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Boys' Perceptions of the Male Role: Understanding Gender Role Conflict in Adolescent Males

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Adolescent males are at risk for a number of academic, social, and emotional problems. Existing research provides evidence that a number of these problems are related to conflicts experienced by adolescent males through the gender socialization process, called gender role conflict. Whereas there is ample empirical literature on gender role conflict in adult males, few researchers have investigated this hypothesized conflict in adolescent males. This study, involving small interview groups of adolescent males, was designed to examine the validity of the gender role construct for adolescent males.

Keywords: adolescent males, gender role conflict, male role

The well-being of adolescent boys has been a topic of growing concern over the past 15 or so years (Beymer, 1995; Horne & Kiselica, 1999; Osherson, 1986). Researchers have observed that adolescent males are at risk for academic, social, and emotional problems in a number of areas. Adolescent males are more likely than adolescent females to drop out of school, be referred in school for disciplinary action, receive lower grades, fail a grade in school, not graduate from high school, and not continue on to college (Coley, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). They are diagnosed with mental retardation, attention disorders, dyslexia, stuttering, and delayed speech more frequently than are adolescent girls (Halpern, 1997). In addition, adolescent males are more likely than adolescent females to commit suicide, be threatened or injured with a weapon at school, be in a physical fight, die from homicide, and commit a violent crime (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2002; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

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Researchers investigating these academic, social, and emotional problems in adolescent and college-aged samples of men have reported a relationship between the presence of some of these problems and higher levels of gender role conflict (e.g., Blazina, 1997, 2001; Fagot, Rodgers, & Leinbach, 2000; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). Gender role conflict is defined as the psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others; gender - role conflict occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986).

O'Neil and his colleagues (1986) identified four gender role conflict patterns experienced by males. The conflict regarding success, power, and competition involves persistent worry about personal achievement, obtaining authority, and comparing oneself with others. *Restrictive emotionality* emphasizes difficulty and fears expressing one's emotions. *Restricted affectionate behavior between men* involves having limited ways to express one's thoughts and feelings to other men. *Conflict between work and family relations* focuses on experiencing difficulties balancing work-school and family relations, resulting in health problems, overwork, stress, and a lack of leisure and relaxation (O'Neil et al., 1986).

Gender role conflict theory has been supported in a number of empirical studies in which relationships between gender role conflict and a wide range of maladaptive behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes have been explored. Elevated levels of gender role conflict have been related to anxiety (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), depression (Good & Mintz, 1990), difficulty with intimate relationships (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), stress (Good et al., 1995), negative attitudes toward help seeking (Good & Wood, 1995), well-being (Blazina & Watkins, 1996), substance use (Blazina & Watkins, 1996), self-esteem, (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), and poor attachment with parents (Blazina & Watkins, 2000). These studies almost exclusively have involved college-aged male participants.

Gender role conflict, however, is theorized to occur over the course of a male's lifespan, although it is assumed to be manifested differently at various ages and stages in a male's life (Blazina, 1997, 2001; O'Neil et al., 1995). In support of this theoretical supposition, a few empirical studies have indicated differences in how gender role conflict is experienced in young adult males versus middle-aged men (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Mendelson, 1988). Notably, younger adult males tend to experience more gender role conflict than older adult males, except in the subscale related to the conflict between work and family life.

Although gender role conflict is theorized as a lifelong process, few researchers have investigated the hypothesized conflict among adolescents. In fact, only three studies were located involving adolescent male participants. Two of these studies used the adult gender role conflict measure (i.e., Addelston, 1995; Reichert & Kuriloff, 2001) with adolescent participants. Addelston (1995) found that boys who reported higher gender role conflict scores tended to have lower self-esteem and more traditional attitudes about women than boys who reported lower gender role conflict scores. Reichert and Kuriloff (2001) found a relationship between gender role conflict and anxiety as well as poor academic self-concept.

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In the third study, the authors created and used an adapted version of the gender role conflict measure (e.g., Blazina, Pisecco, & O'Neil, 2003). Items on the adult scale were reworded by the authors to be developmentally appropriate for an adolescent population. For example, the item "Moving up the career ladder is important to me" was removed and replaced with "Getting to the top of my class is important to me," which potentially speaks better to the aspirations of a high school aged adolescent male. Similarly, the subscale *Conflict between Work and Family* was renamed *Conflict between School, Work, and Family* to reflect the potential conflicts that adolescents may experience in schools. The authors found that gender role conflict predicted psychological distress—specifically family problems, emotional problems, and conduct problems—in a sample of 339 high school aged boys.

There are some clear limitations to the research on gender role conflict in adolescent males, including, principally, the very small number of studies available on this hypothesized conflict in adolescents. Of the studies that have been conducted, only one has used an instrument designed for adolescents (e.g., Blazina et al., 2003). However, the items for this instrument were generated by a focus group of researchers, not pilot tested with adolescent males; it is not clear that the items on the instrument and the underlying constructs actually make sense to and resonate with boys. Finally, with one exception (e.g., Blazina et al., 2003), all of these studies have used samples of boys enrolled in private schools, thereby limiting the generalizability of those studies.

Clearly, there is a need for researchers to have a better understanding of adolescent males' experience of gender role conflict. Although theorists and researchers have hypothesized that gender role conflict is experienced by adolescent males, no researcher to date has asked a group of boys directly about their experience of gender role conflict. Talking directly with boys seems necessary at this point, as the theoretical assumptions about gender role conflict in adolescent males have not been evaluated adequately, and their experiences necessarily would differ from those of adult men (Blazina et al., 2003). Indeed, the theoretical descriptions of gender role conflict as manifested at adolescence are relatively brief and somewhat general. Qualitative methodology, such as interviews and focus groups, would allow researchers to explore in-depth gender role conflict from the adolescents' point of view.

The overall goal of this research project, then, was to determine the extent to which gender role conflict and the four underlying constructs of gender role conflict theory (as described by Blazina et al., 2003) reflect the essence of adolescent males' experience and are measured accurately by the adolescent version of the Gender Role Conflict Scale. Interviews and qualitative methodology were chosen to allow broad and in-depth exploration of the construct from the participants' perspectives. In addition, a more representative sample of boys, those in public vs. private schools, were interviewed.

There were five specific research questions for this study:

- Do adolescent boys experience restricted affection between men?
- Do adolescent boys experience restricted emotionality?
- Do adolescent boys experience a conflict between work or school and family?

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- Do adolescent boys experience a need for success and achievement?
- Does gender role conflict, as defined by O'Neil et al. (1986), apply to adolescent boys?

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

Participants for this study were a convenience sample of high school aged boys currently enrolled in North Carolina public schools who were members of a local youth organization. The potential participants were informed of the risks and benefits of the study and were asked to secure parental permission via consent form. Those participants who chose to participate in the study were compensated with five dollars for their time.

There were a total of 11 participants. Of these, three were freshmen in high school, six were juniors, and two were seniors. The range of ages was 14 to 18 years, with an average age of 16.2 years ($SD = 1.18$). The sample was somewhat ethnically diverse; nine of the participants were Caucasian, one was African-American, and one was an exchange student from Eastern Europe. The sample was also diverse with respect to academic achievement in school as well as socioeconomic status; the participants' self-reported grade point averages ranged from 1.2 to 4.0 on a four-point scale. Their parents' educational levels, an indicator of socioeconomic status (Crosnoe, Erickson, & Dornbusch, 2002), ranged from having completed some high school to having obtained an advanced degree.

Participants were interviewed individually and in small groups by the first author. The individual interviews lasted approximately one hour; the group interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours. All interviews followed the format outlined in Appendix A. Generally speaking, the interview questions were designed to tap into the constructs represented within gender role conflict theory. Tapes of the interviews were transcribed and used for coding.

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the authors elected to use a consensual approach (citation) to coding and interpreting the data. In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination, and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence. The focus of conceptual analysis is on identifying the *occurrence* of selected terms within a text or texts, although the terms may be implicit as well as explicit (Smith, 1992).

In line with the research questions, we coded for the existence of the identified concepts in the transcriptions, rather than the frequency. The authors reviewed the interview transcripts independently, identifying thematic categories of gender, masculine behavior and attitudes, and gender role conflict, and then met to compare identified themes. Agreement was reached through discussion. Themes were then interpreted and analyzed with respect to their relevance to gender role conflict theory.

RESULTS

Results are presented in terms of the goals for the study. The words of the participants are used whenever possible to more accurately describe and capture the meaning of their experience.

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RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

DO ADOLESCENT BOYS EXPERIENCE RESTRICTED AFFECTION BETWEEN MEN?

Participants robustly supported the gender role conflict theme of restricted affectionate behavior between men. Many of the participants said that they could not share their feelings of affection with their friends for fear of criticism. "You would never know if a guy liked another guy 'cause they would never talk about it," said one participant. If feelings were shared, "People would tease him or something." Another participant said, "I know that if I share with some of my friends, they just laugh in my face. And be like 'man, you're gay.'"

One participant articulated the reason why boys might fear expressing feelings to one another: "Cause they've developed that unspoken code, you know. They know, if I do this to this guy, pat him on the back or something, some people might look at it in a different light and make some assumptions."

As these quotes indicate, a theme of homophobia as a rationale for not expressing affection to other males ran through many of the comments. For example, one participant said, "I think there is [a fear of expressing affection to other men], just because there's that fear of criticism and that fear that someone will jump on you and be like 'what!?' What's going on?' And you don't want to get that started. You could be the next gay dude at your school or something."

Some participants said that they simply did not have feelings of affection for male friends. "Well, yeah. I don't really have like ... emotions for other guys. I mean.... Or, yeah, friendship. But like, love? I don't love any guys!" Other participants were willing to share feelings of affection, but said they did so knowing that there would be retribution or ridicule. One boy, who claimed that he was pretty open about sharing his emotions, said that he would share his feelings with another boy; "And [when] I share with him, for example, he'll just laugh at me."

RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

DO ADOLESCENT BOYS EXPERIENCE RESTRICTED EMOTIONALITY?

The restricted emotionality theme seemed to be experienced dynamically by the participants. Many boys said that it was inappropriate to express emotions that they felt because that came across as not masculine or "unmanly." Boys made comments such as, "I mean, that's like the stereotype thing. Like that I'm supposed to be all hard and tough," and "You know, you can't say you love somebody." Another participant said, "We have to be that awesome guy who has no problems. We've got to be that strong individual." Finally, "Guys, it seems, they don't show their feelings because it's hard for them. Others don't show their feelings because they don't really have any."

Many boys shared that the only acceptable emotion was anger or rage. One boy remarked, "The thing about showing emotion.... I show when I'm mad. That's the only emotion I really have. Temper. When something ticks me off, man, it is known. It is known." Another boy shared a story about an exchange with a coworker in which the participant was driving a car. He got angry at the coworker and flared. That was the only emotional exchange that the two had ever had, he reported.

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As for emotions other than anger or rage, many boys said that they had difficulty expressing those feelings: "[Guys] usually express our feelings of anger pretty well and quick. But more on the affection side, and the happy side, we don't show it too much." Another participant said, "We really don't say what's on our minds. Until we're at a state of doing something violent and rash. Every now and then we'll be 'yeah,' but we really don't say what's on our minds."

The more sensitive the emotion, the more difficult to express, reported the boys, "especially if they were like sad, like crying feelings." One boy said, "I don't really cry much. It's not that I'm really afraid to cry. I'm not that dramatic. I don't have a very dramatic life."

A few boys discussed the role that their fathers played in the development of their emotional expressiveness. One boy remarked, "We had a real major occurrence happen about a year ago. And ah, he couldn't take it. He just stormed out. Walked home from a few miles away. All because, you know, he didn't want to actually admit to it. And I guess he would rather walk four or five miles home than deal with his emotions." Another group member echoed that he had never seen his father cry.

Notably, several boys discussed their grief reactions and other boys' grief reactions. One boy told a story of seeing a peer after that boy's grandfather had died. That peer, he said, never showed any sign of grief for fear of ridicule. In the following example, a boy described his own grief experience and one of his friends:

Well, like, I always thought that when I experienced, like death, or something, or seeing someone die, that, I said this as a kid, if my great-grandma died anytime soon, I would just ball my eyes and stuff. But when I found out she died, I was just kind of OK with it. I mean, I accepted it cause I knew she was going to die eventually. I mean she was just like suffering. She had just like this little problem and stuff. She was in the hospital for a few weeks. She couldn't open her eyes or anything. She was just ... I thought I was really going to be sad about it. One of my best friends, or like one of my good friends that I know, his dad had a heart attack right in front of him, and he had to give CPR to him and he finally gave up because he was already dead. He died right in front of him. The guy ... didn't cry once ... he just kinda stood up and called 911. He didn't cry or anything. I guess that was just because his dad was so disciplinary. 'Cause his dad was a Navy Seal, and he was really strict on him and stuff, and the son who didn't cry at all was expected to be a Navy seal. A lot of guys thought that it was just going to hit him one day. Just because, it hits a guy once, even though it's not supposed to, that our dad's dead, you know. We're not supposed to be emotional, but you figure that you're going to be saddened by it even though you're not expected to be saddened by it. It's just life and death.

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RESEARCH QUESTION 3:

DO ADOLESCENT BOYS EXPERIENCE A CONFLICT BETWEEN WORK OR SCHOOL AND FAMILY?

Adolescent boys' experience of gender role conflict was somewhat less clear with respect to the conflict between work or school and family. Whereas some boys expressed a clear conflict, others did not. Although this sample was too small to draw substantive conclusions, there seemed to be a relationship between the level of academic achievement of the boy and the presence of this conflict.

Some boys expressed this conflict clearly. One boy said, "Lots of times I've had a conflict, like I need to study for a test, and my friend calls me up, and he's like 'hey, do you want to go to the soccer game tonight?'" Another boy said,

I come right from school, and I have a bunch of homework to do, and I know I have to do it because the day before I was planning to do it, and, you know, I'm trying, I'm struggling to be, you know, to do what I'm supposed to. And achieve my goals, and all that stuff. But then somebody calls, and she or he will be like, "Let's go out; let's do something."

A final participant said,

Like, the past year and a half has been the most schoolwork stress I've ever had in my life. Just because I have to get good grades to get into college and stuff, I mean, like, a lot of people have noticed that I'm, like, not able to hang out with my friends as much as I used to be able to, just because I have to worry about schoolwork; I have to do all these projects, and it just, it's really stressful.

This participant said that he had broken up with six or seven girlfriends because of schoolwork.

Boys who claimed that they were more academically motivated tended to express this conflict more frequently. One participant, who was near the top of his class, said:

I get in bad moods [when I have to choose between my friends and school work]. Like, I get pretty pissed off whenever, for instance, like if I had something planned, just even, just to talk to somebody or something like that, and I end up having to stay up late doing a project that won't affect my life at all in five years.

Other boys claimed that they experienced no work, school and/or family conflict. This may have been because one or more of the areas of this conflict—school, work, or family—were not a strong factor in their lives. Also, there may have been little or no conflict because they were able to manage the stressors in their lives. Some boys claimed that friends, family, or school were not important to them. For example, one participant said, "I don't think so because ... I don't place that much

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stock in friends." Another participant said, "Um, actually, I don't really feel torn. I don't focus on school that much. I'm really extremely unmotivated and lazy."

In general, boys who claimed that their schoolwork was important to them tended to claim that they felt torn between school and family and friends. Occasionally a boy would claim that when he faced a conflict he would simply prioritize schoolwork over family and friends.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4:

DO ADOLESCENT BOYS EXPERIENCE A NEED FOR SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT?

Boys varied in their response to the question regarding the need to be successful. Some said success is important: "I think it's pretty important. I mean, you can't be too much [of a person] if you're not successful [and] you don't have much money. You can't be too happy if you're not successful." Another boy said, "Yeah. I'm setting it up so that I will be financially successful. So ... if success is mostly defined by how much money you have, I'll be all right."

Other boys struggled with the definition of the term "successful." Some suggested that "success means different things to different people" and that "it depends on your definition of success." This ambiguity in the meaning of "success" seemed to interfere with their ability to respond to the question.

Some boys were specific rather than global about the areas in which they tried to be successful. School, music, and sports were examples. One boy said about his attempts to be successful, "I think, yeah, I do. Number one, on the court, I try to be more successful gotta be." Another boy said, "Whenever I'm on the field, I always try to do better than the person I'm going against or the team I'm playing against or someone who's going for my position."

Most boys agreed that, in general, it was important for some guys to feel in charge. They noted that other boys seem to "thrive on dominance" and need to "act tough." They come to school "so that they can run everything."

A common theme was boys' needs to take charge in group situations. For example, one boy said of his peer group, "There will be like a bunch of guys, and they will be like each trying to take, like, you know, control. Three people will try to be the leader." Or, "If I do something with a group of people, like on a mission trip, I like to do things my way, because ... I can do it better, or I can be more successful."

Athletics was a specific area in which some boys discussed the need to take charge. Here are two examples:

Like, me being 6'4" and being a post player, you want to intimidate people! I mean, if somebody's going to drive the lane, I'm not going to do well if I walk through. I mean, that's my space! That's mine, you know. That's all there is to it.

I attend a Quaker meeting, and Quakers—it's one of those beliefs, or whatever—to be a pacifist. And, well, I play soccer on this rec team, and this kid on my team was like "you don't play soccer like a Quaker." And I'm like, "I know." So I'm different on the field. I

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play physical. I guess I could be intimidating. I play physical, you know. I'm going to do what it takes.

RESEARCH QUESTION5:

OVERALL, DO ADOLESCENT BOYS EXPERIENCE GENDER ROLE CONFLICT?

HOW IS THIS SIMILAR TO OR DIFFERENT FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF ADULT MALES?

At the end of the interview, the participants were read a simplified version of gender role conflict theory and asked if that was similar to their experience. For the most part, they responded in the affirmative. "The fact of the matter is most of that's true, and it's there. As to why it's there, I can't like fully explain, but a lot of it is." Another participant said, "It sounds good. I'm trying to give an explanation of why it's there, but I really can't think of one, 'cause I mean ... as long as I have been alive, and, you know, as far back in history as you can go, you know, there's always been this role that men are supposed to have and women are supposed to have." A third boy said of the theory, "The theory that you just read is actually like the theory that everyone envisions as a male." A final boy offered the following comment after he offered a critical evaluation of the theory, pointing out its strengths and weaknesses: "So pretty much the theory is correct in its general state. If you were to break into more specific things, it kind of has its bends. Like some rules." One boy disagreed about how the theory was worded but ultimately agreed with many parts of the theory, simply believing that it was worded too strongly.

At times, boys would offer explanations for why pressures on boys to act in a gender constricted way exist. Common explanations were parents, especially fathers, the media, and society. Some boys commented societal roles for men have always been there.

DISCUSSION

In line with the theory proposed by O'Neil et al. (1995), the boys' responses indicated that gender role conflict is a developmental process begun by adolescence. Most of the participants in this study said that some or all of the theory resonated with their experience and provided concrete examples. In general, they reported that they felt societal pressure to avoid emotional expression as well as the expression of affection to other men. They described a need to succeed and show dominance in class, in groups, and in athletics. Some boys reported feeling conflict between their school or work obligations and the need to spend time with friends and family.

With respect to the underlying factors of gender role conflict, both *Restricted Emotionality* and *Restricted Affection between Men* resonated as strongly with the adolescent male participants as they typically do with adult male samples. Almost all of the boys acknowledged experiencing very strong societal messages regarding feeling emotions and expressing emotional feelings to other males. A theme of homophobia often seemed to be integrated within these discussions. It seems possible, as Blazina et al. (2003) have suggested, that the cultural assumption in Western cultures is that showing affection to other males or showing emotional sensitivity is effeminate and therefore indicative of homosexuality. The strength of these cultural

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dynamics may be reflected in the boys' endorsement of these attitudes. The homophobia theme may also be related to normal identity development. A task for males in adolescence is to develop an understanding of their identity (Erikson, 1950); for some boys, part of stereotyped masculine identity in Western cultures involves the rejection of anything feminine or "gay" (Blazina, 1997; Martino, 2000).

Another theme that emerged during discussions of emotionality and affection with other men was one of denial. Some boys denied that they experienced any emotions at all, except for anger, or that they felt neither of these conflicts because they never wanted to express their affections or emotions to other males. It seems possible, from their responses, that these socialized behaviors are learned directly from adult men, as Pollack (1998) and Osherson (1986) have suggested. In short, these theorists suggested that caregivers, especially fathers, provide a limited range of acceptable emotional experiences for their son in the effort to make him a strong man. Some of our participants echoed these words in their responses.

In general, the construct Need for Success and Achievement was supported in this sample of boys. However, there were some notable variations. Boys tended to need to pin a specific and concrete activity, such as schoolwork, athletics, or music, on their success. They tended to speak less about future success except for those who were seniors in high school. To tap into this construct, the interviewer asked two separate questions: "How important is it to be successful?" and "Do some guys need to feel really in charge?" In retrospect, the term "in charge" may not have accurately addressed "achievement or success" and may have represented another construct altogether. Nevertheless, boys tended to support the premise that males, in general, have a need to be in charge, especially when in groups.

The construct *Conflict between Work or School and Family* seemed to be experienced differently by this adolescent male sample than it would be by an adult sample. As mentioned, adult males are conflicted between work and their own families of which they would be head of household, whereas adolescent males more appropriately would be conflicted between school and a family in which they would be a child. It was clear that some of these boys were experiencing a conflict, but it is somewhat unclear how this notion relates to the adult male counterpart. Certainly a conflict between school, friends, sports, extracurricular activities, and work would seem more appropriate unless the adolescent boy is responsible for head-of-household duties; then some of this theorized conflict is lost in the translation to boyhood.

For the most part, there were few notable differences in the experience of gender role conflict between boys of different ages. The one exception is that older boys (i.e., juniors and seniors) tended to experience more of a conflict between school or work and family than younger boys. This difference makes sense as the older, high school aged students tend to have more schoolwork.

On the whole, then, gender role conflict and the four constructs underlying gender role conflict theory seemed to apply to this sample of adolescent males, so that further research with this age group is warranted. There are several logical next steps for this research, including additional qualitative studies. One focus, suggested by results of this study as well as Pollack (1998) and Osherson (1986), would be an exploration of the fathers' role in their sons' understanding of themselves as males, their socialized roles as males, and how to deal with conflicts and negative conse-

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quences resulting from these roles. In addition, interviews with boys at different developmental points in adolescence would help broaden our understanding of gender role conflict. Other researchers have found that, generally, men become less gender role conflicted over time (Counoyer & Mahalik, 1995). It may be that the experience of the emotional components of gender role conflict peak in the high school years for most boys and then gradually level off after they enter adulthood. Longitudinal studies would help elucidate the trajectory of gender role conflict in males. Studies of more diverse populations also are needed to determine whether gender role conflict is manifested differently across racial and ethnic groups.

Future researchers also might seek to understand other socialization influences in boys' lives, such as the ways in which their families, peers, schools, and the media affect notions of their gender role in society. Although it is important to ascertain the influences that lead to gender role conflict, researchers also should give attention to identifying factors that might *protect* boys from gender role conflict. Research in this vein would help clarify the complex web of external influences on gender role conflict development and perhaps suggest strategies for helping boys deal with the conflicts.

An important aim of this study was to explore the efficacy of the *Gender Role Conflict Scale—Adolescent Version* (Blazina et al., 2003). When asked, participants reported that they understood most of the questions on the scale. They were often confused by the use of the word "men" when the question seemed to refer to same-aged peers. In light of this feedback, all references to "men" on the instrument could be changed to read "males." For example, the item "Affection with other men makes me tense" could be changed to "Affection with other males makes me tense." With this change, the use of this scale in future studies is supported, especially in quantitative research exploring the relationship of gender role conflict with other variables (e.g., psychological functioning variables investigated in studies of adult males).

In summary, results of this study have added validity to and broadened our understanding of the nature of gender role conflict in adolescents. It seems apparent from the boys' responses to the interview questions that they receive strong socialization messages about what it means to be a man from a young age and already are struggling to understand themselves as males.

This study is limited, however, with respect to generalizability due to the small nonrandom sample size and the qualitative methodology used. Whereas the qualitative approach adds depth to the phenomena under investigation, the results of a qualitative study are often not generalizable beyond the participants of that study (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999).

Another limitation may be a difficulty that boys have in talking about the subject itself. Many of the interview questions were of a personal and emotional nature. Some of the participants seemed to struggle with the questions or had difficulty coming up with examples to support their response to the question. This difficulty, perhaps grounded in gender role conflict itself (i.e., gender role conflicted males have difficulty expressing emotions to other men), may have been a confounding factor in this study. However, the fact that boys have difficulty in articulating their notions of gender and the male role in society may give insight into the nature of gender role conflict itself for adolescent males.

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APPENDIX A

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When do you feel torn between the school stuff that you have to do and other obligations, like family and friends? What do you do when you feel torn? Example? (Conflict between school, work, or family)
- It seems that it is sometimes hard for guys to express their feelings. Do you think this is true? Is it true for you? When is it hard? Easy? (Restricted Emotionality)
- How important is it to be successful? Do you try to be more successful than other guys? What are some areas in which you try to be successful (school, sports, work)? Do you think that some guys need to feel really in charge? Do you think this is true? Is it true for you? (Need for success and achievement)

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- Is it hard for guys to express their emotions to each other? Do you think this is true? Is it true for you? (Restricted affection between men)
- There is an idea (theory) that states that males are raised with pretty strict and rigid expectations about what they can do and cannot do. Specifically, the theory suggests that there is pressure put on males by society to put school and work ahead of friends and family. Furthermore, males are taught that they should not express their feelings, that it is extremely important to be successful, and that men should not express affection toward each other. What do you think of this theory? Can you give any examples of times where you have felt any of the pressures that I mentioned?