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The Social Roles Questionnaire: A New Approach to Measuring Attitudes Toward Gender

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Abstract Innovative research is constrained by instruments that assume gender to be captured by dichotomous categories. This article presents the results of two studies that document the psychometric properties of the Social Roles Questionnaire (SRQ), a new measure of gender role attitudes. A social constructivist perspective guided the development of the instrument that was designed not only to capture the diversity in people's thinking about social roles for men and women, but also to identify attitudes that transcend binary categories. The article details the process of assessing reliability and validity based on data from 414 undergraduates. Findings revealed the SRQ is reliable and valid and that women were more likely than men to endorse egalitarian and gender transcendent beliefs. Additional possible uses of the SRQ are discussed.

Keywords Gender · Gender transcendent · Social roles

Interest in gender and attitudes toward gender roles continues to provide a strong impetus for research and theory building. However, conceptualizations of gender and gender attitudes appear to have outdistanced the instruments available for validly measuring these variables. Although there are different viewpoints on the nature and development of gender, several recent theorists (Bockting, 1999; Bohan, 2002; Kimmel, 2000; Maurer, 1999) have claimed that gender is socially constructed and stressed the complexity and diversity of the concept. It is difficult to capture this complexity because most measures of gender are based on a dichotomous

approach that merely set women and men in opposition and assume that people believe that differences between them are normal and natural. The belief that men and women are fundamentally different is often linked to the idea that there are particular social roles for which men and women are best suited (Ruble & Martin, 1998).

Individuals' beliefs about gendered behaviors in society can be useful to researchers who are interested in determining people's thinking about equality among women and men, as well as relationships between gender attitudes and other variables of interest. To accomplish this, however, it is critical that we have valid, reliable ways of assessing attitudes about gender roles in contemporary society. Efforts to investigate and understand the implications of gender complexity, diversity, and resistance to prevailing conceptualizations of gender are hampered by instruments that are dated, that assume gender to be captured by dichotomous categories, and that focus only on adult men and/or women.

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1978) and the Attitudes Toward Marital and Childrearing Roles Scale (AMCR; Hoffman & Kloska, 1995) are used routinely as measures of adults' endorsement of traditional gender roles. Many of the items included in the AWS and AMCR ask about the role behaviors of women, and these instruments contain statements to which participants indicate the extent of their agreement; a high score indicates the belief that women are not as capable as men to fulfill certain roles and tasks, as well as support for differential treatment of the sexes. Although these instruments are widely used, some of the items they include are dated, and these measures reinforce a dichotomous approach to thinking about social roles and responsibilities (i.e., that some roles are appropriate only for women or only for men), thereby limiting the possibility of capturing more nuanced beliefs about social roles or the possibility that attitudes

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toward these roles may not be gender-linked. In addition, Thompson et al. (1992) noted that the AWS may actually assess the broader concept of gender attitudes, rather than the intended attitudes toward women, because the instrument includes many items that either explicitly or implicitly compare the sexes. Thompson and colleagues attributed this conceptual problem to the prevailing belief at the time of the instrument's development that men's rights and roles were the fixed standard and that variation in gender beliefs would be reflected only in thinking about women's rights and responsibilities.

In the present article, we document the process we used to create and revise the Social Roles Questionnaire (SRQ), a valid, reliable instrument for assessing attitudes toward social roles in contemporary society, and we report psychometric data from two studies carried out as part of this project. We undertook this work because we were beginning a new research project on adolescents and their families, and we needed a parsimonious measure that would tap thinking about gender roles. We encountered difficulty in locating an instrument that did not seem dated, was not restricted explicitly to attitudes toward only adult women or only adult men, and was not dominated by items that describe stereotypical roles for men and women (e.g., A father's major responsibility is to provide financially for his children; Mothers should work only if necessary).

We decided to develop an instrument that met our needs by adapting items from several established measures and including new items in an attempt to transcend a dichotomous approach to thinking about social roles. We also wanted to develop an instrument that was theoretically grounded and might stimulate additional work on this topic. Our project, guided by a social constructivist perspective, was an attempt to provide an instrument that not only captures the diversity and nuances in people's thinking about social roles for men and women, but also offers an approach to identifying attitudes that transcend these categories.

Constructing/transcending gender

A social constructivist perspective is useful as a guiding perspective in rethinking how we assess gender attitudes because it is based on the assumption that gender and our beliefs about appropriate roles for both women and men are produced in social and historical contexts, rather than being intrinsically linked to individuals or their sex (Bohan, 2002; Kimmel, 2000). For example, men do not inherently have skills that make them better leaders, but are often provided more and better opportunities than women are to learn and practice leadership skills. If there are more men than women with such skills, it may seem "normal" and "natural" that more men than women are in leadership positions. From a constructivist perspective, gender is seen not as a

characteristic of a person, but as something one "does" in relationship with other people and that varies by situation (Bohan, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Such an approach provides a way of explaining how gender differences are created and sustained by conceiving of gender as a configuration of norms, practices, and relations that evolve through social transactions influenced by power differentials (Bohan, 2002; Harding, 1998). Basic to a constructivist perspective is the idea that gender perceptions are multifaceted and reflect variations in race, class, sexual orientation, and education. For example, Connell (2000) documented the multiplicity of masculinities and noted differences between homosexual and heterosexual forms of masculinity, variations among Latino and European American men, and different expectations for men in schools, workplaces, and the military. Social discourse, including both explicit and implicit messages from family, religion, education, the media, and other social institutions, influences how expectations and attitudes are constructed and enacted as people "do" gender. The resulting social interactions among individuals both reproduce gender "differences" and produce gender inequalities (Kimmel, 2000).

A social constructivist approach encourages efforts to attend to power and context to uncover taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie social categories by breaking down these categories, pointing out different definitions and alternate constructions, and examining the language used to maintain the categories (Gordon & Abbott, 2003). Deconstructing gender by critically analyzing and challenging the "naturalness" of the concept is far from easy because gender beliefs, norms, and practices are deeply embedded in our culture and language. Some gender theorists, therefore, have suggested that we not only need to challenge the socially constructed differences between men and women, but also to consider the possibility of moving beyond a system comprised of only two categories. Lorber (2001) claimed that it is the division of people into two differentially valued categories that lies at the heart of gender inequality. Embedded, dichotomous beliefs about gender influence everyday behaviors, activities, and power balances (Kimmel, 2000; Lorber, 2001).

There are various strategies that might be used to decompose and reconstruct the concept of gender. However, it may be more useful to question the very concept of gender and then attempt to transcend it. Kessler and McKenna's (2003) work on transgender suggests some possibilities for thinking about transcending gender. They offered three different meanings for "trans": changing from a man to a woman or vice versa, moving across or not being permanently committed to being either a woman or a man, and the possibility of moving beyond or through gender. They see the last sense as being the most radical and of greatest importance to those interested in eliminating gender. However, Kessler and

McKenna reported that, although there have been challenges to traditional constructions of gender in the last 25 years, a gender dichotomy persists. The notion of gender, or even an acceptance of two and only two genders, may be impossible to move beyond in everyday life. However, it might be possible to document individuals' acceptance of moving across gender prescriptions and/or to detect gender transcendence in another sense—that of acknowledging the categories of gender, but seeing them as irrelevant for prescribed social roles and responsibilities.

The Social Roles Questionnaire

With the SRQ we attempt not only to build upon and integrate existing work on assessing gender attitudes, but also to generate interest in evaluating people's beliefs about gender transcendence. Our measure includes references to role behaviors of both women and men and contains items with contemporary focus that are more likely to capture covert sexism, that is, the subtle support of gender inequality (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). Perhaps the most important contribution offered by the SRQ is the ability to capture nondichotomous thinking about social roles. Rather than focus on social prescriptions for men and women, we created items that suggested that social roles need not be gender linked (e.g., The freedom that children are given should be determined by their age and maturity level and not by their sex; Tasks around the house should not be determined by sex). These items provide a way of capturing attitudes of individuals who believe that roles, behaviors, and tasks should not be assigned on the basis of gender alone; those who seek to combine traditional masculine and feminine roles in innovative ways; and those who may endorse the elimination of the two gender categories. Evidence for the existence of such thinking comes from the ego development literature. The views of those at the highest levels of ego development are not restricted to society's proscriptions regarding men's and women's roles (Hy & Loevinger, 1996). Additional evidence for such gender-transcendent thinking recently has emerged from writings and research about gender (Bockting, 1999; Kimmel, 2000), queer theory (Butler, 1990; Kirsch, 2000), and research in which fewer people endorsed "traditional" sexism statements such as those included in the AWS (Twenge, 1997).

We present here analyses of data from two studies to document the process used to determine the psychometric properties of the SRQ. We also explain the procedure used to reduce the measure from the original 52 items to a more manageable 13 items, which resulted in a short instrument that can be used alone or embedded with other measures in a larger survey.

Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to establish reliability and several forms of validity, including construct validity, both convergent and discriminant. We used the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973) and the Attitudes Toward Marital and Childrearing Roles Scale (Hoffman & Kloska, 1995), both measures of orientation to social roles, to determine convergent validity. We expected that participants who endorsed a gender transcendent approach to social roles on the SRQ would support more nontraditional roles for women on the AWS and the AMCR. We used the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), a measure of personal psychological attributes, to assess discriminant validity. Previous empirical and theoretical work on the relationship between gender trait and ideology measures (Huston, 1983; King & King, 1997; Spence, 1993; Spence & Helmreich, 1978) led us to expect that any correlation between PAQ scores and scores on the SRQ would be weak or nonsignificant. For example, Spence and Helmreich (1978) reported that, among college students, high instrumental scores for men and high expressivity scores for women on the PAQ were occasionally weakly related to more traditional attitudes.

Method

Participants

Study 1 included 266 undergraduate students at a small, public university in New England. There were 191 who identified themselves as female, 72 as male, and three students who did not indicate their sex. Average age was 19.4 years ($SD = 1.53$; range 18–27 years old). The majority of the students were White (98%), which reflects the demographic characteristics of the region. Students represented a variety of majors, and they were primarily from working-class and middle-class families.

Measures

The initial version of the SRQ consisted of 52 items derived from the literature and/or adapted from other measures of gender roles as explained below. We expected there to be three subscales: a General subscale, a Child subscale, and a Gender Transcendent subscale. The 30 items that formed the "General" subscale focused on social roles generally deemed appropriate for men or women and included updated and revised wording of some of the original AWS and AMCR items. Here is an example of our editing of an original AWS item. The original item "It is ridiculous for a woman to run a locomotive and for a man to darn socks" was changed to "Only some types of work are appropriate for both men and women; for example, it is silly for a woman to do

construction and for a man to do sewing.” Items included in the General subscale focused on parental and relational roles (e.g., “A father’s major responsibility is to provide financially for his children; It is difficult for women to be good wives and mothers while working outside the home”), sexual roles (e.g., “It’s okay for women to make the first move to have sex with their partner; Men and women have similar interest in sex”), and community roles (e.g., “Generally speaking, men make better leaders than women; Some types of work are just not appropriate for women”). For the Child subscale, 10 items that assess social roles for boys and girls were adapted from the Attitudes About Roles for Children Scale (Antill et al. (1996); “It is better for boys to learn to do outside tasks and for girls to learn to do housekeeping and childcare; Girls need to be protected and watched over more than boys”). Twelve gender transcendent items were generated for the Gender Transcendent subscale generally by editing gender-linked items such as “Mothers should work only if necessary” and “A father’s major responsibility is to provide financially for his children” to reflect attitudes about roles and responsibilities that are not gender linked. The gender transcendent items included statements such as “Both boys and girls should be raised to expect to be breadwinners as well as caregivers” and “We should stop thinking about whether people are male or female and focus on other characteristics (e.g., kindness, ability).”

Respondents indicated how much they agreed with each of the 52 items by circling a percentage (range: 0–100% with increments of 10%). A percentage scale was chosen over a Likert scale because we believe that percentages have more meaning to participants and potentially allow for more fine-grained distinctions. Twenty-six items were reverse coded. High scores on this measure reflect more traditional beliefs.

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence et al., 1973) is a 15-item index that measures attitudes toward the rights and roles of women in relationship to men in our culture. Respondents indicate their agreement with each item on a 4-point scale from *Agree Strongly* to *Disagree Strongly*. Each item was scored 1–4, which results in possible total scores from 15 to 60. High scores on this measure indicate more traditional attitudes toward women’s roles. The Cronbach’s α for the present sample was .78.

The Attitudes Toward Marital and Childrearing Roles Scale (Hoffman & Kloska, 1995) is a measure of gender-stereotyped attitudes and consists of two subscales: one that assesses attitudes about spousal roles (six items), and another that assesses attitudes toward parenting roles (seven items). Respondents indicate their degree of agreement with the items using a 4-point scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. The range of possible scores for the measure is 13 to 52. Higher scores indicate less gender-typed attitudes. Cronbach’s α s for the present sample were .83 for the marital and .73 for the childrearing roles subscales.

Sixteen items from the 24-item Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) were used, eight of which comprise a subscale that measures instrumentality, which is stereotypically associated with men, and eight that assess personal expressivity, which is stereotypically associated with women. The 8-item M-F scale was not included because, according to Spence and Helmreich, the items on this scale include both instrumental and expressive characteristics whose social desirability appears to vary in the two sexes. Respondents to the PAQ rate themselves on a 5-point scale for each of the bipolar items that describe personality characteristics (e.g., Goes to pieces under pressure/Stand up well under pressure; Not at all helpful to others/Very Helpful to others). Each item is scored 0–4 with a possible range of 0–32 for each subscale. Cronbach’s α s for the present sample were .72 for instrumentality and .77 for expressivity.

Procedure

Students completed a packet in Human Development, Family Relations, and Sociology classes that included the Social Roles Questionnaire, the Attitudes Toward Women Scale, the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, the Attitudes Toward Marital and Childrearing Roles Scale, and questions about demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, ethnicity, college major, family configuration). They also received a Participant Information Sheet, which provided a description of the project, indicated that participation was voluntary and would have no impact on the student’s grade for the course in which the survey was administered, and assured participants that their information would be confidential. A subsample of 121 students completed the survey at two points in time approximately 1 month apart so that the test–retest reliability of the SRQ could be determined.

Results

Reliability of the SRQ

Descriptive statistics were examined for each of the original 52 items on the SRQ, and 11 items with limited variability in responses (i.e., as a group, participants either strongly agreed or disagreed with a statement) were deleted. The remaining 41 items (which included 17 reversed-scored items) were pooled into groups that reflected our expected subscales, and then were summed: General (22 items), Child (9 items), and Gender Transcendent (10 items). Cronbach’s α analyses suggested that no additional items should be dropped from any of the subscales. Cronbach’s α for the General was .85, for the Child was .74, and for the Gender Transcendent was .66. Item-total correlations were examined, and all were above .31. Inter-subscale correlations indicated that the General and the Child subscales were not distinctly

Table 1 Convergent and Discriminant Validity of the General/Child and Gender Transcendent subscales of the Social Roles Questionnaire ($N = 266$)

	General/child	Gender transcendent
Convergent validity		
AWS	.59**	.40**
AMCR—marital roles	.57**	.26**
AMCR—parenting roles	.54**	.33**
Discriminant validity		
PAQ—masculinity	.01	.06
PAQ—femininity	-.26**	-.19**

** $p < .01$.

different, $r = .77$, $p < .01$, but the Gender Transcendent subscale was related to, but distinct from, both the General and Child subscales, $r = .54$, $p < .01$ and $r = .59$, $p < .01$, respectively. The General and Child subscales were subsequently merged, and the Cronbach's α of this new General/Child subscale was .91. Both the Gender Transcendent ($M = 27.25$, $SD = 13.33$; range 0–77, out of a possible range of 0–100) and General/Child subscales ($M = 87.83$, $SD = 42.45$; range 8–258, out of a possible range of 0–310) had adequate variability. Test–retest reliability of the SRQ was high; the Pearson product moment correlations were .87, $p < .01$, for the General/Child subscale and .76, $p < .01$, for the Gender Transcendent subscale.

Validity of the SRQ

Validity of the SRQ was assessed in several ways. First, the SRQ has face validity; it is distinct from the AWS and AMCR because the items are contemporary in nature, refer to the role behaviors of men as well as women, assess individuals' attitudes toward roles for boys and girls, and include items that indicate nondichotomous thinking about gender roles. Second, content validity was achieved by the inclusion of a broad sample of items that represent central concepts established in the literature as related to people's ideas about gender roles. Third, as predicted, the two SRQ subscales had moderate positive correlations with both the AWS and the two subscales of the AMCR thereby demonstrating convergent validity (see Table 1). Finally, discriminate validity was assessed with the PAQ. As anticipated, correlations indicated that the two subscales of the SRQ had no relationship to the PAQ Instrumentality subscale and a weak relationship to the PAQ Expressivity subscale (see Table 1).

Evaluation of demographic differences

A one-way ANOVA for each of the SRQ subscales revealed that women were less traditional than men in their attitudes on the General/Child subscale, $F(1, 261) = 104.58$, $p < .001$,

$d = 1.32$, a large effect. The mean score on the subscale for women was 73.41, $SD = 31.48$ and for men the mean was 123.78, $SD = 44.86$. There was also a significant difference between women and men on the Gender Transcendent subscale, $F(1, 261) = 36.11$, $p < .001$, $d = .81$, a large effect. Men's higher scores, $M = 34.58$, $SD = 13.50$, indicated that they were less likely to endorse gender transcendent items than were women, $M = 24.23$, $SD = 12.03$. Age was weakly correlated with the General/Child subscale, $r = .19$, $p < .01$, but not correlated with the Gender Transcendent subscale. Scores on the two SRQ subscales were unrelated to parents' marital status, education level, or occupational choice. Because 98% of the sample was White, racial/ethnic differences in subscale responses could not be assessed.

Study 2

We designed Study 2 to establish further the reliability and convergent validity of the SRQ and to examine whether participants responded to SRQ items in ways perceived to be socially desirable. The Modern Sexism scale (MS; Swim, et al., 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997) was included in this study with the expectation that it would be related to the SRQ because both measure attitudes toward social roles, but that the relationship would be only moderate because MS focuses only on women, their roles, and their treatment. Convergent validity was also assessed with Baber and Monahan's (1988) Career Orientation Scale (COS); we expected that scores on the SRQ and the COS would be negatively related because the COS measures egalitarian attitudes toward careers for women and men. A measure of social desirability was included to assess the extent to which participants might respond to SRQ items in a way that demonstrates that they have internalized socially acceptable beliefs and practices with regard to men's and women's roles.

Method

Participants

Study 2 included 123 female and 22 male undergraduate students from the same university as in Study 1. The mean age of the participants was 19.5 years ($SD = 1.76$). As in Study 1, 98% of the participants were White, and they were predominantly from working-class or middle-class families. A variety of majors were represented.

Measures

The Modern Sexism scale (Swim et al., 1995) measures covert or subtle beliefs that support gender inequality even

though individuals may say that they favor equal treatment of men and women. Swim and Cohen (1997) stated that an individual may not notice when he/she or others are treating someone unfairly based on gender and may be more likely to perceive gender segregation to be a result of “normal” or “natural” processes. They demonstrated that MS and the AWS tap different, though related, constructs. The instrument includes eight items such as “Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination” and “It is easy to understand the anger of women’s groups in America” rated on a 4-point, Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*). Higher scores indicate more traditional attitudes. Cronbach’s α for the present sample was .73.

Career orientation was assessed by three items regarding respondents’ expectations about having and maintaining a career (e.g., “I would consider my career and my spouse’s career equally important”). Respondents indicated how much they agreed with each statement using a percentage scale that ranged from 0 to 100% with 10% increments. Higher scores indicate less traditionality. Cronbach’s α for the present sample was .75.

The Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) is a generally accepted measure of social desirability, which is defined as a participant’s tendency to respond in culturally sanctioned ways. Respondents indicate whether each of the items in the measure are true or false as it pertains to them personally. The original 33-item measure includes 18 items for which the socially desirable response would be true and 15 items for which it would be false. The instrument was adapted for use with college students. One of the 33 original items (“Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates”) was deleted because we thought, given their average age of 19 years, that many students in the sample may never have voted. Socially desirable responses were summed so that higher scores indicated greater likelihood of responding to other questions in culturally sanctioned ways. The Cronbach’s α for the present sample on the 32-item measure was .76.

Procedure

The participants completed a packet of questionnaires in class that included a Participant Information Sheet, the revised Social Roles Questionnaire, the Modern Sexism scale, and the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale. Students also reported demographic information (e.g., age, sex, ethnicity, major, family configuration) and responded to the three-question Career Orientation Scale. Approximately 1 month later, students in the same classes were asked to repeat the packet of questionnaires for the purpose of determining test–retest reliability.

Results

Reliability of the SRQ

The results of Study 2 confirmed both the internal and test–retest reliability of the SRQ. Cronbach’s α was .86 for the General scale and .71 for the Gender Transcendent scale. Fifty students completed questionnaire packets at both administrations. There was high test–retest reliability for both the General scale, $r = .92$, $p < .001$, and the Gender Transcendent scale, $r = .81$, $p < .001$.

Validity of the SRQ

Convergent validity was assessed with the Modern Sexism and the Career Orientation Scale. Scores on the Modern Sexism scale were moderately correlated with scores on the General subscale, $r = .36$, $p < .01$, and the Gender Transcendent subscale, $r = .37$, $p < .01$, of the SRQ, which indicates, as predicted, that the scales measure related, but distinct, constructs. Similarly, there was a moderate, negative correlation between career orientation and the General subscale, $r = -.40$, $p < .01$, and the Gender Transcendent subscale, $r = -.49$, $p < .01$.

Assessment of social desirability bias

To ensure that the SRQ is not simply a measure of social desirability, the correlation between the SRQ and the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale was tested. Analyses revealed no association between participants’ responses to the SRQ and the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale.

Evaluations of demographic differences

Demographic differences in participants’ attitudes toward roles on the SRQ also were examined using *t*-tests. The analyses revealed that women were less traditional in their attitudes on the General scale ($M = 76.38$, $SD = 34.54$) than men were ($M = 125.97$, $SD = 36.25$), $t(143) = -6.15$, $p < .01$, $d = 1.40$, a large effect. Women also were more likely to endorse gender transcendent items ($M = 25.67$, $SD = 12.37$) than men were ($M = 37.92$, $SD = 11.68$), $t(143) = -4.31$, $p < .01$, $d = 1.02$, a large effect. Age was not related to scores on the Gender Transcendent scale, but was weakly correlated with scores on the General scale, $r = -.24$, $p < .01$, which indicates more traditional thinking in younger participants. Participants whose parents were divorced were less traditional on the General scale ($M = 72.93$, $SD = 39.21$) than those whose parents were still married ($M = 90.93$, $SD = 38.64$), $t(133) = 2.53$, $p < .05$, $d = .46$, a small effect. The scores of participants with divorced parents also were less traditional on the Gender Transcendent scale

($M = 22.93$, $SD = 13.27$) than were those with parents who were still married ($M = 30.38$, $SD = 12.31$), $t(133) = 3.20$, $p < .01$, $d = .58$, a medium effect.

Study 3

Results from the two studies presented above documented the reliability and validity of the 41-item SRQ. Although the SRQ could easily be used alone or with a few other instruments in a study, it was still long for our purposes. We believed that a shorter version also would be more useful to others who might want to embed the measure in a longer survey. We therefore continued to refine the instrument. The samples from the two studies had very similar backgrounds and demographic characteristics, so we combined them to gain analytic power. The combined sample consisted of 414 participants (316 women, 95 men, three participants who did not indicate their sex), and each had completed the SRQ at least once. We used the data from the first administration for those participants who had completed the measure twice.

To investigate the underlying structure of the SRQ, we conducted a principal components analysis with varimax rotation. We chose varimax rotation because we believed the items in the Gender Transcendent and General subscales to be conceptually distinct. We expected that participants who endorsed the items in the Gender Transcendent subscale would be unlikely to endorse the items on the General subscale. Correlations between the General and Gender Transcendent subscales found in Study 1 were not high, and they supported our belief. Careful examination of the solution indicated that the 41 items did not load as expected on a particular factor or loaded on more than one factor. Because we wanted to create a brief instrument, we decided to create a final measure from select items from the Gender Transcendent and General/Child subscales. Items were chosen that met all the following criteria: the items had strong factor loadings, high response variation in the sample, strong correlations with other items in the measure (for internal consistency), and strong face validity.

Results from the principal components analysis are shown in Table 2. A two-factor solution was selected because (a) two eigenvalues were greater than 1.00, (b) the scree plot was most consistent with a two-factor solution, and (c) this solution was the most conceptually meaningful. The two factors accounted for 41% of the variance, and they were negatively correlated, $r = -.63$, $p < .01$. The first factor assessed the extent to which participants think about gender in nondichotomous ways. This factor, named Gender Transcendent, consists of five reverse-coded items and has adequate variability ($M = 5.86$, $SD = 6.44$) and internal consistency ($\alpha = .65$). Women reported higher levels of gender tran-

Table 2 Varimax-Rotated Factor Pattern Matrix From Principal Components Analysis of the Social Roles Questionnaire

Items	Gender transcendent	Gender linked
1. People can be both aggressive and nurturing regardless of sex. ^a	.68	
2. People should be treated the same regardless of their sex. ^a	.70	
3. The freedom that children are given should be determined by their age and maturity level and not by their sex. ^a	.61	
4. Tasks around the house should not be assigned by sex. ^a	.59	
5. We should stop thinking about whether people are male or female and focus on other characteristics. ^a	.59	
6. A father's major responsibility is to provide financially for his children.		.64
7. Men are more sexual than women.		.47
8. Some types of work are just not appropriate for women.		.64
9. Mothers should make most decisions about how children are brought up.		.60
10. Mothers should work only if necessary.		.54
11. Girls should be protected and watched over more than boys.		.64
12. Only some types of work are appropriate for both men and women.		.67
13. For many important jobs, it is better to choose men instead of women.		.55
Percent of variance	31	10

Note. Loadings under .40 are not shown. Items 1–5 form the Gender Transcendent subscale, and items 6–13 form the Gender-Linked subscale. A scale from 0 to 100% is anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree.”

^aItems should be reverse coded.

scendence than men did ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 5.31$ vs. $M = 9.46$, $SD = 8.15$), $t(412) = -5.37$, $p < .001$, $d = .71$, a medium effect. The second factor consists of items that assess participants' beliefs about whether certain roles are associated with a particular gender. This factor consists of eight items taken from the General/Child subscale, and it has adequate variability ($M = 25.21$, $SD = 14.43$) and internal consistency ($\alpha = .77$). We named this factor Gender-Linked in order to describe more accurately the items included in this subscale. Men and women responded significantly differently to these factor items, such that men were more likely than women to identify certain roles with each gender ($M = 37.82$, $SD = 14.26$ vs. $M = 21.33$, $SD = 12.12$), $t = -10.22$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.25$, a large effect; higher scores indicate more traditionality.

General discussion

We believe that the SRQ has the potential to make a contribution to the study of gender and social change. The SRQ is an alternative measure for assessing attitudes toward social roles, and it is appropriate for use with both adults and older adolescents. Most important, the SRQ offers a way to capture thinking about gender that transcends dichotomous categories. The Social Roles Questionnaire will provide researchers with a brief instrument that has good face validity as well as good psychometric properties. Results of tests for convergent and discriminant validity support the construct validity of the instrument, and both internal consistency and test–retest reliability were established.

We developed the SRQ in an attempt to capture the distinct and complex ways that adults and older adolescents think about gender. Some may view gender as a dichotomous category that sets men and women in opposition and may believe that there are particular roles appropriate for each group. Others' views may challenge traditional beliefs about men's and women's roles, and they perceive that social roles are not, or should not be, tied to gender. The results of the factor analysis suggest that items in the SRQ assess at least two distinct ways of thinking about gender and social roles. Results of analyses regarding demographic differences in the studies reported here suggest that thinking about gender and social roles is socially constructed and affected by one's life experiences. As is generally found with measures of traditionality or sexism, men had higher scores on both the SRQ subscales, which indicates more gender-linked and less gender-transcendent attitudes. There also is some evidence that age and the experience of one's parents' divorce may influence attitudes toward gender, which suggests the malleability of gender attitudes. A necessary next step is the assessment of the SRQ with participants from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, potential developmental differences in SRQ responses should be determined.

Development of an instrument that transcends dichotomous gender categories presents some unique challenges for researchers who work within a gendered culture and system of discourse. Although α levels of around .70 are generally viewed as acceptable (Nunnally, 1978; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991), and Nunnally took the position that a level of .50 or .60 would suffice when researchers are engaged in measurement development, a higher α level on the Gender Transcendence subscale would be desirable. We believe that part of the difficulty was finding language that is effective in assessing this concept. We also believe that, similar to the situation with the Male Role Attitudes Scale (Thompson et al., 1992), which had a reported α of .56, the small number of items on the Gender Transcendence subscale contributed to the lower internal reliability coefficient.

However, because estimates of reliability should be considered in the context of validity (Patten, 1997), and evidence from our studies demonstrates several forms of validity, we think that the SRQ and the Gender Transcendence subscale can be used with more confidence than the α level alone might suggest.

We believe that the SRQ will contribute to the study of gender. We are confident that the identification of attitudes that transcend dichotomous categories will enhance the investigation of theoretical and conceptual issues regarding gender. A brief instrument such as the SRQ could easily be used clinically as an assessment tool to provide information about gender attitudes. It also might be used in training environments, such as with human service workers, to sensitize them to gender biases that might manifest themselves in their practice. Finally, we hope that our efforts will encourage others to undertake the challenge of identifying and reconstructing instruments that may be perpetuating traditional biases and missing the changes that are occurring in the ways that people construct and perform gender in contemporary societies.

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