The goal of this study is:

- Gender Role Congruity Theory (e.g., Diekman & Eagly, 2008; Evans & Diekman, 2009; Diekman et al., 2010) proposes that gender roles function as self-standards for behavior and serve a self-regulatory function.
- College students should choose majors that fit their gender roles and fulfill the goals associated with these roles.
- College women in STEM majors struggle to deal with the conflict between the pursuit of romantic relationship roles and academic goals (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Gilmarlin, 2005; Diekman et al., 2010).
- This is similar to Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987), which suggests that people have internal “ideal” standards to which they compare themselves.
- Self-discrepancy occurs when a person does not match up in reality to this internal “self-guide”.
- Combining Self-Discrepancy Theory and Gender Role Congruity Theory:
  - STEM women should be more invested in romantic roles versus student roles and their partners should expect the same of them.
  - STEM women and men should shift towards traditional gender role norms for their ideal selves.
  - However, if STEM women and their partners do not strictly adhere to gender role norms, the women may invest more in the student role.
  - The partner could possibly be more supportive of the woman’s investment in the student role.

**Objectives**

- To examine female STEM majors’ investment in their student and relationship roles in comparison to their partners’ investment in these same roles.
- To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to directly assess both members of the relationship on their role investment and gender role traditionalism.

**Introduction**

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- To examine female STEM majors’ investment in their student and relationship roles in comparison to their partners’ investment in these same roles.
- To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to directly assess both members of the relationship on their role investment and gender role traditionalism.

**Participants**

- 54 female undergraduate (M age = 20 yrs.) STEM majors and their romantic partners (M age = 20 yrs.)
- Had been together for a minimum of 4 months.
  - 74.1% had been together 12 months or longer
  - 22.2% were living together.
- Participants were primarily Caucasian.

**Procedure**

- Men and women arrived together and completed several assessments individually. They were seated so that they could not see each other’s responses.
- Sessions lasted approximately 70 minutes and each person was paid $20 ($40/couple).

**Measures**

- **Penny Role Sort** (McBride & Rane, 1997). Participants divided 18 chips across 6 different roles (student, work, relationship partner, social relationships, volunteer, and other) to indicate their commitment to each role. They complete the sort 4 times:
  - Their own current commitment
  - Their ideal commitment
  - Their partner’s current commitment
  - Their ideal for their partner’s commitment
- **Scale of Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes (ESRA)** (Beere et al., 1984)
  - Items are rated on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items:
    - Domestic chores should be shared between husband and wife
    - Bringing up children is the most important job for a woman (Reverse)

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**Results**

Analyses focused on the comparing men and women on ESRA and role investment for the student and romantic relationship.

- Correlations were calculated between the men’s and women’s scores (Table 1). There were significant correlations for:
  - ESRA (marginal)
  - Ideal Relationship investment
  - Ideal Student investment
  - To assess the differences between the men and women on the Role Sort task a 2(Gender) x 2(Real/Ideal) x 2(Role) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. Significant effects were found for: the following:

**Table 1. Correlations between Women’s and Men’s Scores**

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<th>p</th>
<th>N</th>
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<td>53</td>
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<td><strong>Role Sort for Self</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Real Relationship</td>
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<td>.319</td>
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<td>.577</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

- In contrast to theoretical predictions from Gender Role Congruity Theory, these women STEM majors were more invested in their student roles than their relationship roles.
- Surprisingly, the men were more invested in their relationship than the women.
- Within their relationships, men and women were similar on their views of egalitarian sex roles.