

Development of normative gender role attitudes and gender role self-concept in emerging adulthood

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INTRODUCTION

From a historical point of view, there is "a clear trend toward more egalitarian gender attitudes in the recent decades" (Arnett, 2012, p. 429, see also Athenstaedt & Alfermann, 2011). In line with this, there are changes "in the social desirability of masculine and feminine attributes for men and women ... [emerging adults nowadays,] both men and women rated feminine attributes as more desirable for men" (Berger & Krahé, 2013, p. 520).

From a developmental psychological point of view, there are also suggestions of a change toward more egalitarian gender role attitudes from adolescence into early emerging adulthood (Bryant, 2003; Kotrba, 2007; Lam & Lefkowitz, 2016). Despite this, there is a lack of empirical studies that consider the development of normative gender role attitudes and gender role self-concept from early to late emerging adulthood (the time between age 18 to age 29).

Thus, the current study posed the following research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do emerging adults with different age groups (18 -24 vs. 25-29) differ with regard to normative gender role attitudes and gender role self-concepts?
2. Do these results differ by partner status (single vs. partner) as well as by gender?

DESIGN

The participants in this study were 571 emerging adults (335 female and 236 male university students). All participants had no children. They were investigated from March 2016 to April 2016.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants ^{1, 2, 3}		18-24		25-29		differences between age group x partner status x
Age group		Single	Partner	Single	Partner	
Gender	women	139	94	33	69	$\chi^2(3, 571) = 5.45$ $p = .142$
	men	103	53	36	44	
Age ⁴	women	20.98 (1.71) ^a	20.67 (1.61) ^c	26.27 (1.55) ^b	26.10 (1.24) ^c	
	men	21.80 (1.57) ^b	22.28 (1.57) ^d	25.83 (1.06) ^b	26.25 (1.14) ^d	
M (SD)	women					
	men					
religion	no	76	68	22	50	$\chi^2(3, 571) = 11.70$ $p = .008$
	yes	166	79	47	63	

¹ distribution age group x partner status: $p < .001$; age group x gender: ns; partner status x gender: ns
² father's level of education: father's level of education x age group x partner status: $p < .05$
³ mother's level of education: mother's level of education x age group x partner status: $p < .05$
⁴ same indices indicate significant differences between the groups ($p < .001$)

VARIABLE AND MEASURES

normative gender role attitudes

"Normative Gender Role Attitudes Scale" (NGRA) (Athenstaedt, 2000)

sumscore, 29 items (traditional vs. egalitarian) ($\alpha = .87$)

13 items = **egalitarian values** (e.g. "Boys and girls should undertake the same duties at home."), 16 items = **traditional values** (e.g. "It is more pleasant to have a male than a female superior.")

high scores indicate a **more traditional** normative gender role attitude

7-point scale from "does not apply at all" (1) to "applies completely" (7)

gender role self-concept

"Positive-Negative Sex-Role Inventory" (PN-SRI) (Berger, 2010)

subscales: Positive masculinity ($\alpha = .81$), Negative masculinity ($\alpha = .79$), Positive femininity ($\alpha = .85$), Negative femininity ($\alpha = .72$)

"We would like you to indicate, for each of the following attributes, to what extent it is part of your personality?"

Positive masculinity (6 items, e.g. rational, logical, objective)

Negative masculinity (6 items, e.g. arrogant, harsh, inconsiderate)

Positive femininity (6 items, e.g. emotional, empathic, sensitive)

Negative femininity (6 items, e.g. anxious, oversensitive, naive)

5-point scale from "not at all true" (1) to "completely true" (5)

RESULTS

Normative gender role attitudes (age group x partner status x gender)

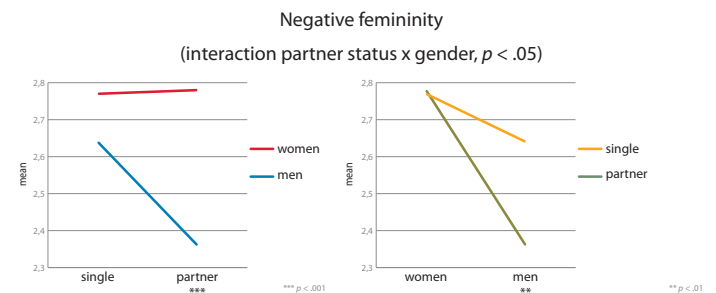
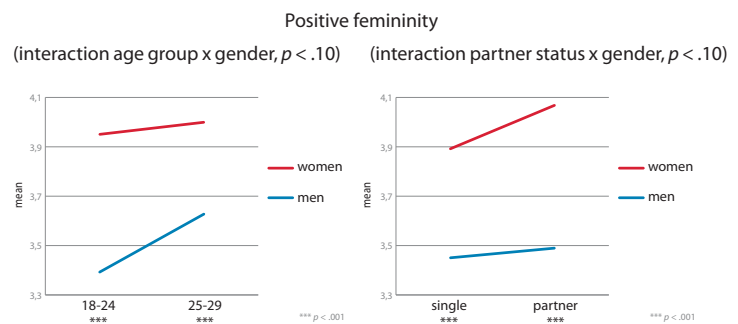
NGRA ^{1, 2}	18-24	25-29	women	men	main effect age group	main effect partner status	main effect gender
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
sumscore	76.50 (19.39)	72.65 (19.81)	70.94 (16.74)	81.42 (21.63)	$p < .05$		$p < .01$

¹ Ancova (age group x partner status x gender); ² covariate religion: $p < .01$, covariate father's level of education: ns, covariate mother's level of education: $p < .05$

Gender role self-concept (age group x partner status x gender)

PN-SRI ¹	18-24	25-29	women	men	main effect age group	main effect partner status	main effect gender
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
Positive masculinity²	3.90 (0.67)	4.00 (.64)	3.71 (0.63)	4.25 (0.56)			$p < .001$
Negative masculinity	1.81 (0.62)	1.85 (.65)	1.67 (0.54)	2.05 (0.67)			$p < .001$
Positive femininity³	3.73 (0.73)	3.86 (0.69)	3.98 (0.63)	3.47 (0.73)	$p < .05$		$p < .001$
Negative femininity⁴	2.67 (0.69)	2.68 (0.76)	2.78 (0.72)	2.52 (0.69)		$p < .10$	$p < .001$

¹ Ancovas (age group x partner status x gender; covariate: religion, father's level of education, mother's level of education); ² Positive masculinity, covariate religion: $p < .01$; ³ interaction age group x gender, $p < .10$, interaction partner status x gender, $p < .10$; ⁴ interaction partner status x gender, $p < .05$



CONCLUSIONS

There were significant differences regarding normative gender role attitudes and feminine attributes of gender role self-concept between the investigated different age groups (18 -24 vs. 25-29) (25-29 were more egalitarian than 18-24). In line with previous research findings, our results also indicate significant gender differences regarding normative gender role attitudes (men are more traditional) as well as masculine and feminine attributes of one's gender role self-concepts. The results of our study also suggest that partner status may be a contextual factor that influences the development of gender role self-concept in emerging adulthood.

In summary, the results of our study indicate a developmental trend toward more egalitarian normative gender role attitudes from early to late emerging adulthood.