you’d be very cheeky then.

Tim: You’d know when to stop now at this stage; you’d only go so far but before I suppose you used to go over that line all right.

Subtheme 4: Loyalty. Among male friends, loyalty was a prerequisite for being a member of a male group and was often referenced by the misogynistic expression “bros before hos.” When boys were asked how they knew they were friends with other boys, the most common responses were: going downtown with male peers; inchoate references to “hanging around with them”; and sticking up for friends while in an argument or in a fight. Some boys felt that the expectation of standing up for a friend at all costs, even when they knew the friend was in the
wrong, constituted a source of stress. Those failing to provide unconditional support ran the risk of being devalued and, hence, potentially isolated from their group.

**Subtheme 5: Pressures to socialize.** Many boys experienced pressure from their peers to go out on the weekend to socialize and drink. If boys did not participate in these activities, they were subject to repercussions.

**Alex [Focus group, fourth year, 15–16 years old]:** There’d be pressure on you then to go out, and you might, you might kind of want to but not want to drink, or you mightn’t be allowed to and then your friends are like whatever. People you’ll be going out with might be putting pressure on you to go, you can’t really say, that I’m not allowed and things like that, or those kinds of things.

**Interviewer:** Are there certain ways fellas feel they should act? [Focus group, fifth year, 17 years old]

**Tim:** I suppose there is all right ... well, I suppose in drinking terms . . . . You’d nearly [be] expected to be if your friends are like whatever . . . . There’s a lot of pressure all right on some fellas.

**Anthony:** Act certain ways as well.

**Interviewer:** To act any way like?

**Anthony:** Yeah there would be I suppose, drinking and stuff like, everyone else would sort of follow them . . . . They’d be under pressure as well like because they’d probably be left behind otherwise.

**Graham:** Yeah.

**Subtheme 1: Girls.** When around girls, boys were expected to listen more, refrain from acting rough, avoid slagging girls to the same degree they would slag boys, be quieter and more respectful, and show greater accommodation to the interests of girls. It is important to note that boys discussed caring more about what girls thought of them nowadays and described girls as accepting you for who you are. Participants also maintained that conflict arose when trying to integrate male and female group expectations.

**Tadhg:** If there is a girl around the place or if you have like a girl out with you, you’re not going to act the same around her; well, all the lads will still be acting, as they would with a group of lads and then you’ll kinda, you’ll kinda quiet down a bit. You won’t be as boisterous as everybody else and all the lads will turn around and they’ll abuse you for not being one of the lads while your girlfriend is there or something.

**All [Focus group, sixth year, 17–19 years old]:** [laughing and jeering].

In another interview, David described how his male friends would know if he were acting differently around different people. He described how you have to “watch yourself” otherwise boys would talk about you.

**David [Individual interview, sixth year, 18 years old]:** Yeah, wilder. That’s the main thing; they’re [boys] wilder and they’d say anything like [laugh] . . . . They’d mind themselves around females I’d say.

**Interviewer:** If you’re used to acting a certain way in front of your female friend.

**David:** Yeah . . . you might be self-conscious then like, you don’t want . . . if your friends know who you are, they know exactly who you are . . . . and they know if you’re messing or they know your kind of humor and if you know but if you’re acting differently or saying around girls like they’d be like “Oh, he’s weird” . . . girls’ talk like.

**Interviewer:** He’s what?

**David:** He’s weird like d’you know or he’s an eejit or d’you know . . . they talk about you . . . yeah . . . you’d be watching yourself all right . . . they’d say it to you afterward . . . . They’d say it to each other anyway.

We find it interesting that some participants assumed the “real you” is the way boys portrayed themselves in front of their male peers, rather that the way they portrayed themselves around females or family. Connor acknowledged these conflicting expectations but contends that being able to adapt to them is a critical skill.

**Connor [Individual interview, fifth year, 16 years and 11 months old]:** Being able to adapt to you know like, when they are with their friends, you hardly want to go talking to them . . . about something with a girl like, say clothes with fellas you know like . . . . They don’t really want to hear about that whereas you talk about a rugby match to a girl, chances are she doesn’t want to hear that you know so it’s like you wouldn’t go speaking French to Germans, you know so.

Also, worth noting was that girls contributed to the maintenance of masculine standards. That is, boys reported that girls sought males who displayed promise in the following dimensions: phys-
ical attractiveness, exuding confidence, possessing a good personality, evidencing general competence, displaying strength, and being respected by peers. Characterological qualities of a successful male that boys believed were sanctioned by both boys and girls included a sense of humor, a good personality, and being sound (i.e., nice to people).

**Donal [Focus group, fourth year, 15–16 years old]:** Girls expect you to be funny . . . to have a good personality and be able to talk to them [girls], do you know?

**Subtheme 2: Parents.** Male group norms and expectancies often compete with parental expectations. Adolescent boys spoke about not being allowed to go out at night to socialize or being required to hide aspects of themselves from their parents (i.e., how they behave around their male peers).

**Mark [Focus group, first year, 14 years old]:** Like I wouldn’t tell my parents everything I do, like outside the house obviously like you know, like it’s none of their business . . . I end up telling them some things but not the stuff . . . I was like going around for like half of this year like pretending to be inside my home . . . to be all good and nice and everything is okay but outside, doing stuff [laughing] . . . [that] shall not be named.

**Subtheme 3: Teachers/figures of authority.** A number of masculine expectations such as being entertaining, taking risks, having no fear, and refusing to back down were triggered in the presence of authority figures, which often caused conflict for boys. For example, within a classroom setting, many of these predominantly masculine expressions were evaluated favorably by peers but were in direct opposition to the objectives of teachers, resulting in negative consequences for the boys.

**Interviewer:** Are there differences in the way fellas act in front of parents/teachers and the way they would generally act without them being around? [Focus group, fourth year, 15 years old]

**Fergal:** Yeah.

**Donal:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What would they be?

**Eoin:** They’d be more open in front of their friends rather than to parents and teachers.

**Donal:** It’d be all innocent in front of the parents and teachers like . . . well, sometimes.

**Fergal:** Some of them would be acting hard then in front of their friends.

**Interviewer:** Acting hard in front of their friends is it?

**Donal:** Yeah.

**Fergal:** When the teachers.

**Interview:** Teachers are there, yeah, and why would they do that?

**Fergal:** To get popular.

**Donal:** Yeah.

**Interview:** Does that work?

**Fergal:** [laugh] Yeah.

**Donal:** Yeah.

**Category Three: Restrictions on Nonnormative Gender Expressions**

Prescribed roles and norms limit the affective and behavioral options of boys. Due to gender role socialization, some boys may feel constrained in terms of their freedom of expression—both emotionally and behaviorally.

**Theme 1: Emotional restriction.** Participants specified that as boys their emotions needed to be controlled and monitored. In most of the interviews, boys said they kept their feelings “in” (Alex, focus group, fourth year, 16 years and 5 months old). Expressions of vulnerable feelings were associated with femininity and the absence of rationality. Participants also espoused essentialist beliefs in terms of gender differences in emotional displays: “girls are more emotional than boys” (Ian, focus group, sixth year, 19 years and 2 months old) and “boys aren’t as sensitive as girls” (Finn, focus group, fourth year, 15 years and 2 months old).

Emotional displays were permissible, however, only under specific/unique circumstances and/or with specific targets. Boys would be more likely to show their emotions if they were: on their own rather than in a same-sex group, in serious physical pain (e.g., a broken leg), intoxicated, located in a suitable venue for emotional disclosure (e.g., not in a public area), involved in a situation that was deemed of sufficient magnitude to warrant an emotional display (e.g., a funeral), and having an “important conversation” with a close friend.

The reasons boys gave for not talking about problems were multifaceted. Boys said that talking was not part of “boy culture”; within male groups, boys were expected to keep exchanges “light” (i.e., good craic [fun]). However, if a boy disclosed his feelings in front of his peers, they would not know how to react. Indeed, participants envisioned emotional interactions with other boys resulting in shared feelings of awkwardness and discomfort as boys would be “unable to handle it” (Aengus, focus group, fourth year, 15 years and 8 months).

**David [Individual interview, sixth year, 18 years and 6 months]:** It was awkward . . . That’s probably why as well like you know, you feel very awkward talking about your feelings or someone else’s . . . You know . . . awful . . . awful like . . . Something you don’t want to have to do like . . . you’d nearly run away before you’d have to deal with something like that.

Boys refrained from talking to other boys about emotional matters because they did not trust boys’ reactions. First, they feared other boys would slag them.
Fergal: Lads don’t talk to each other about stuff; girls are always talking to each other like. [Focus group, fourth year, 15 years and 4 months]

Donal: Yeah, they don’t, they keep to themselves more than the girls.

Interview: Why is that?

Donal: Insecure probably.

Fergal: [laughing]

Donal: I’m serious.

Interviewer: And you reckon that’s because they are insecure?

Donal: I suppose, they’re probably afraid of getting a slagging if they say something to them, yeah.

Fergal: They’d start taking the piss out of you . . . They’d be calling you a pussy if you were crying like . . . they wouldn’t feel any sympathy for you like.

Second, participants expressed concerns that boys would not keep the information to themselves and would use this knowledge in a spiteful way at a later point in time, causing further stress.

Anthony [Focus group, fourth year, 17 years old]: They could easily just keep blackmailing you about it like . . . if you didn’t want them to say anything.

Disclosing their feelings affected how boys perceived themselves. Discussions with Garry revealed that boys refrained from speaking about sensitive topics to their male friends because the act of disclosure had implications for self-perceptions.

Interviewer: Why wouldn’t you talk to boys about things that bother you?

Garry [Individual interview, fourth year, 16 years and 11 months]: I dunno ’cause your friends would kind of see you as . . . kind of a strong character, not physically strong but kinda . . . a steady person and then if they see you like that . . . you’d feel embarrassed . . . because they [would] think of you like that; you don’t want to see them . . . or you don’t want to see yourself, kind of as less than what they think of you.

This quote also ties into other expectations previously mentioned; namely mental strength, consistently, and not caring. Some boys indicated that because they were boys they “weren’t allowed” to have feelings (Joe, focus group, fourth year, 15 years and 6 months old). Others acknowledged that not talking was a problem for boys and that “you [boys] don’t know any better really” and that “you [boys] get used to it” (Fergal, focus group, fourth year, aged 15 years old). Boys recognized that there were limited outlets/opportunities to talk about things that bothered them. For example, Donal described that “there’s no one to talk to really, other than Childline [a free 24 hour counseling service for children and adolescents]” and that “you just pretend it’s not bothering you” (focus group, fourth year, aged 15 years old).

We found it is curious that when boys were asked with whom they would talk, many said they were more likely to confide in and rely on girls.

Ian: Unless you have a best mate that’s there ages and you already know from past experience that you can talk to him but other than that, girls [are] your best bet. [Focus group, sixth year, 17–19 year olds]

Dáithí: I think so, yeah.

Ian: You can confide in a girl but you can’t really confide in lads. It makes you, the exact same thing, they kinda of look down [on you].

Theme 2: Behavioral restriction. Behaviors perceived as either insufficiently masculine or related to femininity were disapproved. These behaviors included: choice of clothing, walking, sitting, and other forms of body language—all at the quest to be more normal. Even subjects chosen in school had implications for perceived masculinity.

Dara [Individual interview, first year, 14 years old]: Like how most lads describe different things as gay . . . maybe the way you walk or like characteristics . . . . It’s really not a game but a competition to see who’s the most normal . . . if you’re a little bit like, maybe you hang around with girls instead of hanging around with boys, you’re called gay straight away. There’s no chance that they’d even think for a second about it.

Interviewer: Are there differences in stresses for girls compared to fellas? [Focus group, third year, 15–16 years old]

Liam: Girls can wear anything they want, any design, anything, doesn’t make any difference; once it’s just not like, horrible . . . nothing would get said to them.

Derick: There’s no, like, logos for girls as much like, you can buy something in Topshop and it’d be the same thing, you wouldn’t notice.

Interviewer: So are fellas more conscious of logos?

All: Yeah

Category Four: Penalties for Being Male

Boys who do gender and fulfill certain gender expectations and those who are incapable or unwilling to do gender in the manner they regard as being prescribed by Irish society are subject to various disciplinary sanctions such as slagging, rebuking, social ridicule, isolation, and devaluation of status. This overarching category is related to penalties incurred by boys for (1) failing to meet masculine standards/expectations, (2) not conforming to or violating masculine expectations, (3) endorsing/conforming to masculine expectations, and (4) simply being boys.
Theme 1: Failing to meet masculine expectations. As mentioned previously, boys failing to meet certain standards of masculinity were subject to various criticisms and devaluations (self-initiated and/or from others). For example, boys who did not satisfy the standards of general competence, strength, and toughness reported experiencing negative consequences. These repercussions included: devaluation of status or hierarchical standing (i.e., people thinking less of you), perceived or real negative judgments from others (i.e., overt [slagging] or covert [fear of boys talking about you behind your back]), and negative self-judgments.

Theme 2: Not conforming to or violating masculine expectations. Many boys expressed that behaving in ways considered contrary to prescribed social norms was met with condemnation, social devaluation, and social isolation. Boys seemed to be governed by the fear of breaking or violating a masculine norm because in so doing, they faced being labeled or branded for life.

Subtheme 1: People think the worst of boys. Participants felt that (a) people automatically think the worst of boys, (b) boys cannot be boys, (c) boys are guilty until proven innocent. Although cognizant of the perception that boys may be more troublesome than girls, they expressed frustration at the fact that variability among boys was ignored (i.e., not all boys cause trouble).

Fergal: It’s always people complaining about us . . . a few, bad, a few lads start doing it, the whole.
Interview: Everyone’s painted with the same brush is it?
Donal: Yeah.

Boys expressed that people and society-at-large think the worst of young men and this dynamic makes it difficult for boys. Ciaran described how this prevailing attitude potentially contributed to a self-fulfilling prophecy for more vulnerable boys.

Interviewer: What’s difficult about being an adolescent boy?
Ciaran [Individual interview, sixth year, 17 years old]: I suppose what’s expected of you; like you see people that just because you’re a young person, they automatically think that you’re going to cause trouble, or you’re going to be drinking on the streets or you’re going to be, drinking down in a pile of bushes or something like [that]. . . . It’s the perception that people have of you that’d make things more difficult than actually being an adolescent.

Subtheme 2: Boys cannot be boys. Some participants felt that parents and authority figures put pressure on boys to become adults prematurely.

Ian: Well... be mature, not be sort of kiddish or, do stupid things . . . look to the future straightaway.
Interviewer: What’s expected of adolescent fellas? [Focus group interview, sixth year, 17–19 years old]
Dāithí: You’re sort of expected, sort of.
Damien: Expected to be adults.
Dāithí: Yeah, exactly all of our lives like.
Tadhg: No, you’re expected to become more mature, like some adults. Some adults look at you and expect like, aw, that chap is 16 or whatever and they go, he should be grown up . . . cause like you get compared to the last generation.

Subtheme 3: Guilty until proven innocent. Boys felt that authority figures and society in general harbor the attitude that boys are presumed guilty until proven innocent. Although cognizant of the perception that boys may be more troublesome than girls, they expressed frustration at the fact that variability among boys was ignored (i.e., not all boys cause trouble).

Dāithí: You’re always accused beforehand; they always expect the worst of you. [Focus group, sixth year, 17–19 years old]
Tadhg: It’s kinda like you’ve got something to prove: they’ve got like the worst expectation of you . . . whereas girls like, there’s no expectation.

**Subtheme 4: Gender double standards.** Boys voiced frustration about perceived double standards in the ways they were treated in comparison to girls. This included how boys were punished, how they were monitored by figures of authority, and how they were depicted in media coverage. For example, when asked if teachers “would act differently to a fella that was messing [around] than a girl messing around,” Joe’s response was, 

Yeah . . . Mr. O’Brien used to go crazy at us and now [the school is mixed-sex], it’s very quiet and he says nothing to the girls, but if it was the lads, he’d go crazy. [Individual interview, sixth year, 18 years and 4 months]

Cathal described the discrimination he experienced when he went into a shop wearing his hoody.

**Cathal** [Individual interview, third year, 15 years and 11 months]: And like if lads are wearing hoodies, if you walk into a shop, you have to tell them to take it down and girls don’t, they just walk in, just leave them off . . . . The last day we were in Lidl [supermarket chain] and we walked in with our hoodies on [and] they came along and told us to take down our hoodies and ah, three girls walked in then afterward and they didn’t say anything to them . . . . It’s just, I dunno, people just expect teenage boys to act the maggot [that is, cause trouble] . . . like, they never suspect anything with girls . . . . If you get in trouble they come down a lot harder on you if you’re a boy as well.

**Discussion**

The current study, which constitutes the first qualitative investigation to explore patterns of gender role conflict among adolescents in Ireland, identified four broad and interrelated overarching categories. These categories and the themes within point to the expectations that young males believe are placed on themselves and other boys by various socialization agents and highlight the complexity, diversity, and inconsistencies of masculine expectations.

Category 1 outlined five masculine expectations that through the endorsement of, failure to meet, or violation of, could result in negative intrapersonal and social consequences for adolescent boys. Category 2 delineated a number of group-specific expectations and competing expectations that conflicted with adolescent boys’ expression of their true-selves. In the third category, ways in which masculine socialization confines and restricted adolescent boys’ behavioral, attitudinal and emotional expressions were articulated. Finally, the fourth category illustrated some of the penalties that adolescent boys believed they were subjected to due to the presence of masculine expectations and highlighted how negative societal attitudes toward boys and masculinity, in general, could affect their self-perceptions.

**Implications for GRC Research**

The results of the current research elucidate the importance of qualitative inquiries in the area of men, boys, and masculinity. In line with social constructionist work, this study has scrutinized constructs that are assumed to be internal properties of individuals (e.g., masculinity, gender role conflict). As Addis and associates (2010) posited, masculinity is not a thing in the world waiting to be discovered, but rather a psychological and social construct. This study has not followed the lead of quantitative studies that see masculinity as a stable, internal trait to be measured psychometrically, but relinquished such assumptions by conducting a qualitative study that grounded the analysis in the participants’ own discourse.

What was found was that each of the categories outlined support the central elements of GRC theory. First, the tenet that GRC occurs from fear of femininity (O’Neil, 2008) was evidenced by the category restrictions on nonnormative gender expressions and themes heterosexuality and intragroup regulation of masculinity. Further, the second tenet of GRC theory, the masculine mystique, was supported and represented in the category expectations of masculine behavior and in the themes not caring, displaying strength, and evidencing general proficiency. Based on these findings, implications for the measurement of GRC are discussed. There is evidence suggesting that age-specific conflicts emerged as a result of this work: The situational dynamics relating to male peer groups, boys’ investment in their physical attractiveness, girls and relating to girls, and figures of authority such as parents and teachers are sources of GRC yet to be explored in the adolescent GRC literature. These aspects were not reflected in the existing GRCs–A (O’Beaglaoich et al., 2013); however, the factors of the GRCs–A (i.e., RE, RAM, NSA, and CWSF) emerged in the interviews with Irish adolescents. Further, it is likely that masculine self-preservation may be more prevalent or intense for adolescent boys in comparison to older males due to their liminal status, such as their (a) dependence on parents, (b) place of residence (i.e., living at home), (c) pressures from school (e.g., teachers), and (d) close proximity with others their own age (e.g., girls and boys).

Many of the expectations that emerged through these interviews mirror themes/factors of qualitative and quantitative research conducted with North American adolescents (e.g., emotion restriction, constant effort, social teasing: Oransky & Fisher, 2009; emotional invulnerability: Chu, Porche, & Tolman, 2005; pursuit of status: Brannon & Juni, 1984; strength and heterosexuality: Connell, 2000) thereby supporting the position that hegemonic masculinities transcend cultural boundaries. However, a number of masculine ideologies and attitudes surfaced throughout the interviews that may be culturally specific to Ireland. For example, in relation to emotional restriction, Irish adolescent boys cited the requirements of being up for a laugh, being entertaining and keeping exchanges light in the presence of other boys as obstacles to evidencing vulnerability. Furthermore, the requirement of modesty by boys relating to achievement was noteworthy. That is, Irish adolescent boys were required to evidence proficiency in specific domains (e.g., athletically and academically) and, yet, not to boast about their success, a nuance that appears to contradict masculine expectations in the United States (e.g., Daubman & Sigall, 1997). These cultural differences support suppositions of the GRC theory that state the experience of GRC is dependent on culture, age, and cohort specific definitions of masculine ideologies and gender role stereotypes (Kahn, 2009) and underpins the importance of conti-
ued research on masculinities outside of a North American context (Whorley & Addis, 2006).

Limitations

As this is the first qualitative paper to outline the masculine expectations of Irish adolescent boys, follow-up work is needed to determine whether these themes are idiosyncratic or robust. Second, an Irish male interviewer in his mid-20s conducted each interview and it is possible that his nationality, gender, and age influenced the adolescent boys’ responses. Researchers examining men’s health have found that interviewers’ gender can shape men’s talk during interviews (e.g., Broom, 2004; Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Oliffe & Mroz, 2005). That the interviewer had shared identities (e.g., Irish, male, white) with the participants likely allowed the adolescent boys to speak more candidly; however, differences in age and power status (i.e., researcher seen as superior) may have created an element of distance.

Future Research

One possible avenue for future inquiry concerns examining the (dis)similarities between the GRC and Gender Role Strain Paradigm (O’Neil, 2008) as there is considerable theoretical overlap between these constructs (i.e., they are often used interchangeably in the literature). Given the lack of a blueprint regarding writing qualitative papers in this area, further qualitative work in GRC is necessary. For example, the theme masculine self-preservation and the subtheme slagging require further assessment. Slagging is akin to Oransky and Fisher’s (2009) factor social teasing, but gives credence to Irish adolescent boys’ vernacular. This construct appears to serve an important regulatory function (Stoudt, 2006); yet, it is missing from formulations of gender role conflict geared toward adolescents.

In conclusion, this is the first qualitative paper to explore patterns of gender role conflict among Irish adolescents. Four broad overarching categories were identified, with numerous contradictory expectations highlighted. The development of items on the GRCS–A that capture the themes and subthemes noted in this paper would enhance the utility of this measure when distributed to male adolescents residing in Ireland. Finally, it is recommended that additional qualitative studies be conducted with male adolescents living in other countries to determine whether heretofore unknown types of conflict will emerge; types that may warrant inclusion in future iterations of the GRCS–A.

References


### Appendix

**Key Interview Questions**

#### Expectations of Adolescent Males

1. I’m interested in the expectations of young people. I was hoping you could say something about this.
2. What are the sources of these expectations?
3. Are there differences in these expectations with age?
4. How do you deal with these expectations?

#### Stress in Adolescents

5. I’m interested in the kinds of stress that young people experience and I was hoping you could say something about this.
6. What are the sources of these stresses?
7. Are there differences in stresses with age?
8. How do you deal with these stresses?

#### Social Norms

9. Generally speaking, are there differences in the ways fellas act as opposed to how girls act?

10. Are there differences in the way fellas act in front of parents/teachers and the way they would generally act without parents/teacher being around?

11. Are there differences in the way fellas act when they’re older or younger?

12. Are there certain ways a fella should act?

13. Are there inappropriate ways for a fella to act? If so, (a) Why?

(b) What would happen if someone acted like this? (deviating or violating norms)

(c) What is likely to be said to someone/about someone if they did?

(d) Would people think less of someone as a result? If so, in what way?

14. Are there differences between how fellas act around their male friends and how they might act around their female friends? If so, (a) Why?

(b) What are these differences?

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