



THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ROLE CONFLICT ON ADOLESCENT AND EMERGING ADULT MALE RESILIENCY

This study examines gender role conflict in adolescent and emerging adult males and how it affects their resilience, or their ability to “bounce back” from adverse circumstances. Specifically, the study investigated the effects of the different patterns of gender role conflict on male adolescent/emerging adult resilience. Results suggest a complex relationship between male gender role conflict and resilience in this sample. Multiple regression modeling showed that as conflict surrounding the Success, Power and Competition (SPC) pattern increased, these male youth reported more resilience. Conversely, as conflict surrounding the Restrictive Emotionality (RE) pattern increased, male youth reported less resilience. Further study is needed to explore these relationships and their effects in adolescent and emerging adult males more closely. More specifically, research should focus on the gender socialization process, the development of gender role conflict, and its effects on male youth throughout the gender development process.

Keywords: gender role conflict, male, resilience, adolescent, emerging adult

Gender identity development can be an arduous process for adolescents and emerging adults. Both the paths of gender development and the resulting identities of youth can have a great effect on the development and later lives of these individuals. One of the potential difficulties at this stage is gender role conflict, “a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others [that] ... occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restrictions, devaluation, or violation of others or self” (O’Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995, pp. 165-166).

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Gender Role Conflict and Its Factors

Gender role conflict consists of four component factors, defined as follows (O'Neil et al., 1995): Success, Power, and Competition (SPC) refers to the specific worries males have regarding their personal achievement, obtaining authority over others, and striving against others or comparing the self to others to establish superiority. The second factor, Restrictive Emotionality (RE), encompasses the anxiety and fear surrounding emotional expression. Difficulty touching and expressing thoughts and feelings to other men comprises the third pattern, Restrictive Affectionate behavior Between Men (RABBM). The fourth or final factor, Conflict between Work and Family Relations (CBWFR), is concerned with the stressors resulting from difficulty balancing work or school and family life. Gender role conflict has been established through previous research to be related to low self-esteem, lower intimacy, anxiety, depression, relationship dissatisfaction, sexual aggression and hostility toward women, and negative attitudes toward homosexuals among college-age men (O'Neil et al., 1995).

Recent research corroborates these findings. Beatty, Syzdek, and Bakkum (2006) examined males' self-reported Gender Role Conflict as well as the Gender Role Conflict they perceived their peers had. Initially, young men overestimated peer Gender Role Conflict; however, after an intervention was held in which Gender Role Conflict was discussed in small groups, males who participated in the intervention not only reported more accurate gender role conflict for peers but also self-reported lower levels of Restrictive Emotionality than those participants who did not receive the intervention. Clearly, these results suggest that social norms can and probably do play a role in gender role conflict, and that gender role conflict experienced by college-age males can be lessened through informational interventions that offer opportunity for discussion, at least for Restrictive Emotionality.

Another study, by Watts and Borders (2005), found that gender role conflict resulted in decreased inter-male affection, limited emotionality, and an increase in school/family/friend conflict in adolescent males. These researchers noted that gender role conflict in Western cultures can mean rejection of anything effeminate or "gay," and they suggest that this homophobic attitude can negatively affect adolescent males.

Watts and Borders (2005) also suggest an asset-based approach to further examine gender nonconformity. It seems that this framework may provide fresh insight without requiring an exploration of virtually limitless risk factors. The asset-based approach may help to identify overarching protective factors that could counteract myriad risk factors for young men. Utilizing the theory of resilience, asset identification in these populations may assist in understanding how gender identity development, specifically gender role conflict, affects adolescent and emerging adult males as well as what may protect young men against any associated vulnerability.

Promoting positive youth development among male adolescents and emerging adults has long been a concern for researchers and practitioners alike. This task historically has entailed identifying a propensity for problematic behaviors in this developmental period, which has "designated the absence of negative outcomes as the presence

of healthy outcomes” (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000, p. 290). Recent research trends highlight the importance of examining the resilience that youth display in the face of myriad developmental stressors.

Resilience Theory

Richardson (2002), for instance, tracks this shift from problem-based research to a more positive approach of resilience theory, proposing “there is a force within everyone that drives them to seek self-actualization, altruism, wisdom, and harmony with a spiritual source of strength” (p. 313). This force, according to Richardson, is resilience, which is comprised of three waves: first, the identification of resilient qualities; second, an understanding of the process of attaining these assets, which explains how assets break down and re-form; and last, innate resilience, that is identifying the motivation for resiliency through personal characteristics and the drive for self-actualization.

The model of resilience, discussed in depth by Richardson (2002) in his section on the second wave of resilience, incorporates the potential effects of gender role conflict. In this model, adolescents/emerging adults are presented as having a biopsychospiritual homeostasis, a safe “home base” of sorts in which protective factors and stressors balance out, resulting in minimal risk on the individual. Next in the model, a disruption occurs, throwing off the balance of the former homeostasis. Factors that could cause disruption may include self-awareness of gender role conflict, treatment or reaction from peers, taunting due to gender nonconforming behavior, or myriad other similar events.

The adolescent/emerging adult’s task is reintegration, and according to the model, there are four ways to do this. The first is resilient reintegration, in which the rebound

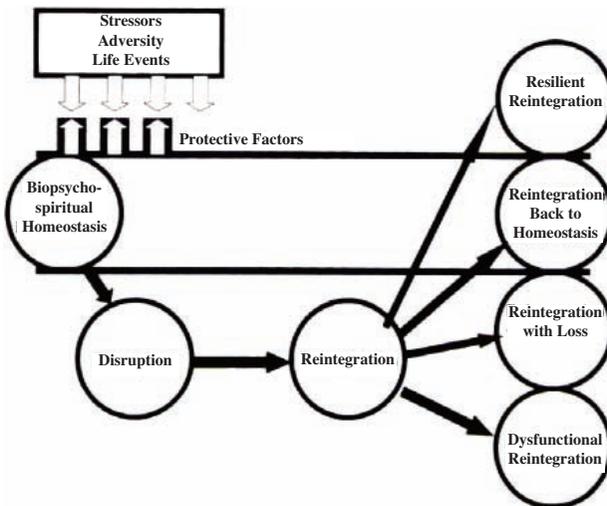


Figure 1. Resiliency model, adapted from Richardson (2002).

level is higher than the original homeostasis, usually due to learning, growth, or further development. Another outcome is reintegration back to homeostasis, in which the adolescent simply deals with the disruption and leaves it behind. Yet another possibility is reintegration with loss, in which the individual loses motivation as a result of dealing with this disruption. Lastly is dysfunctional reintegration, in which “people resort to substances, destructive behaviors, or other means to deal with life prompts” (Richardson, 2002, p. 312).

Since homeostasis is maintained by a stress level less than or equal to protective factors, as these protectors increase in number or intensity, the youth becomes less likely to experience disruptions. Conversely, if youth have very few protective factors, even small stressors can cause disruptions, resulting in an almost constant reintegration process that could result in dysfunctional reintegration. This dysfunctional integration model can lead to problematic behaviors, a more likely outcome for adolescents with few protective factors, according to this model.

Gender role conflict can have great and lasting effects on adolescent and emerging adult development, both in terms of gender identity and resilience. The positivistic framework of resiliency can assist in explaining exactly how adverse events related to gender development can play out in adolescence and emerging adulthood. The results of this study will allude to potential prevention/intervention methodology for practitioners while also giving researchers direction for further study on the topic.

The purpose of this study is to examine gender role conflict in adolescents and emerging adults and how it affects their resilience, or their ability to “bounce back” from adverse circumstances. Specifically, the study will investigate the effect of the different patterns of gender role conflict on male adolescent/emerging adult resilience. Specific research questions for this study included:

Is there a relationship between overall gender role conflict (GRC) and overall resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males?

Is there a relationship between the Success, Power, and Competition (SPC) pattern of gender role conflict and overall resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males?

Is there a relationship between the Restrictive Emotionality (RE) pattern of gender role conflict and overall resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males?

Is there a relationship between the Restrictive Affectionate Behavior between Men (RABBM) pattern of gender role conflict and overall resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males?

Is there a relationship between the Conflict between Work and Family Relations (CBWFR) pattern of gender role conflict and overall resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males?

Methodology

Instrumentation

A self-completion questionnaire was used for this study. This questionnaire contained four main portions: the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP), the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS), a modified self-report (Kinsey sexuality rating), and demographic questions.

The DAP was created by the Search Institute to inventory the level, types, and combinations of developmental assets that youth between the ages of 11 and 18 report. (<http://www.search-institute.org/surveys/dap.html>). This falls under Richardson's first wave of resilience, or the identification of resilient qualities, here referred to as developmental assets. These assets were divided into four internal categories (Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, and Constructive Use of Time) and four external asset categories (Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies, and Positive Identity). Respondents indicated the frequency at which they experienced resilient qualities with four possible responses: "Not At All or Rarely" (= 0), "Somewhat or Sometimes" (= 1), "Very or Often" (= 2) and "Extremely or Almost Always" (= 3). Validity and reliability have been established for the intended age range (Chronbach's alpha for the DAP averaged .81 for the asset categories). Validity was assessed using the Search Institute's Attitudes and Behaviors survey, and yielded a correlation of .82 for total asset scores (DAP User Manual, 2005); however, this study utilized this instrument on an extended age range, namely 18-24 years old. It was important to use an established instrument when exploring initial relationships with resilience, especially after addressing a few concerns. First, there are many 18-year-old freshman males included in this study. Also, as the instructions ask respondents to reflect on the past three months in order to respond to given items, 19-year olds would probably be very similar to the 18-year-olds in their responses. After testing different age groups (18, 19-24, and combined), Chronbach's alphas showed college-age male respondents to be generally consistent (see Appendix A); thus, the DAP was used to assess resilience over this extended age range in this study.

The DAP yields both an overall asset score as well as two major subscale scores, one for internal assets and one for external assets. The individual asset areas (Support, Empowerment, etc.) each have their own scores as well. The scale score for each of the asset areas (Support, Empowerment, etc.) can range from 0 to 30. The internal and external asset scores are computed by averaging the four component asset area scores, and thus range from 0 to 30 as well. The total asset score is the sum of both the internal and external asset scores and ranges from 0 to 60. For the asset areas as well as for the internal and external asset areas, scores ranging from 26-30 represent "abundant levels of assets," scores from 21-25 are considered "good," with room for improvement, scores from 15-20 are considered "fair" and may show areas of particular deficiency in the respondent's life, and scores from 0-14 represent low levels of assets (DAP User Manual, 2005). The total asset score ranges reveal "Excellent" (51-60), "Good" (41-50),

“Fair” (30-40) and “Low” (0-29) ranges (DAP User Manual, 2005). Throughout the DAP scoring system, then, higher scores generally reflect higher levels of assets.

In 1986, O’Neil described the GRCS, which was designed to assess men’s conflict with the four patterns of the male gender role. These patterns are: success, power, and competition (SPC); restrictive emotionality (RE); restrictive affectionate behavior between men (RABBM); and conflict between work and family relations (CBWFR). This 37-item scale is scored both as an overall gender role conflict score and as a pattern-specific score for each pattern of gender role conflict. Reliability and validity of this instrumentation have been established in previous research (O’Neil) and Chronbach’s alphas for both the pattern scores and the overall gender role conflict scores in this study similarly showed sufficient internal consistency for use in this research (see Appendix A).

The sexuality rating for this study was a single item designed to ascertain self-reported respondent feelings of sexuality. It was thought that this was an important demographic item when testing for gender role conflict, as men with different sexual orientations may internalize the masculine gender role differently. This item was thus intended to serve as a basis for comparison between the gender role conflict experienced by predominantly heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual men; however, the sample size of the latter groups was insufficient for any such comparison. This item was a self-report sexuality item based on the Kinsey rating, and had 0 – 6 scalar response ranges from “exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual” to “exclusively homosexual” (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948/1998). Although Kinsey received some criticism for his methods, the operationalization of sexuality into a spectrum has been modeled by many subsequent researchers. Additionally, this scalar response allows for a more diverse sample in terms of sexuality response. Other demographic items were included for screening purposes and for sample validation.

Participants and Procedures

A cross-sectional design was used for this study. After obtaining a list of general education classes offered at a large coeducational university in the southeast, researchers contracted instructors via e-mail with a request to allow their students to participate in the study during class time. All male students in attendance were offered the opportunity to voluntarily participate after researchers provided the participants with an overview of the study and instructions for completion, beginning with the required consent form. No content questions were answered during the study. Due to the sensitive nature of some demographic items, all male students were asked to participate, since excluding individuals at the time of administration would have inadvertently identified potentially stigmatized groups. Complete confidentiality was ensured by coding instrumentation packets with identification numbers for analysis rather than collecting identifying information. Respondents were also instructed not to participate multiple times in the study so as not to skew or bias results.

Of the approximately 450 general education classes offered on campus during the data collection semester, 22 participated in this study, generating 394 completed in-

strumentation packets. Respondents were excluded if their self-reported age was outside of the age range (18-24 years) or they self-reported intersex status. As intersex individuals have biological characteristics of both sexes (Sax, 2002), their gender identity and/or expression may be different than non-intersex college males; thus, they would comprise an interesting group to study independently, but were not included in this study.

The sample for this study included 362 male respondents. This sample was predominantly White (59.1%), but did include a significant percentage of reported Black of African American (16.2%) and Hispanic (16.8%) respondents, a smaller percentage of Asian (4.6%), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (0.6%), American Indian or Alaska Native (0.0%), and Other (2.7%) race groups. Age in this sample ranged from 18-24 years, with the mean age of 20.05 years ($SD = 1.602$). Also, respondents in these general education courses were slightly early on in their academic careers on average, with 29.5% freshman, 25.6% sophomore, 20.9% junior and 22.6% senior males. Sexual orientation was reported on a scale from 0 (= exclusively heterosexual) to 6 (= exclusively homosexual). This sample had a mean sexuality score of 0.32 ($SD = 1.161$); thus, the majority of respondents were exclusively heterosexual.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using the following model. Independent variables, including demographics appear on the left and the dependent variable, resilience, appears on the right (see Figure 2).

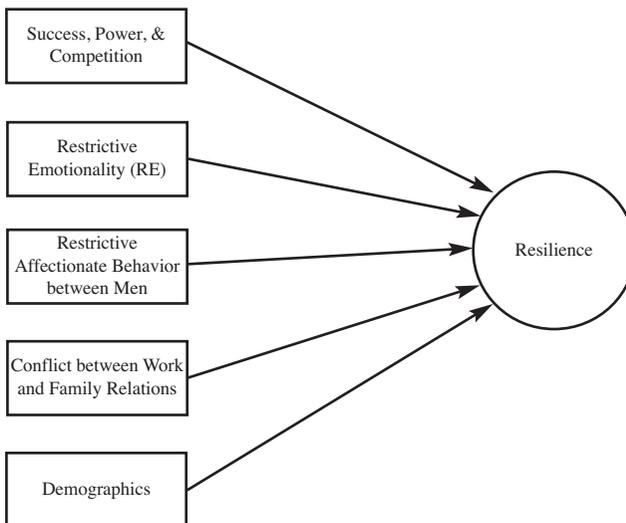


Figure 2. Data analysis model.

Initially, Pearson's correlations were conducted between the variables in the model in three groups: demographics related to resilience, gender role conflict patterns related to resilience, and demographics related to gender role conflict. If significant relationships were found through these correlations, ANOVAs were used to independently relate demographics and the patterns of gender role conflict/overall gender role conflict to resiliency score. Finally, multivariate analyses in the form of a multiple regression were conducted to ascertain which of the variables most heavily influence or predict resiliency in this population.

Results

This study examined the relationship between gender role conflict and resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males. The four patterns of gender role conflict were examined in relation to resilience as measured by developmental assets. These patterns of gender role conflict include: Success, Power and Competition (SPC), Restrictive Emotionality (RE), Restrictive Affectionate Behavior between Men (RABBM), and Conflict between Work and Family Relations (CBWFR). Resilience was measured by overall DAP score, Internal and External asset scores, and pattern scores.

Bivariate analyses in the form of correlations and ANOVAs were used to preliminarily explore the data to see how relationships between gender role conflict and resilience fit together in an isolated environment. Bivariate analyses revealed no significant relationships between SPC and resilience. The RE pattern of gender role conflict, though, was significantly negatively correlated with 7 of the eight factors of resilience as well as the Internal Asset score, External Asset score, and overall score. Subsequent ANOVA tests revealed that high levels of RE consistently translated to lower levels of resilience—for 5 out of the eight factors, as well as external and overall asset scores. These statistical tests showed that as gender role conflict, specifically within the RE pattern, rose, the male's resiliency declined.¹

Correlations revealed that the RABBM pattern of gender role conflict was inversely related to two factors within resilience: Boundaries & Expectations (B&E) and Commitment to Learning (CTL). To delve into more specific relationships, ANOVA was again used. For these tests, high levels of RABBM were associated with less resilience in both the Commitment to Learning and Social Competencies factors.

CBWFR conflict was negatively correlated with three of eight component resilience factors. Additionally, there was a negative correlation found between CBWFR and Internal Asset score. Again, ANOVA was used to explore more specific relationships within these two conceptual areas. The CBWFR pattern of gender role conflict most significantly affected the resilience areas of Empowerment (EMP) and Social Competencies (SOC). Again, as gender role conflict of this type increased, resilience decreased.

¹The results for significant bivariate analyses, including F-scores, are available from the corresponding author.

Beyond bivariate analyses, the researchers wanted to explore how these variables related to each other in a real-world context. Thus, multiple regression was used to systematically explore associations between variables. Specifically, the component patterns of gender role conflict were related to resilience. Each analysis started with the patterns of gender role conflict and demographic variables entered into the model to test their effect on resilience (either overall, internal asset, or external asset score). Because some of these variables were sometimes not significant and their presence in the model could mask other significant relationships, these non-significant variables were systematically removed based on the results of the first test in each model. The remaining variables were then entered into a “reduced model,” which elucidated the most significant relationships without considering the effects of non-significant variables on these relationships.

Correlations showed that as gender role conflict (by pattern and overall) increases, resilience tends to decline. Resilience has been shown through developmental science literature discussed above to relate to a decreased propensity for myriad problematic behaviors. Thus, as adolescent/emerging adult males experience higher degrees of gender role conflict, their lack of resilience may contribute to an increased risk for a wide range of problematic behaviors. Further, the results of ANOVA analysis point to a more direct relationship between the overall gender role conflict score and resilience. These statistical tests showed that total GRC score most significantly impacted the Empowerment (EMP) area of resilience but also affected Positive Identity (PID) and External Asset (EA) score. The general pattern of results remained constant: that as gender role conflict increased, resilience decreased.

Success, Power and Competition (SPC)

This pattern accounted for slight variance, less than 1%, in overall resilience the independent multivariate regression model (adjusted $R^2 = 0.002$); however, in the reduced model, the SPC pattern score was one of two significant variables that predicted resilience. Interestingly, the regression coefficient for this significant relationship was positive, indicating that as conflict with the SPC pattern of gender role conflict increases, so does the number of developmental assets reported. Regression models using Internal and External Asset scores as dependent variables revealed the same results: that SPC score was significantly and positively related to resilience in the reduced models.

Perhaps this factor was somewhat influenced by the sample of college-age males, to whom upward mobility and performing well would probably be encouraged and internalized. Further research may assist in elucidating the complex relationships that exist within this pattern of gender role conflict.

Restrictive Emotionality (RE)

Finally, the least squares regression model for overall resilience showed this pattern as consistently important, explaining over 6% of the variance in resilience inde-

pendent of other variables (adjusted $R^2 = 0.062$). In the reduced model, the RE conflict score was the most significant in explaining resilience level (standardized beta = -0.338). This pattern continued over the regression analyses using Internal and External asset scores as dependent variables, explaining over 5% of the variance in EA score and over 4% of the variance in IA score (adjusted $R^2 = 0.058$ and 0.043 , respectively). Reduced models for these regressions revealed that RE pattern score was the most significant relationship in both cases, but was more strongly related to External asset score.

Throughout this study, higher Restrictive Emotionality (RE) scores meant less resilience overall. As the theory suggests, this finding confirms that fear of emotional disclosure generally has negative effects on males. As males are more unwilling to discuss feelings, or as they feel increasing pressure to internalize those emotions, they experience a decrease in resilience. It is thus important to explore ways in which males may feel less negative about expressing their emotions or venues in which males may be most likely to do so.

Restrictive Affectionate Behavior between Men (RABBM)

The multivariate model was also used to explore the effect of RABBM on resilience. The RABBM model alone accounted for less than one percent of the variance in resiliency alone (adjusted $R^2 = 0.004$) and, when combined with demographics and the other patterns of gender role conflict, was not significant. Similarly, for regression models using EA and IA scores for dependent variables, RABBM score was not significantly related to resilience in either the independent or reduced models.

While some levels of analysis in this study showed a relationship between Restrictive Affectionate Behavior between Men (RABBM) and resilience, the most rigorous test, the regression models, showed little effect of RABBM on resilience. RABBM is a complex pattern with items that males can interpret in many ways. Comments from participants about this particular factor's items generally represented two viewpoints: (1) that touching other men is not necessarily related to sexuality (participants often cited the example of athletes engaging in male-on-male contact) or (2) that perhaps this instrument may be better suited to homosexual individuals based on the items included. Based on the interpretation of the items, respondents may have provided very different answers. Overall, though, one would expect higher degrees of conflict to cause a decrease in resilience in males based on the theory. In any case, further research is needed to more closely study ties between these variables, especially while considering the different interpretations of this pattern's component items.

Conflict between Work and Family Relations (CBWFR)

CBWFR conflict, when entered independently into the model, accounted for less than 1% of the variance in overall resilience (adjusted $R^2 = 0.004$). When all other patterns of gender role conflict and demographics were entered into the model, CBWFR score did not significantly contribute to a change in overall resilience. The same pat-

tern was seen in the regression model that used EA score as a dependent variable. When CBWFR score was entered into a regression model using IA score as a dependent variable, this pattern score independently contributed significantly to the variance in IA score; however, this score was not significant in the reduced model.

Conflict between Work and Family Relations (CBWFR) did have at least a preliminarily negative effect on overall resilience as shown in the bivariate analysis; however this effect, when compared with the other factors within gender role conflict, was the least significant in explaining change in resilience. This may be due to the population sampled. Many undergraduates do not work; however, it is possible that those male respondents that were employed were different from those that were not. This was not addressed in this study. Further, a majority of undergraduates at the sampled institution are separated geographically from their families, which may result in less conflict with this pattern of gender role conflict. Finally, this study did not consider whether these respondents might be married or have children, which might also affect this pattern; however, this probably affects a minority of males in this age range. While CBWFR conflict was not particularly related to resiliency in this group, it may be more predictive of resilience in males of different ages or different circumstances, such as college males who live with their families and commute for educational purposes.

Overall Gender Role Conflict

Finally, in the multivariate model, more than 11% of the variance in overall resiliency score was attributed to the component patterns of gender role conflict (adjusted $R^2 = 0.115$). While overall gender role conflict score was not included in this analysis, all patterns of gender role conflict that contribute to the final score were included. When regression models were run using both Internal Asset score and External Asset score as dependent variables, the same results appeared. Specifically, three of the four gender role conflict pattern scores were inversely related to resiliency and the SPC pattern again was positively related. The only significant difference occurred in the Internal Asset score model, in which the CBWFR pattern was significant when entered individually; however, in this relationship did not remain significant in the reduced model. Overall, analysis revealed a clear inverse relationship between overall gender role conflict and resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males; thus, the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between gender role conflict and resilience was rejected.

This supported the hypothesis that gender role conflict negatively affected resilience. As gender role conflict has previously been shown to be associated with many negative outcomes, this is not surprising but is nonetheless important. Rather than relating gender role conflict to one or a few negative youth outcomes, this study related gender role conflict to resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males. This allows researchers to relate gender role conflict to the numerous problematic behaviors already associated with overall resilience. Further, by relating gender role conflict to specific patterns within resilience, researchers are able to see closer ties to specific problematic behaviors through the relationships that exist between these problematic behaviors and resiliency patterns already established in resiliency literature.

Table 1

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Demographic and GRCS Pattern Effect on External Asset Score

	Model						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Reduced
Demographics							
Black	.146**					.168**	.176**
Hispanic	.019					.031	
Other	-.050					-.046	
Academic Status	-.022					-.007	
Sexual Orientation	.090					.080	
SPC Pattern		.040				.144*	.154**
RE Pattern			-.247***			-.362***	-.329***
RABBM Pattern				-.077		.072	
CBWFR Pattern					-.032	.019	
Adjusted R²	.020	-.001	.058	.003	-.002	.102	.106
Cases	357	361	361	361	361	356	356

* Significant at the .05 level ** .01 level *** .001 level

Table 2

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Demographic and GRCS Pattern Effect on Internal Asset Score

	Model						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Reduced
Demographics							
Black	-.053					-.030	
Hispanic	-.099					-.098	
Other	-.114*					-.108*	
Academic Status	-.166**					-.146**	-.147**
Sexual Orientation	-.032					-.038	
SPC Pattern		.077				.200***	.181***
RE Pattern			-.214***			-.272***	-.284***
RABBM Pattern				-.070		.021	
CBWFR Pattern					-.107*	-.084	
Adjusted R²	.033	.003	.043	.002	.009	.101	.103
Cases	357	361	361	361	361	356	356

* Significant at the .05 level ** .01 level *** .001 level

Table 3
Standardized Regression Coefficients for Demographic and GRCS Pattern Effect on DAP Score

	Model						Reduced
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Demographics							
Black	.044					.069	
Hispanic	-.049					-.042	
Other	-.093					-.087	
Academic Status	-.110					-.090	
Sexual Orientation	.028					.019	
SPC Pattern		.066				.192**	.181***
RE Pattern			-.254***			-.347***	-.338***
RABBM Pattern				-.081		.050	
CBWFR Pattern					-.080	-.040	
Adjusted R²	.012	.002	.062	.004	.004	.102	.115
Cases	357	361	361	361	361	356	356

** Significant at the .01 level *** .001 level

Discussion

Rather than looking at specific problematic behaviors, this study examined youth resilience, which has been linked through the literature to propensity to engage in or steer clear of problematic behaviors (Benson, 2002). This wider scope paints a broad picture of positive youth development rather than focusing on one specific problematic behavior or a small set of problem issues. This study examined the effect of gender role conflict on resilience, which, along with resilience literature, will assist researchers in determining which effects of gender role conflict to be most concerned with as well as which problematic behaviors these depleted resilience areas are most associated with.

The results of this study seem to be generally in accordance with past research on gender role conflict. While this design did not examine specific problem behaviors, it did show that as gender role conflict increased, adolescent/emerging adult males did have an increased risk for a multitude of problematic behaviors in terms of a lack of resilience. By examining specific patterns of gender role conflict, analysis revealed several interesting relationships with resilience. The pattern of gender role conflict that most negatively affected resilience was Restrictive Emotionality (RE). This pattern was defined as “having difficulty and fears about expressing one’s feelings and difficulty finding words to express basic emotions,” (O’Neil et al., 1995, p. 175). The more intense these difficulties and/or fears were, the less resilience overall the males in this

sample reported. This strong relationship has important implications, especially considering the findings of the Beatty et al. study (2006), which showed that intervention providing information and discussion on gender role conflict lessens the self-report RE scores in college-age males.

One main point of discrepancy this study illuminates is the relationship between SPC and resilience. Gender role conflict has been established through research to be related to many negative outcomes, including low self-esteem, lower intimacy, anxiety, depression, relationship dissatisfaction, sexual aggression and hostility toward women and negative attitudes toward homosexuals (O'Neil et al., 1995); however, in this study, conflict with the SPC component pattern of gender role conflict was associated with a positive change in resilience. Youth with more developmental assets have been shown to be less at-risk for problems like these. Clearly, the relationship between overall gender role conflict as well as its component patterns and resilience are complex and warrant further study.

This study contributes to the literature surrounding gender role conflict in several specific ways. First, it expands the study of gender role conflict, using resilience as a representation of adolescent/emerging adult male vulnerability or propensity for problematic behavior. The use of resiliency rather than problematic behaviors in research related to gender role conflict can more completely identify many risks to or strengths of male youth. Additionally, due to the large body of literature on resilience, this perspective also will show insight into variables associated with problematic behaviors. For instance, the positive identity factor of resilience has been shown to relate to propensity for suicide through the literature; thus, a low score in this area associated with gender role conflict suggests a potential relationship there. This is one of many examples in which resilience literature and research might expand the study of gender role conflict.

The Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) has been used by many researchers to assess youth resilience in general. Results from general populations of high school youth have shown low means of 19.3 assets on average in the adolescent population and a decrease in number of assets from 23.1 to 18.3 over the academic progression in grades six through twelve (Benson, 2002). In this study, the DAP, usually used on 11-18 year olds, assessed resilience in 18-24 year old males after ensuring internal consistency. Interestingly, in this college-age male population, the average score was 40.8, a high level of assets, notably greater than the average high school adolescent population reported above. The pattern showing decreasing resilience in terms of assets over academic progression held true in this study, however, as increases in academic status in college predicted a decrease in three factor scores (Support, Empowerment, and Boundaries & Expectations) as well as the overall Internal Asset score.

In the adolescent population typically responding to the DAP, a high number of developmental assets (31-40) were correlated with high academic performance (Benson, 2002). The individuals in the present study have performed well academically, or at least well enough to enroll at a competitive university, which may explain the higher mean resiliency score. Trends in resiliency fluctuation as a result of gender role con-

flict would probably not be significantly affected by this sample composition, although this is certainly a possible area for future research.

Much research has been conducted on youth resilience, in particular using the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP). Gender role conflict, as predicted, did have an effect on overall resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males. As detailed above, though, these relationships are complex. The general findings suggest that as gender role conflict increases, resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males decreases, although this is not true for all items within the gender role conflict scale.²

This study contributes to the existing resilience literature in several ways. First, this study expanded the studied population beyond the range of 11-18 years. By first examining the responses of 18-year-old participants and comparing them with those of their college classmates through age 24, this research created a general profile of resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males pursuing their undergraduate education at a research university. Recommendations made by developmental scientists regarding research in the field support both the use of a resilience perspective and an expansion of the adolescence research arena into the relatively new area of study encompassed by emerging adulthood (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000).

Additionally, the three main informational goals of the initial resiliency approach included risk behavior prevention, thriving outcome enhancement, and youth resilience (Benson, 2002). This study and its findings can be used to achieve all three of these objectives. Prevention programs can be tailored to address gender identity development, gender norms, and gender role conflict in many settings from school and youth extracurricular activities to parental seminars and information distribution. Specifically, researchers can identify coping strategies that may mitigate some of the risk brought on by stressors like gender role conflict. For instance, the intervention used in Beatty et al.'s study (2006) was found to lower reported Restrictive Emotionality, the major negative influence on resilience identified in this research. By utilizing research and previous literature, positive youth development researchers and practitioners can maximize efficiency and positive outcomes in the face of myriad stressors faced by youth.

Now that gender role conflict has been identified as a risk factor for male youth, both prevention and intervention efforts with regard to gender role conflict can help enhance positive youth outcomes. Finally, through an understanding of what specific assets or asset areas are most depleted by conflict with gender roles, youth workers can help build assets and thus overall resilience in their intended populations.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study has several potential limitations. First, a cross-sectional study cannot assess change over time. Thus, this study was unable to track Gender Role Conflict and its potential effects on the individual at varying developmental periods or its effect on

² For a review of the instrument, see <http://www.search-institute.org/survey-services>

development itself. Additionally, the sensitive nature of the material covered by the instrumentation may result in dishonest answers from respondents, especially if they perceive their peers to be aware of or interested in their responses.

This university setting is a large campus in the southeast with much diversity in student body, academic programs, and student life. Thus, the results may not be readily generalizable to other seemingly similar populations. As a large university with highly rigorous admission requirements, a different kind of student may be enrolled at this large coeducational university in the Southeast rather than other universities. When considering colleges, many prospective students make decisions based on size, number of majors offered, rigor of degree programs, reputation, and other factors. The status of this university with respect to these considerations may determine the type of student body comprising the sample for this study. Thus, schools of other types (smaller, fewer degree programs, religiously affiliated, private institutions and the like) may have different populations with respect to the variables in this study.

Also, the length of the instrumentation may cause some degree of respondent fatigue, resulting in potentially less valid responses toward the end of the questionnaire. To alleviate as much of this as possible, demographic questions requiring less thought by respondents were asked at the end of the instrument. One potential vulnerability within this section was the sexuality rating. Respondents in a classroom setting may not have felt comfortable disclosing such information, so a social desirability effect may have affected this item. Further, this was the only item to assess sexuality, so respondents who may have thoughts, feelings, fantasies, or other characteristics of a particular sexuality may not be willing to label themselves as such.

Further, sampling from a list of general education courses necessarily excludes those students that may have completed these requirements by some other method (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, community college, etc.) and thus potentially excludes many highly advanced students as well as community college transfer students. Conversely, students enrolled in fewer courses were less likely to be included. These individuals may be different from the typical undergraduate population of males. No data was available to determine the proportion of the population affected by these circumstances.

Finally, within the classes sampled, participants were asked to voluntarily participate. Those that self-select not to participate may be different from those that do participate in terms of the variables in questions, especially if they perceive that their peers could potentially become aware of their responses to instrument items. This was not thought to affect this study to a large degree, as the few refusals ($n = 8$) often occurred almost immediately, presumably before they could have reviewed the instrumentation thoroughly, and were often accompanied to time-related excuses (“I have a test next period.”).

Recommendations for Research

This study has its origin in youth resiliency. An up-and-coming trend in developmental research, the study of youth resilience can help researchers, keep their finger on

the pulse of youth development today. Gender role conflict and resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males are clearly related, as evidenced by this study. While this research was beneficial in establishing these relationships, a more thorough examination of these relationships would be beneficial in furthering the literature as well as the ramifications for youth workers. To this end, a more qualitative research design in which respondents are able to give feedback on their specific experiences and attitudes could help explain some of the complex relationships found in this study. Perhaps open-ended interview questions could more fully explore these ties.

Additionally, respondents in this study answered questions in a classroom setting amidst their peers. While this was a strength in terms of recruiting potentially a full range of sexual minority males rather than the biased samples generated by support group recruitment, some degree of social desirability effect probably played into individual participant response. As the nature of some of the gender role conflict scale as well as the sexuality item were somewhat personal, sometimes even resulting in non-response, an online survey or private interview may be a more appropriate way to allow participants to honestly respond to these items without fear of association or lack of confidentiality.

Finally, follow-up research on gender role conflict and its effect on resilience in college-age sexual minority and transgender populations would be interesting and appropriate to add to the body of literature. While some studies (Watts & Borders, 2005) do examine these relationships, these are typically small sample and in-depth. A snapshot picture as provided through cross-sectional research would allow further understanding of what relationships to explore specific to these populations.

Summary

Issues surrounding gender roles including gender role conflict, gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality are cutting-edge issues in society today. In news, politics, public policy, higher education, as well as in the corporate world, these topics are becoming increasingly common, and they have important ramifications.

Recognizing that issues related to gender have origins within gender identity formation, it is necessary for youth researchers to examine how these variables relate to children, adolescents and emerging adults. This study examined gender role conflict and resilience in adolescent/emerging adult males. The results of this study have many possible implications for youth researchers, practitioners, policymakers and advocates. This research aimed to elucidate relationships between these variables on a large scale, as no relationship between these variables had previously been established. To maximize positive youth development, this study aims in its finality to spark further research and programmatic development to best serve male youth, especially those who do not conform to traditional masculine gender roles and may have poorer outcomes because of this.

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Appendix A Instrumentation

A brief explanation surrounding each of the component parts of the instrumentation packets follows.

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

This was page one of the instrumentation packet and was approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB) for this research. Potential respondents were instructed to read the consent form and, if they voluntarily chose to participate, to tear this page off and keep it for their records.

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSET PROFILE (DAP)

The DAP was purchased from the Search Institute and is a manila, two-sided form complete with instructions and prompts for respondents. The DAP comprised pages two and three of five in the instrumentation packet. In this study, the "Name," "Grade," and "Birth Date" items were blacked out so as to preserve respondent confidentiality.

GENDER ROLE CONFLICT SCALE (GRCS)

Instructions read as follows: "In the grid below please mark the box corresponding to the number which most closely represents the degree that you Agree or Disagree with the statement.

There is no right or wrong answer to each statement; your own reaction is what is asked for,” (O’Neil, 1986).

This was page four of five of the instrumentation. The bottom of the sheet asked respondents to turn over and complete the back of the form. The original layout of the GRCS was changed to a grid and the scalar responses reversed for ease of completion and seamless transition from the DAP to this instrument.

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

This was page five of five of the instrumentation packet. The packet ended with demographic information to minimize respondent fatigue, but obtained information used in sorting, excluding, or categorizing responses to the DAP and GRCS.

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