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# RESTRICTIVE EMOTIONALITY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

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RESTRICTIVE EMOTIONALITY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

The relationship between restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction was examined in a sample of 112 married couples. Individuals were asked to rate their own and their spouses' restrictive emotionality, rate the extent to which they believed their spouses were a good fit for them in terms of emotional expression, and rate their own marital satisfaction. Analyses focused on the relationship of men's and women's restrictive emotionality to marital satisfaction, and the relationship between similarity among spouses to marital satisfaction. Results indicated that men's restrictive emotionality was related to both men's and women's marital satisfaction, but women's restrictive emotionality was not related to marital satisfaction. Only individuals' perceptions of similarity were related to satisfaction for both men and women.

# RESTRICTIVE EMOTIONALITY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

A great majority of Americans will marry during their lifetime, and among those who do, most will naturally wish their marriages to be satisfying and long-lasting. Unfortunately however, the divorce rate of the United States suggests that while most desire to have long-lasting and satisfying marriages, many seem unable to do so. In an effort to illuminate what contributes to satisfying marriages, researchers have attempted to identify characteristics of marriages associated with high and low satisfaction.

A broad area of research recognized to be linked with marital satisfaction is the emotional experiences shared between spouses (Burke, Weir, & Harrison, 1976; Hendrick, 1981; King, 1993; Rosenfeld & Bowen, 1991; Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatfield, & Thompson, 1995; Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). In fact, researchers have found that positive emotional interactions between spouses are one of the strongest predictors of marital satisfaction (Cutrona, 1996; Erickson, 1993; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Sprecher et al., 1995; Veroff, Douvan, Orbuch, & Acitelli, 1998; Wilke, Ferree, & Ratliff, 1998). In addition, research has demonstrated that emotional expressiveness of spouses is positively correlated with marital satisfaction (King, 1993; Siavelis & Lamke, 1992). In general, the literature suggests that the communication of emotions is good for marriage in the way that it facilitates intimacy and trust between spouses.

On the other hand, while emotional expression appears beneficial for marriages, some research has suggested that men tend to be less emotionally expressive and tend to self-disclose less often than women (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Foubert & Sholley, 1996;

Stapley & Haviland, 1989). Accordingly, research indicates that this emotional restriction in men is related to decreased marital satisfaction for both men (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Sharpe, Heppner, & Dixon, 1995), and their spouses (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004).

Some have suggested that men's emotional restriction is a result of some men's adherence to norms associated with a traditional masculine gender role (O'Neil, 1981). They point out that in western cultures men are generally socialized to view expression of soft emotions as a sign of femininity or weakness; as a result, men learn to restrict their emotional expression. Some have said that this restriction of emotion causes men to develop a difficulty identifying and labeling their emotional experience (Levant, Good, Cook, O'Neil, Smalley, Owen, & Richmond, 2006). The construct of Male Gender Role Conflict has emerged in research to describe the interpersonal and intrapersonal consequences of rigid adherence to a traditional masculine role. Research on male gender role conflict has demonstrated that gender role conflict factors have been associated with a number of negative characteristics for men, including: lower self-esteem (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995), lower capacity for intimacy (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), higher levels of anxiety and depression (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good, & Mintz, 1990; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), increased abuse of alcohol (Blazina & Watkins, 1996), and higher levels of general psychological symptomology (Good, Robertson, O'Neil, Fitzgerald, Stevens, DeBord, Bartels, & Braverman, 1995).

The term Restrictive Emotionality (RE) has been used to describe one of the four factors of Male Gender Role Conflict in which men tend to devalue and are uncomfortable with emotional expression, and in turn tend to express less emotion to others. Research has demonstrated that increased restrictive emotionality among men has

been linked to decreased marital satisfaction (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Consequently, research on gender role conflict and restrictive emotionality has led some to suggest developing therapeutic interventions with the goal of freeing men from rigid adherence to traditional male roles (Fischer & Good, 1997; O'Neil, 2008). To the extent that emotional restriction is a consequence of socialized gender roles, the belief is that these interventions would enable men to become less emotionally restricted, thus enabling them to experience deeper and more satisfying interpersonal relationships.

While research currently supports the idea that men's restrictive emotionality is related to decreased marital satisfaction, there may be some value in determining if restrictive emotionality among women is similarly related to decreased marital satisfaction. As Zamarripa, Wampold, and Gregory (2003) suggested, men's gender role conflict factors such as restrictive emotionality may be personality characteristics that also create difficulties for women. However, little research has examined how women's restrictive emotionality may be related to marital satisfaction.

In regards to women's socialization experiences, many have noted women are generally socialized to be caretakers, and thus tend to develop more intimate and expressive styles of communication and interaction (Vangelisti & Daly, 1997). Research on emotional differences between women and men seems to support this idea. Specifically, studies have demonstrated that women are more emotionally expressive than men (Balswick & Avertt, 1977; Brody, 1997) and give more emotional forms of social support (Marks & McLanahan, 1993; Solomon & Rothblum, 1986; Vinokur & Vinokur-Kaplan, 1990). A study examining male gender role conflict factors among

women found that male participants were significantly more emotionally restrictive than women (Zamarripa et al., 2003). However, while this study demonstrated that men scored higher than women on a measure of restrictive emotionality, there was a similar relationship between restrictive emotionality and depression for both men and women, such that higher scores of restrictive emotionality for both were associated with higher scores on a measure of depression. Consequently, one might expect that a similar relationship would hold true for women's restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction, such that greater emotional restriction among women would also be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Yet, while the research examining gender role conflict has found that husbands and wives report lower marital satisfaction when the man scores high on a measure of restricted emotionality, no research has examined if restrictive emotionality among women is also negatively correlated with marital satisfaction.

Based on the literature which finds emotional restriction among men to be detrimental to marriages, one would expect that a similar relationship would be found between emotional restriction and marital satisfaction among female spouses. However, there may be some evidence to suggest that the emotionality of one spouse may be less important than the interaction of emotionality of husbands and wives. In fact, the research which has found men's restrictive emotionality to be associated with decreased marital satisfaction may be caused by the fact that greater restriction in emotion in men increases the likelihood of a discrepancy in the emotionality of each spouse. That is, it may not simply be greater restrictive emotionality which relates to satisfaction, but a mismatch in emotionality between spouses. Spouses who are similar in emotionality may experience

less opportunity for conflict around emotional communication, which may occur more readily in couples that are emotionally mismatched. Consequently, examining female spouses' emotionality in relation to their spouses is important to determine if similarity of emotionality between spouses is indicative of satisfying relationships.

Research indicates that, in general, similarity in personality between partners in a relationship predicts increased relationship satisfaction (Acitelli, Kenny, & Weiner, 2001; Russell & Wells, 1991). Moreover, research on emotional similarity of spouses revealed that similarity of emotional experience between partners was significantly positively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Gonzaga, Campos, & Bradbury, 2007). Additionally, a study by Croyle and Waltz (2002) demonstrated that discrepancy between partners' levels of emotional awareness was related to lower relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it is possible that marital satisfaction may be more related to the similarity of spouses on emotionality, as opposed to the restrictive emotionality of only one spouse.

Another important variable in relation to similarity between spouses is the finding that perceptions of similarity are more strongly related to satisfaction than the actual similarity of spouses (Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004). Regarding the current study, those who believe their spouses to be more similar to themselves in emotionality may experience increased satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine not only if similarity in emotionality is related to increased satisfaction, but if each spouse's perception of similarity is related to increased marital satisfaction.

Lastly, a number of studies have found that wives' marital behaviors are less related to marital satisfaction than husbands' behaviors (Cutrona, 1996; Gottman, 1998;

Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). A study by Gottman and Porterfield (1981) found that husbands' nonverbal emotional expression was more related to marital satisfaction than wives'. Likewise, one might expect that men's restrictive emotionality would be more related to ratings of marital satisfaction than women's. That is, the relationship between restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction may only hold true for men's restrictive emotionality.

**Statement of Problem**

While research has identified that men's restrictive emotionality is related to decreased marital satisfaction, no research has examined the relationship of women's restrictive emotionality to satisfaction in marriages. Additionally, no research has examined the relationship between the similarity of husbands' and wives' levels of restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction. This study adds to the current body of research on restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction by examining the relationship between female spouses' levels of restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction, and examines how similarity or discrepancy between husbands' and wives' levels of restrictive emotionality is related to marital satisfaction. Lastly, this study attempts to determine if perceptions of similarity in emotionality are linked to marital satisfaction.

As demonstrated in the existing literature, it was expected that men's restrictive emotionality, as rated by themselves and their spouses, would be negatively correlated with ratings of marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. However, it was expected that women's self-ratings of restrictive emotionality would not be significantly related to husbands' ratings of satisfaction. Furthermore, it was expected that similarity between spouses on a measure of restrictive emotionality would be significantly related

to ratings of satisfaction, such that those who are most similar would report having the most satisfying relationships. Since it is assumed that emotional expression tends to be beneficial for marriages, it was expected that couples who are similarly low in restrictive emotionality would be more satisfied than couples who are similar in high levels of restrictive emotionality. It was also expected that perceptions of similarity between spouses would be linked to marital satisfaction.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Emotion

Emotion, broadly defined, is the body's system of appraising stimuli. Emotions allow an individual to attach valence and weight to stimuli in order to inform an individual's decisions regarding whether to attend to, approach, or avoid specific stimuli. A number of components are said to be involved in the emotional experience. Generally, researchers agree on three basic components or levels of emotional experience: physiological arousal, experience, and expression (Ekman, 1992; Gross & Munoz, 1995; Izard, 1977; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999; Lang, 1995; Levenson, 1994; Leventhal, 1984). Physiological arousal includes all of a body's physical reactions associated with experiencing emotion. The experience component is the subjective, felt sense of an emotional response which may include cognitive processing and awareness of emotion. Lastly, expression includes both verbal and nonverbal behaviors that communicate or express emotional experience. Emotional expression brings emotion into the social arena in which individuals articulate their emotions to others to elicit help, or warn of danger, for example.

The three components, arousal, experience, and expression, appear to function along a continuum. Experience, for example, can include sensitive awareness of subtle changes in feeling on one end of the continuum, to a complete lack of awareness of physiological and mental indicators of emotion. Similarly, expression of emotion can range from expression of all the subtleties of emotional experience to suppression or restriction of any verbal or nonverbal communication of emotion.

While emotional arousal often seems to be an automatic response to environmental or internal stimuli, there is often an assumption that emotional awareness is also automatic, while emotional expression is more volitional. However, there can be a motivated lack of awareness in which individuals suppress awareness of emotion. Additionally, leakage of emotion often occurs nonverbally even when one attempts to restrict verbal expression of emotion (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999).

While identifying components of emotion is useful, in practice the components are not always clearly distinct. This is demonstrated particularly in the lab when researchers attempt to isolate components of emotion. For example, facial electromyography (EMG) has been used as a measure of physiological response and alternatively as a measure of emotional expression. While facial muscle activity appears to be an indication of physiological response, patterns of facial EMG recordings are more frequently used to identify nonverbal expression of emotion (Blascovich, 2000). In addition, while components may have conceptual distinctions, measuring one component often tends to rely on others. Attempting to assess awareness, for example, often requires participants to describe or express emotional experience. Emotional awareness may also be conceptually distinct from emotional experience; experience is thought to involve

having or perceiving a physical sensation or state of mind, while awareness involves knowing, realizing, or recognizing the emotion is present. Awareness appears to include experiencing, but adds cognitive reflection about the experience. Attempting to isolate awareness from experience, however, seems especially difficult in practice since the act of identifying experience requires awareness.

**Sex differences in emotion**

Popular culture suggests that men and women are from different planets (Gray, 1992). In addition to other indicators of the difficulty of maintaining satisfying intimate relationships, the widely publicized statistics on divorce seem to confirm that men and women do in fact have ways of relating and communicating that are light years apart. One of the central suggested differences between the sexes focuses on emotionality. Women are largely considered more emotional than men. In fact, a 2001 Gallup Poll revealed that ninety percent of American adult respondents rated women as "more emotional" than men (as cited in Wilson, 2006). It is generally believed that women differ from men on all of the previously identified components of emotion. That is, women are believed to have more emotional arousal, experience emotions more intensely and are more aware of their emotions, and are more emotionally expressive than men. The one possible exception is that men are often believed to experience and express more anger than women (Fabes & Martin, 1991).

However, the research has been somewhat inconsistent in identifying across-the-board differences in emotion between the sexes. In a recent review of the scientific literature on sex differences in emotion, Wester, Vogel, Pressly, and Heesacker (2002) identified two perspectives regarding emotional differences between the sexes. One, they

reported, is that there are significant sex differences in emotion and that they are "deep-seated and enduring" (p. 631). The other perspective suggests that sex differences in emotion tend to be either situational or small in magnitude. Wester et al.'s (2002) review of extant literature on sex differences in emotion supports the latter position, as they concluded that research suggests little if any difference between the emotional abilities of men and women. They argued that when differences are observed, they are often influenced by gender role expectations as opposed to innate differences. Sex differences in emotion, they concluded, are typically small in magnitude and socially constructed. Similarly, Barrett, Lane, Sechrest, and Schwartz (2000) identified a difficulty of finding consistent sex differences in emotion. They pointed out that sex differences typically occur in self-report measures in which participants are asked to rate their emotionality as a global trait. However, when emotionality is measured on a moment-to-moment basis, differences have not consistently been observed. Additionally, they noted, the research has been inconsistent in finding differences in self-reported experience of specific emotions.

In contrast, Barrett et al. (2000) pointed out, "A substantial body of research has demonstrated with few exceptions that women are more emotionally expressive than are men" (Barrett et al., 2000, p. 1033). A similar review of the literature on emotional expression also concluded that the research has consistently demonstrated women to be more emotionally expressive than men (Kring & Gordon, 1998). In examining the research on the three components of emotion, a pattern seems to emerge in which differences appear inconsistently among the components of arousal and experience, and more regularly for the component of expression.

The research assessing the physiological component of emotion typically uses one or a combination of functional magnetic imaging of the brain, skin conductance, blood pressure, or heart rate. Facial electromyography responses have also been identified as an indication of physiological response associated with emotional response; however, EMG seems to be more often used to denote nonverbal expression of emotion. A number of studies assessing sex differences of physiological response have suggested, contrary to stereotypes, that men tend to show more physiological signs of emotion than women (Brody & Hall, 1993, 2000; LaFrance & Banaji, 1992; Manstead, 1998). In addition, some have found support for the notion that men exhibit higher levels of physiological arousal in conflict situations than their spouses (Gottman & Levenson, 1988; Levenson, Carstensen & Gottman, 1994). Studies using blood pressure as in indication of physiological reactivity have demonstrated greater physiological reactivity in men than women (Allen, Stoney, Owens, & Matthews, 1993; Lawler, Wilcox, & Anderson, 1995; Light, Turner, Hinderliter, & Sherwood, 1993; Murphy, Stoney, Alpert, & Walker, 1995; Stoney, Davis, & Matthews, 1987). However, other research has found that women demonstrate greater blood pressure reactivity than men in response to conflict situations (Denton, Burleson, Hobbs, Von Stein, & Rodriguez, 2001). Still other research has revealed no sex differences in physiological arousal in response to conflict discussions (Julien, Arellano, & Turgeon, 1997). A complicating factor in the studies assessing physiological arousal is that baseline rates of many of the measures often differ widely between sexes. While some research seems to suggest that men may in fact experience more emotional arousal than women, the literature appears somewhat inconclusive regarding sex differences in physiological arousal. Consequently, if women are indeed

more emotional than men, research has given little to no indication that they are more emotional at the level of arousal.

The research which suggests that men are more physiologically reactive than women has caused some to suggest that their greater reactivity is evidence of a deficit in men's ability to modulate emotional arousal. Levant (1992), for example, suggested that greater physiological arousal could be explained by a lack of emotional awareness. He indicated that the lack of an ability to process and make sense of emotional experiences could explain why men would exhibit higher levels of physiological arousal in conflict discussions. That is, without awareness and the ability to make sense of emotion, it becomes more difficult to soothe oneself and reduce one's arousal levels.

On the other hand, Gottman and Levenson (1988) indicated that men's emotional reactivity is not necessarily greater than women's, but suggested that men experience high arousal levels as more aversive than women. He noted that men cannot function as well as women in the context of high negative affect. As a result, men are more inclined to withdraw from emotionally arousing relationship discussions in order to reduce arousal. Consequently, the demand-withdraw pattern, widely observed in marital interaction, is said to be related to emotion processes. In the demand-withdraw pattern, one partner attempts to discuss a relationship problem often in a critical and blaming manner, while the other partner tries to emotionally and/or physically withdraw in order to avoid conflict. Research has consistently found women to be more often in the demanding role and men in the withdrawing role (Caughlin, 2002; Caughlin & Huston, 2002; Christensen, Eldridge, Catta-Preta, Lim, & Santagata, 2006; Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995). Similarly, a study by Stanley, Markman,

and Whitton (2002) found that men were significantly more likely than women to withdraw during conflict, as indicated by both partners' reports. Gottman and Levenson (1988) suggested that men's tendency to withdraw during conflict could be explained as a means of reducing emotional arousal experienced as a result of conflict.

Regarding the second component of emotion, emotional experience, the research seems to have documented inconsistent differences between men and women. Typically, studies that attempt to access experience or awareness of emotion tend to use either self-report instruments which ask participants to rate themselves on general experience of emotion, or moment to moment ratings of the experience of specific emotions. The differences that have been documented in the research have shown women to have greater experience and awareness of emotion. However, critics have argued that when studies demonstrate differences in experience the differences tend to occur only when ratings are general self-report measures of emotional experience, as opposed to specific ratings of moment to moment experience of emotion (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992). They have suggested that general ratings are more subject to stereotyped expectations regarding gender and emotion, in which men may be inclined to think 'I am a man, and men are not emotional, therefore I must not be emotional" (Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco, & Eyssell, 1998, p. 557). In fact, the study by Barrett et al. (1998) found that when participants were asked to describe global emotional experience, significant sex differences were found. However, when participants were asked about their experience of specific emotions, no differences were reported.

On the other hand, when awareness is conceptualized as the capacity to identify and describe one's own or others' emotions, studies have indicated that women

demonstrate greater emotional awareness than men. A study by Barrett et al. (2000) found that women consistently fared better than men on a measure called the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS), which requires participants to describe their own or others' anticipated feelings in a number of different scenarios. In their study, the sex difference was observed after controlling for verbal intelligence. The authors concluded that their results demonstrated greater emotional awareness in women than men. Other studies using the LEAS have also demonstrated higher levels of emotional awareness in women (Ciarrochi, Caputi, & Mayer, 2003; Ciarrochi, Hynes, & Crittenden, 2005; Lane, Quinlan, Schwartz, Walker, & Zetlin, 1990). In addition, a version of the LEAS developed for children also demonstrated a sex difference with females scoring significantly higher than males in the study (Bajgar, Ciarrochi, Lane, & Deane, 2005).

Another study using the LEAS, in addition to a measure developed for the particular study assessing emotional awareness only in couple-specific scenarios, found that women demonstrated higher levels of emotional awareness than their male partners only in response to couple-specific situations; however, they failed to replicate the findings of a sex difference in emotional awareness in general situations (Coyle & Waltz, 2002). The authors noted that although women's scores on the emotional awareness measure were on average higher than men's in response to general situations, the difference was not significant. They surmised that larger sample sizes used in Barrett et al.'s (2000) studies may have accounted for significant differences that were found in their studies. Addressing their finding of a significant sex difference in awareness in response to couple-specific situations, Croyle and Waltz (2002) suggested, "Women may generally demonstrate an ability to use more differentiated and complex emotion

language than men, and that this difference in ability may become more pronounced in close male-female relationships" (p. 441).

One potential problem with the LEAS in assessing emotional awareness is that the measure relies in part on the expression of emotions, which seems to be particularly subject to socialized gender role expectations. Research has found that the requirement to restrict emotional expression is a central component of traditional masculinity ideology (Good, Borst, & Wallace, 1994; Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, Cozza, Hill, MacEachern, Marty, & Schnedeker, 1992; O'Neil, 1981; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986). As a result, males who complete the LEAS may be motivated to present themselves according to stereotypical gender roles. Consequently, another study using the LEAS attempted to determine if differential motivation could explain the documented sex differences in emotional awareness in studies using the LEAS (Ciarrochi et al., 2005). Participants completed half of the LEAS and then received either motivational instructions or control instructions before completing the remainder of the LEAS. The results revealed that the unmotivated women outscored unmotivated men in levels of emotional awareness, as had been previously documented. However, their research did find that motivational instructions caused men to improve emotional awareness to levels equivalent to those of unmotivated women. On the other hand, the motivated men took 38% longer to reach levels of emotional awareness comparable to those of unmotivated women; in addition, the motivated women still scored significantly higher than motivated men on emotional awareness. The authors concluded that motivation failed to account for sex differences in emotional awareness. Instead, they cited the socialization experiences of men and women to explain differences: "women have an advantage over men resulting

from years of practice attending to their own and others' emotions" (Ciarrochi et al., 2005, p. 139).

Alexithymia is a condition which closely relates to the concept of emotional awareness. Alexithymia refers to the inability to identify and describe feelings. Severe alexithymia, which has typically been assessed using the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20; Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994), is often characterized by flat facial expression, an inability to identify even bodily sensations associated with emotional arousal, and a concrete, logical cognitive style (Levant, Good, Cook, O'Neil, Smalley, Owen, & Richmond, 2006). A review of the research on severe alexithymia reveals that the majority of studies examining clinical populations found no significant sex differences. However, in studies examining non-clinical populations, men consistently scored higher than women on a measure of alexithymia, even though most men's scores still did not reach clinical levels (Levant et al., 2006). This led some researchers to develop a measure to assess mild to moderate levels of alexithymia in men, theorized to be associated with male socialization experiences which encourage restriction of emotional expression. Research using the Normative Male Alexithymia Scale (NMAS) found that men scored significantly higher than women on both the NMAS and the TAS (Levant et al., 2006).

Regarding the third component of emotion, the research examined by Wester et al. (2002) suggested few to no differences in the expression of emotion, whether verbal or nonverbal. For example, they cited a meta-analysis of studies on the verbal expression of empathy which demonstrated that sex differences were found only when participants were motivated to present themselves according to stereotypical gender roles (Ickes, Gesn, & Graham, 2000).

However, much of the research reviewed for the purposes of the current study found consistent sex differences in the expressive component of emotion. Kring and Gordon (1998), for example, suggested that emotional expression has been the most widely studied component of emotion, and has been examined using a variety of methodologies, including facial electromyography, observational coding by trained raters, judgments by untrained raters, and self-report. Kring and Gordon (1998) note that, with few exceptions, the research appears to clearly demonstrate greater emotional expression by women than by men. Similarly, the evidence reviewed by Brody and Hall (2000) suggests that women are more emotionally expressive than men.

Self-reports of emotional expression consistently show that women identify as being more expressive than men (Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Balswick & Avertt, 1977; Gross & John, 1995; Kring & Gordon, 1998). Of course, critics again cite socialized gender role expectations as accounting for the differences documented by self-report (Wester et al., 2002). Wester et al. (2002) noted that the differences observed in self-report studies were largely a result of motivation by participants to present themselves in a stereotypical fashion. They reasoned that because socialized gender roles tend to encourage emotional expression by women and proscribe emotional expression by men, self-reports of emotion differences may reflect the societal expectations of gendered experiencing of emotion.

Non-verbal indicators, on the other hand, also demonstrate greater emotional expression by women. Meta-analysis conducted by Hall (1990) indicated that women are more nonverbally expressive than men. A review by Manstead (1992) similarly found that women are more facially expressive and recognize others' facial expressions more

accurately than men. Facial EMG studies have consistently found women to be more facially expressive of emotion than men (Greenwald, Cook, & Lang, 1989; Lang, Greenwald, Bradley, & Hamm, 1993; Schwartz, Brown, & Ahern, 1980). In addition, an interesting study using EMG found that administration of a dose of testosterone to women caused significantly decreased facial expressiveness, suggesting a possible biological component to the documented sex differences in emotional expression (Hermans, Putman, & van Honk, 2006).

**Gender roles**

While a number of sex differences in emotion have been documented in the literature, as has been mentioned, some suggest that these differences are context-dependent or a result of situational pressures (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992, Wester et al., 2002). One such pressure is the pressure to present oneself according to gender role stereotypes. In fact, research on gender role socialization has repeatedly found that one of the central aspects of traditional masculine socialization is the requirement to restrict emotional expression.

Gender roles are made up of society's norms regarding what is considered appropriate behavior of males and females. Gender roles vary from society to society, and frequently vary noticeably within societies. Regarding norms for masculinity in particular, Levant (1996) suggested that because masculinity is a social construction, masculinity norms can differ for men of different social classes, races, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, life stages, and historical eras. For the same reason, gender role expectations can change over time.

On the other hand, within the United States, some have identified common themes among expectations for the male gender role. A number of components have been identified by researchers and have named this core set of beliefs traditional masculinity ideology. Brannon (1976) identified four components: men should not be feminine; men should strive for achievement; men should not show weakness; and men should seek risk and adventure. More recently, seven components have been identified: rejection of femininity; restriction of emotion; toughness and aggression; self-reliance; achievement of status; objectifying attitudes toward sexuality; and homophobia (Levant et al., 1992).

While traditional masculinity ideology restricts men's behavior, much has been said recently of expansions in gender role expectations, particularly in the western world. Traditional expectations for women to stay at home and care for children, and men to be primary breadwinners, have given way to more egalitarian gender role expectations in which men are expected to play a more active role in childcare and women are encouraged to pursue their own careers (Botkin, Weeks, & Morris, 2000; Wentworth & Chell, 2005).

Along with the expectations that men be more involved in childcare, are growing expectations for men to be more engaged and in touch with the emotional needs of their children and spouses (Elder, 2005). However, some have suggested that the socialization experiences of many males appear to constrain their abilities to do just that. Murray (1999) asserted that boys are being "emotionally crippled" by the way that society teaches boys how to deal with emotions. She suggested that boys tend to be disciplined more harshly to girls, demonstrating that sensitivity is not modeled to boys in the same way it is than girls. Boys are taught to be tough and not to cry. Murray also noted that

popular media images of ideal males have become more hyper-masculine, as opposed to the images of previous generations.

The literature appears to support the idea that males are socialized to deal with emotions differently than females. Levant et al. (2006) summarized some of the research on the emotional socialization of males. Unexpectedly, studies have indicated that males actually tend to be more emotionally reactive and expressive than girls up until early childhood. By about two years of age males become less verbally expressive than females, and by six years, become less facially expressive (Buck, 1977; Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Haviland & Malatesta, 1981). Mothers tend to work harder to rein in the emotional reactivity of infant boys (Haviland & Malatesta, 1981), and fathers have been observed to socialize boys along gender stereotyped lines as early as age one (Siegal, 1987). Studies have indicated differing behavioral expectations of boys and girls, even as early as twenty-four hours after birth (Rubin, Provenzano, & Luria, 1974; Thorne, 1993). Researchers have found that parents, teachers, and peers respond negatively to displays of emotion by boys (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Kuebli & Fivush, 1992; Zeman & Garber, 1996). Parents discourage the expression of emotions like fear and sadness in boys, but encourage the same expression in girls (Brody & Hall, 1993; Dunn et al., 1987; Fivush, 1989). Peer reactions to emotional expression of vulnerable emotions from boys are often unsympathetic (Pollack, 1998). Boys who are caught crying in front of their peers are told to “Quit acting like a girl,” or called “sissy,” reinforcing the notion that vulnerable emotions are inappropriate for boys. Lastly, group activities in which boys and girls are encouraged to participate differ, with girls’ interactions focused on building and

maintaining relationships, and boys' activities focused on competition, teamwork, and toughness (Lever, 1976; Maccoby, 1990).

As a result of the emotional socialization process of males, men are said to develop a number of problems. Namely, Levant and Kopecky (1995) suggested that many men develop an action empathy in which men are able to predict the actions of others, but do not fully develop emotional empathy or the ability to understand how others feel. The emotional socialization process is also said to account for mild to moderate levels of alexithymia, increased aggression and violence, and sexual problems (sexual addiction, promiscuity, and pornography) in men (Levant, 1996). Fischer and Good (1997) stated that one consequence of the socialization process is that men become less able to identify and make sense of many emotions as they occur.

Male gender role norms also suggest that emotion is associated with femininity and weakness. Consequently, many men who adhere strictly to gender role expectations learn to avoid and fear their emotions. Research differentiating between primary and secondary emotional responding has found that men experience significantly greater secondary response to their emotions than women (Jakupcak, Salters, Gratz, & Roemer, 2003). That is, men in the study were observed to have greater responses to the experience of emotion. Jakupcak et al. (2003) suggested that their results demonstrated that men tend to experience more fear of their emotions than women.

While the gender role socialization process is said to produce a number of problems for males, some have identified positive effects for men. Levant and Kopecky (1995), for example, outlined positive qualities associated with the masculine gender role, including the tendency for many men to demonstrate love to others through favors and

gifts, endure difficulties for the sake of loved ones, and put aside personal needs in order to provide for others. Early research on gender roles also found masculinity to be associated with positive psychological adjustment (Long, 1986; O'Herson & Orlofsky, 1990). Traits such as independence, assertiveness, self-confidence, persistence, and the ability to make decisions easily were identified to be connected with a masculine gender role.

**Gender role conflict**

It has been suggested that the emotional socialization of males conflicts with the current demands on men to communicate more openly about feelings and be more intimately involved in the care and nurture of children (Levant, 1996). As a result, the pressure men feel to either conform to or deviate from traditional masculine norms can bring condemnation and psychological consequences. Pleck (1995) conceptualized these negative consequences as male gender role strain, and identified three types: discrepancy-strain, dysfunction-strain, and trauma-strain. Discrepancy-strain results from failure to conform to one's internalized ideal of masculinity, which Pleck noted, is often closely related to traditional masculinity ideology. Dysfunction-strain results from the negative consequences of successfully conforming to traditional masculine norms, since some masculine gender role characteristics are by nature psychologically dysfunctional. For example, the masculine norm of emotional restriction has been found to be related to depression and anxiety in men (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good, & Mintz, 1990; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Lastly, trauma-strain is said to result from the traumatic nature of the male role socialization process. Levant (1995) suggested that experiencing separation from mothers and having absent fathers is traumatizing for boys.

Gender role conflict (GRC) has been defined as the negative effects of adherence to rigid gender roles (O'Neil et al., 1986). Researchers have identified four patterns of gender role conflict: Success/Power/Competition, Restrictive Emotionality, Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men, and Conflict Between Work and Family Relations. Success/Power/Competition reflects personal attitudes regarding success pursued through competition and power. Restrictive emotionality is identified as restrictions and fears about expressing feelings as well as difficulty finding words to express emotion. Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men represents restrictions in expressing feelings and thoughts with other men and difficulty touching other men. Conflict Between Work and Family Relations is identified as experiencing difficulty balancing work, school, and family relations resulting in health problems, overwork, stress, and a lack of leisure and relaxation (O'Neil, 2008). The GRC patterns have been identified as the observable outcomes of gender role strain (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000).

The research on gender role conflict in men has demonstrated that gender role conflict (GRC) factors have been associated with decreased self-esteem (Mahalik, Locke, Theodore, Cournoyer, & Lloyd, 2001; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), decreased capacity for intimacy (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Fischer & Good, 1997; Good, Robertson, O'Neil, Fitzgerald, Stevens, DeBord, Bartels, & Braverman, 1995; Sharpe & Heppner, 1995; Sharpe, Heppner, & Dixon, 1991), and increased substance and alcohol abuse (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Korcuska & Thombs, 2003; Monk & Ricciardelli, 2003). Gender role conflict factors have been strongly linked to depression. In a review of 27 studies assessing the relationship between GRC and depression, only three studies failed to show a significant relationship (O'Neil, 2008). The link was also found to be consistent across

race, culture, and sexual orientation. In addition, twelve of fifteen studies reviewed found a significant relationship between GRC and anxiety (O'Neil, 2008). Gender role conflict has also been shown to be predictive of men's reluctance to seek psychological services (Good, Dell, & Mintz, 1989), and negative attitudes toward psychological help-seeking (Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992; Wisch, Mahalik, Hayes, & Nutt, 1995). Additionally, GRC factors have been associated with coercive sexual behavior (Senn, Desmarais, Verberg, & Wood, 2000), hostile and rigid interpersonal exchanges (Mahalik, 2000), hostility toward women (Rando, Rogers, & Brittan-Powell, 1998; Senn et al., 2000), and self-reported violence and aggression (Cohn & Zeichner, 2006). In sum, "men who experience gender role conflict feel less positively about themselves, are less intimate with important others, experience greater psychological distress, are less willing to seek out help for that distress, and act in ways that are vengeful and destructive" (Mahalik, 1999, p. 6).

Studies have also found that GRC factors are correlated with problems in relationship functioning. Research has demonstrated that increased GRC factors are associated with decreased marital satisfaction (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Sharpe et al., 1995). That is, males who endorse higher levels of the gender role conflict factors tend to rate their marriages as less satisfying than males who endorse lower levels. One study also demonstrated that women's perceptions of their male partners' GRC were correlated with decreased relationship satisfaction (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004).

**Restrictive emotionality**

A number of researchers have focused particularly on the emotional component of GRC, restrictive emotionality, and have found it to independently correlate with

measures of psychological health and relationship functioning. Wong, Pituch, and Rochlen (2006) noted, “There is growing theoretical speculation and empirical evidence that restrictive emotionality is connected to many intrapersonal and interpersonal problems for men” (p.114).

In the research, restrictive emotionality has been shown to be related with depression (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Shepard, 2002), anxiety (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995), alexithymia (Berger, Levant, McMillan, Kelleher, & Sellers, 2005; Fischer & Good, 1997; Shepard, 2002), shyness and toughness (Bruch, Berko, Haase, 1998), problems with relationship intimacy (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), decreased marital satisfaction (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), and a negative view of help-seeking (Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992). In fact, a review of studies on GRC factors found restrictive emotionality to be the most consistent predictor of depression (O’Neil, 2008). Researchers have also found RE to be related to immature defense mechanisms, in which rigid limits on what may be disclosed are constructed to create interpersonal distance or a sense of safety from perceived social threats (Jansz, 2000). Moreover, studies of gender role conflict across the lifespan have found that only restrictive emotionality of all the GRC factors has shown no significant age differences across age groupings (O’Neil, 2008). Consequently, O’Neil (2008) suggested that restrictive emotionality may be a particularly difficult gender role conflict pattern to confront and change.

In an attempt to understand the relationship between RE and other emotion constructs, a study was conducted by Wong et al. (2006). Specifically, the researchers sought to determine if restrictive emotionality, as measured by the Gender Role Conflict

subscale, was more closely related to measures of repression, alexithymia, or negative attitudes towards emotional expression.

Guiding their study was a model of emotional expression by Kennedy-Moore and Watson (1999), which suggests that disruptions in expression can occur at any of five steps along the process of translating emotional information into expression. The first step, *prereflective reaction,* involves preconscious processing of emotional information and automatic physiological arousal in reaction to a stimulus. A disruption which could prevent emotional expression at this step would occur if the individual had minimal physiological reactivity in response to a stimulus. As indicated in the previously reviewed literature on emotional arousal, consistent sex differences in physiological reactivity have not been documented, and some evidence appears to suggest that men may in fact tend to have more physiological reactivity than women. The second step of the Kennedy-Moore and Watson model, *conscious perception of response,* occurs when the individual becomes aware of his affective response. A disruption of expression occurs at this step when the individual is motivated to block emotional experience from awareness. In other words, the disruption at this step could be considered repression. *Labeling and interpretation of the emotional response* is the third step in the model. This step involves active processing of the emotional information and attaching labels to the emotional experience. A disruption at this step can occur when an individual lacks the skill to effectively interpret and label one's emotional experience. Kennedy-Moore and Watson suggest that alexithymia best fits the disruption at this step. The fourth step is *evaluation of the acceptability of the emotional response,* which involves evaluating the affective response according to one's beliefs and goals. Disruption of emotional expression at this

step occurs when the individual determines that the emotional experience is unacceptable. The last step is called *perceived social context for expression*. This step occurs when the individual evaluates whether expressing emotional experience is desirable in the current social context. A disruption at this step can occur when the individual determines that it would be inappropriate to express emotion in the current context.

The study by Wong et al. (2006) sought to identify which disruption or disruptions would be most closely related to restrictive emotionality. In an attempt to do so, the researchers identified measurements which they believed most closely related to steps 2 (repression), 3 (difficulty identifying feelings), and 4 and 5 (negative attitudes toward emotional expression). Interestingly, the results showed that RE was unrelated to a measure of repression. The authors suggested that restrictive emotionality may not relate to repression since the restrictive emotionality scale measuring men's difficulty expressing emotions requires conscious recognition of one's emotions, while repression is often said to occur outside of conscious recognition. The researchers did find a significant, but weak relationship between RE and difficulty identifying feelings (only a 2% shared variance), but found a much stronger relationship between RE and negative attitudes toward emotional expression (28% shared variance). The authors suggested that their results provided support for the notion that emotional restriction in men is most closely related to an unwillingness, as opposed to an inability to express emotion.

**Marital Satisfaction**

It's a well-known statistic that in the United States approximately fifty percent of couples who get married will likely divorce. In addition, a number of couples stay intact, but remain unhappy and unsatisfied in their marital relationships. Despite considerable

interest in having satisfying and lasting marriages, a majority appear to be unsuccessful in attaining this goal. Consequently, many have sought to understand why so many marriages falter and what makes marriages that last, last. In doing so, researchers have focused particularly on what factors contribute to "satisfaction" in marriages.

Marital satisfaction is generally defined as a subjective evaluation by each spouse regarding the quality or level of happiness within the marriage (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). As such, measures of satisfaction are not intended to be objective assessments of marital interaction, but as measures of the attitudes and feelings of spouses. Additionally, it should be noted that satisfaction is not synonymous with stability (Lenthall, 1977). Marriages can be stable but unhappy and can be happy but unstable. However, while researchers are often interested in both satisfaction and stability, assessing stability typically requires following couples over extended periods of time. While some researchers have conducted this kind of research (e.g., Gottman, 1999), most researchers have used measures of marital satisfaction to quickly assess the quality of a marriage, and not without reason. The marital literature indicates that decreased marital satisfaction is in fact associated with increased rates of personal, work, and family problems, and high rates of divorce (Clements, Cordova, Markman, & Laurenceau, 1997).

Researchers have examined a number of variables related to marital satisfaction. Early research focused particularly on demographic correlates of marital satisfaction. Some of the findings from this line of research indicate that factors such as low socioeconomic status, low level of education, and young age at marriage are associated with lower marital satisfaction (Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Kurdek, 1991). Other research has focused on personality variables and their impact on marital satisfaction. Neuroticism

is frequently cited as strongly related to decreased marital satisfaction (Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Kelly & Conley, 1987).

Studies have also examined how satisfaction changes during the course of marriages. Some have suggested that satisfaction in marriages tends to follow a U-shaped curve in which couples experience high satisfaction at the beginning of marriages, a decline during the middle years, and an uptick in satisfaction during the latter years of life together (Vaillant & Vaillant, 1993). Others have argued that this observation has only been observed in cross-sectional research and that available longitudinal research suggests that satisfaction generally declines throughout the course of marriage (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003). Changes in marital satisfaction have been attributed to a number of different stressors. For example, childbirth has been associated with declines in marital satisfaction for many parents (Belsky & Kelly, 1994; Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983).

A burgeoning area of research has focused on gender and its relationship with marital satisfaction. Some studies have demonstrated that men tend to me more satisfied with their marriages than women (Fowers, 1991; Schumm, Webb, & Bollman, 1998; Veroff, Douvan, Orbuch, & Acitelli, 1998), while other studies have shown that women's marital satisfaction ratings are as high or higher than men's (Aron & Henkemeyer, 1995; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991).

Researchers have also identified differences in variables that predict satisfaction based on the sex of the spouse. Some have suggested that what contributes to satisfaction is generally similar for both men and women (Karney & Bradbury, 1995), while others have identified key differences. Clements et al. (1997), for example, reported that marital

satisfaction appears to be unidimensional for men and multidimensional for women. In other research, variables that have been shown to relate to women's satisfaction ratings include: levels of intimacy, the ability to self-disclose with one's husband and perceive him as responsive (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005); the amount of affectionate expression and level of negativity of one's husband; and a sense of interdependence with one's spouse (Burleson, Kunkel, Samter, & Werking, 1996; Huston & Chorost, 1994). Variables that have been shown to relate to men's ratings of satisfaction include: the presence of the demand/withdraw conflict pattern; satisfaction with the sexual relationship; division of household tasks; the conflict resolution style of wives (Kurdek, 1995; Vangelisti & Huston, 1994).

A number of studies have also found that the marital behaviors of women are less related to marital satisfaction than the behaviors of men (Cutrona, 1996; Gottman, 1998; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). A study by Gottman and Porterfield (1981), for example, found that husbands' nonverbal expression of emotion was significantly linked to marital satisfaction, but wives' expression was unrelated to satisfaction.

Research has also focused on the contribution of interpersonal factors to marital satisfaction, such as commitment and communication. Commitment has been identified to involve holding a long-term perspective on one's marriage, linking personal goals to the marriage, and making sacrifices and accommodations for the marriage. This type of commitment has been called personal dedication (Stanley & Markman, 1992). Another type of commitment called constraint commitment may involve staying with one's spouse because of economic, social, or religious pressure, even when the relationship is

not found to be rewarding (Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga, & Cox, 1998; Stanley & Markman, 1992). In their research, both types of commitment were significantly related to marital satisfaction; however, dedication commitment was found to be more strongly related. Generally, higher levels of commitment have been associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction (Allgood, Crane, & Agee, 1997).

Communication factors have been found to be among the most documented interpersonal variables related to relational satisfaction (Gottman, 1994). In self-reports, partners who report higher levels of sensitive and supportive communication report higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Gottman's (1994) observational research indicated that decreased marital satisfaction was associated with increased levels of negative interaction and affect, low levels of agreement between partners, low levels of humor and laughter, and more criticism. Gottman (1999) identified four specific behaviors most detrimental to the marital relationship, which he termed the "four horsemen of the apocalypse": criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. Another communication pattern associated with decreased satisfaction has been called negative affect reciprocity, which refers to the propensity of one partner's affect to be negative following negative affect exhibited by the other (Gottman, 1994; Margolin & Wampold, 1981). That is, couples who are more likely to reciprocate negative affect in their interaction tend to be less satisfied than couples who are more able to interrupt or prevent the reciprocity of negative affect.

Another pattern in marital interaction identified to be related to decreased marital satisfaction has been called the demand-withdraw or pursue/distance pattern (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Wile, 1981). In this pattern, one partner attempts to discuss a

relationship problem often in a critical and blaming manner, while the other partner tries to emotionally and/or physically withdraw in order to avoid conflict. The literature on the demand-withdraw pattern has demonstrated it to be associated with lower marital satisfaction and divorce (Caughlin, 2002; Caughlin & Huston, 2002; Christensen, 1998; Christensen & Shenk, 1994; Heavey et al., 1995). This has also been found to be true across a number of cultures (Christensen et al., 2006). Additionally, research has consistently found a gender difference in the demand/withdraw pattern, with women more often in the demanding role and men in the withdrawing role (Caughlin, 2002; Christensen et al., 2006; Caughlin & Huston, 2002; Christensen, 1998; Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Heavey et al., 1995; Stanley et al., 2002).

A number of explanations have been offered for why women are more often in the demand role and men in the withdraw role. Gottman and Levenson (1988) suggested that men's tendency to withdraw during conflict could be explained as a means of reducing increased emotional arousal that is experienced as a result of conflict. They suggested that men experience arousal in conflict as more aversive than women and are thus more motivated to reduce arousal by removing themselves from the conflict situation.

Christensen and Heavey (1990) have suggested that the reason women are more often in the demanding role is because women are more frequently interested in seeking change in the relationship. Their research indicated that as the topic of discussion shifted, spouses alternated demand/withdraw roles depending on whose topic was being discussed (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Christensen and Heavey (1993) suggested that women are more likely to want change in the relationship, particularly in the areas of increased involvement in housework and

child care, and increased closeness. The finding that women do a greater portion of housework and child care, even when both spouses are employed, provides support for the notion that women may be more interested in increased involvement from husbands (Presser, 1994). Some have noted evolutionary processes in explaining women's interest in increased closeness from husbands, noting the need for mothers to be attuned to the emotional needs of their children, for example (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Others have suggested that socialization processes of boys and girls explain differences in the need for closeness, in which communal needs are encouraged and strengthened in girls and agentic needs are encouraged in boys (Davis, Williams & Best, 1982).

**Emotion factors and relationship satisfaction**

The literature on communication processes and relationship satisfaction alludes to the importance of emotion factors and emotional connectedness in relation to marital satisfaction. Generally, it seems reasonable to assume that the ability to express one's feelings would facilitate better communication and increased intimacy, and as a result, bring about increased relationship satisfaction. Conversely, dysfunction in communication and decreases in relationship satisfaction could be expected to result from a lack of emotional expression. In fact, Greenberg and Johnson's Emotionally Focused Therapy for couples centers on the notion that increases in disclosure of emotion leads to greater intimacy and therefore, greater relationship satisfaction (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988). A number of studies help to elucidate the relationship of emotion factors and relationship satisfaction. For example, willingness to disclose feelings is connected to increased relationship satisfaction for both men and women (Jones, 1991; Siavelis & Lamke, 1992). Studies have also demonstrated that increased levels of emotional

expression are related to increased ratings of satisfaction (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Barnes & Sternberg, 1997; Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Johnson & Greenberg, 1988; Jacobson & Addis, 1993).

Gender role factors have also been demonstrated to relate to marital satisfaction. Research has shown that marital satisfaction has been associated with the extent to which one's partner endorses traditionally feminine traits, such as being nurturing and affectionate (Antill, 1983; Ickes, 1985; Kurdek & Schmidt, 1986; Lamke, 1989). Likewise, Burn and Ward (2005) have argued that dissatisfaction in many relationships stems from men's conformity to norms associated with the traditional masculine role. In their research, Burn and Ward (2005) found that women who perceived their partners as conforming more to traditional masculine norm were less satisfied with their relationships. Additionally, men who identified with more traditional male norms were also less satisfied in their relationships. However, women's satisfaction ratings were more strongly linked than men's to their husbands' conformity to masculine norms. They suggested that women's relationship satisfaction may be more strongly linked to men's conformity to masculine norms because of differing emotional needs. That is, men who conform more strongly to masculine norms may provide less emotional support for their spouses, but receive adequate support from their female spouses.

Conformity to the gender role norm of restricted emotional expression has been specifically linked to satisfaction in relationships. The research on the gender role conflict factor restrictive emotionality has consistently found RE to be negatively related to marital satisfaction (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Sharpe, 1993; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Sharpe, Heppner, & Dixon, 1995). A study by Rochlen and Mahalik (2004) has even

found that women who rated their male partners more highly on RE were more likely to experience decreased relationship satisfaction. Previously cited research which has linked restrictive emotionality to negative attitudes toward emotional expression suggests that negative attitudes toward emotional expression may account for decreased satisfaction (Wong et al., 2006). Specifically, emotional expression has been identified as a central component of healthy relationships; therefore, men's negative attitudes toward and discomfort with expressing emotion and unwillingness to disclose emotions is said to lead to dissatisfaction in relationships.

The link between restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction may involve the impact of RE on intimacy. Men who experience greater gender role conflict when expressing emotion are likely to restrict emotional expression, thereby reducing opportunity for intimacy. Studies assessing the relationship between gender role conflict and intimacy have demonstrated that men with higher levels of restrictive emotionality have greater difficulty with intimacy (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Mahalik, Locke, Theodore, Cournoyer, & Lloyd, 2001; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Sharpe et al., 1995).

While positive attitudes toward emotional expression and a willingness to disclose emotion to one's partner appear beneficial for marriage, other research suggests that the type of expression is crucial. The approach to emotional expression proposed by Jacobson and Christensen (1996), for example, suggests that the expression of "hard" emotions, such as anger, criticism, and disgust, leads to dissatisfaction in relationships, while the expression of more vulnerable emotions, like hurt, fear, or sadness, promotes intimacy and relationship satisfaction. Keltner and Kring (1998) noted that hard emotions tend to activate threat-related responses in a partner, while soft emotions tend to elicit

sympathy-related responses. Gottman's (1999) work also reveals that the type of emotion expressed is more important than general expressiveness. His research indicates that both increased negative affect and increased negative affect reciprocity are associated with decreased satisfaction (Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Levenson, 1986). Other research also demonstrates that negative affect is an important contributor to marital distress and is often viewed as the best discriminator of distressed and non-distressed couples (Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). In particular, more depressed affect and more anger have been associated with marital distress (Beach, 2001; Fruzzetti & Jacobson, 1990; Gottman, 1993b; Gottman & Levenson, 1986). Regarding emotional expression, it appears that more is not necessarily better. In fact, unrestrained expression can have a destructive influence on interpersonal relationships (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999).

The demand/withdraw pattern identified previously appears to denote the role of gender differences in marital communication and satisfaction. The research on emotional factors and relationship satisfaction similarly reveals important gender differences in what contributes to satisfaction. A study by Lavee and Ben-Ari (2004) of Israeli couples found that wives' marital satisfaction ratings were positively correlated with their own and their husbands' emotional expressiveness. However, husbands' satisfaction ratings were not significantly related with their own or their wives' expressiveness. Similarly, a study by Croyle and Waltz (2002) found that higher levels of emotional awareness predicted decreased relationship satisfaction for women. For men there was no significant relationship between emotional awareness and relationship satisfaction. Importantly, however, the researchers found that discrepancies between partners' emotional awareness were related to relationship satisfaction, such that discrepancies predicted decreased

relationship satisfaction for both men and women. Croyle and Waltz (2002) explained their findings by suggesting that higher levels of emotional awareness in women increased the likelihood of a greater discrepancy between partners, since men tend to score lower than women on measures of emotional awareness. They concluded that similarity between partners in emotional awareness may be necessary for partners to communicate effectively. That is, if emotional awareness levels are considerably different, attempts to communicate emotions to each other may be difficult to understand.

**Partner similarity and relationship satisfaction**

As reflected in the study by Croyle and Waltz (2002), similarity between spouses may be an important variable in predicting marital satisfaction. Generally, there has been considerable debate within the research as to whether marriages work best when couples are similar or complementary (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). However, it appears that much of the research supports the notion that spouses who are similar on a number of key dimensions appear to be most satisfied. Regarding mate selection, the literature indicates that individuals tend to choose spouses who are similar in education, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, age, culture, attitudes, values, and physical attractiveness (Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster, 1971; Buss, 1985; Antill, 1983). Similarity between spouses in these domains also tends to predict higher levels of marital satisfaction (Bouchard & McGue, 1981; Feingold, 1988; Tan & Singh, 1995). Several studies have demonstrated that similarity in personality is also predictive of increased relationship satisfaction (Acitelli et al., 2001; Caspi & Herbener, 1990; Luo & Klohnen, 2005; Russell & Wells, 1991). However, depending on the measure used, other research has found no relationship between similarity of personality and marital satisfaction

(Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Glicksohn & Golan, 2001; Watson, Klohnen, Casillas, Simms, Haig, & Berry, 2004). In addition, a recent longitudinal study found that overall personality similarity predicted more negative slopes in marital satisfaction (Shiota & Levenson, 2007).

A particularly interesting study by Locke and Horowitz (1990) found that similarity in dysphoria predicts greater relationship satisfaction. While previous research had found that individuals tend to find interactions with depressed individuals aversive, no research had examined if similarity in mood would relate to satisfaction. One might have expected that a dyad of depressed individuals would experience considerably lower satisfaction than a dyad of nondepressed individuals. However, regardless of whether participants were similarly dysphoric or similarly nondysphoric, dyads who were similar in mood were significantly more satisfied in interactions than those who were dissimilar in mood. There was no significant difference in satisfaction ratings between dysphoric dyads and nondysphoric dyads.

A study by Antill (1983) demonstrated that couples who were similar on the constructs of masculinity and femininity were significantly happier than couples who differed on these constructs. In addition, similarity was related to marital happiness regardless of whether couples were similarly masculine, similarly feminine, or similarly androgynous.

A study by Acitelli, Kenny, & Weiner (2001) assessed the relationship between partner similarity and understanding of marital ideals and marital satisfaction. However, differing from previous studies, each spouse rated him/herself and estimated the ratings of his/her spouse. Similarity was measured by comparing each spouse's self-rating of

marital ideals. Understanding was measured by comparing one spouse's self-rating of marital ideals to the other spouse's estimate of his/her spouse's ideals. The results showed that similarity predicted relationship satisfaction, while understanding was unrelated to relationship satisfaction. An interesting finding was that husbands tended to overestimate the importance of togetherness to their wives, while wives tended to overestimate the importance of sexual satisfaction to their husbands. The authors suggested that spouses may be more alike than they think they are.

Similarity on emotional factors has also been thought to relate to relationship satisfaction. King and Emmons (1990) argued that discrepancies between one's own emotional expressiveness and his/her partner's leads to discontent in relationships. Gottman (1999) similarly identified as a significant problem, differences in partners' styles of conflict resolution, including emotional expressiveness. He emphasized the importance of spouses matching one another in levels of emotional expressiveness, and interestingly suggested that couples could be equally happy matched at high, moderate, and low levels of expressivity.

The study by Croyle and Waltz (2002), discussed previously, found that discrepancies between partners' levels of emotional awareness were related to decreased relationship satisfaction for both husbands and wives. They suggested that partners with discrepant levels of awareness would be more likely to misunderstand each other, thus contributing to dissatisfaction. The authors went on to say that highly emotional situations would create communication difficulty if one partner liked to talk about feelings using complex and highly differentiated emotion words, while the other partner preferred to act on emotions rather than reflect on them.

Another study demonstrated that similarity in emotional experience between dating partners predicted greater relationship satisfaction (Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003). Similarly, a study by Gonzaga, Campos, and Bradbury (2007) revealed that similarity in self-rated emotional experiencing predicted relationship satisfaction in samples of both dating and married couples. Moreover, the finding was demonstrated to be independent of the type of emotional experience and the level of emotional experience. Specifically, partners' similarity in emotional experience was related to satisfaction, regardless of whether the emotion was positive or negative and regardless of whether partners experienced similarly high or low levels of emotion.

These studies point to what Anderson et al. (2003) describe as the benefits of emotional similarity. Namely, they suggest that similarity in emotional experience and expression facilitate coordination of partners' thoughts and behaviors in response to the environment, promote understanding between partners of motivation and intention, and encourage mutual validation of partners' feelings. On the other hand, Gonzaga et al. (2007) suggested that the laboratory environment in which they assessed couples likely prevented couples from engaging in escalating levels of negative conflict. Therefore, the effect of similarity may attenuate in situations of very high negative affect. While their study found a significant relationship between similarity in self-reported emotional experience and satisfaction, Gonzaga et al. (2007) questioned whether similarity at low levels of emotional expressivity would limit the degree to which emotion similarity predicts relationship satisfaction. That is, the benefits of similarity may disappear if partners express very little emotion to each other.

Lastly, a study examining the relationship between similarity of affective self-disclosure and marital satisfaction also found that discrepancies in affective self-disclosure were related to lower levels of satisfaction (Davidson, Balswick, & Halverson, 1983). Interestingly, the researchers asked participants to rate to what level they believed their spouses affectively disclosed to them. The results indicated that satisfaction was more strongly related to perceptions of similarity than actual similarity of affective disclosure.

**Perceptions of similarity and satisfaction**

As indicated in the Davidson et al. (1983) study, perceptions of similarity may be more closely related to satisfaction than actual similarity. Generally, this has found to be true. Perceiving a partner to be more similar to oneself than in actuality is strongly related to increased relationship satisfaction. (Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004). It is expected that perceptions of similarity lead to feelings of being understood in a relationship. Believing that one's partner is similar to oneself may encourage the belief that interactions with the partner will be rewarding and that conflicts will be unlikely to arise. Some have pointed out that seeing qualities of oneself in his/her partner may also bring validation of one's self-worth (Murray, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998). In a study examining the relationship between perceptions of similarity and satisfaction, Murray et al. (2002) found that ratings of relationship satisfaction increased as perceptions of similarity increased, and the relationship was stronger than that of actual similarity between partners.

# METHODS

## Participants

The participants for this study were 112 married heterosexual couples between the ages of 23 and 64 who were recruited by snowball sampling. Length of marriage ranged from less than one year to 42 years, with the mean length of marriage reported as 10.9 years. The mean age of female participants was 37.1 years, while the mean age of male participants was 39 years. A majority of participants reported that this was their first marriage (85.3 %), and 12.1 % reported that they had been married once before. Number of children ranged from 0 to 6 ($M$ = 1.46, $SD$ = 1.21). The sample was self-identified as 87.1 % White/Caucasian, 3.1 % American Indian/Alaska Native, 2.7 % Black/African American, 2.7 % mixed/multiracial, 2.2 % Latino/Hispanic, 1.3 % Asian, 0.4 % Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 0.4 % other.

## Instruments

Restrictive emotionality. Restrictive emotionality scores were assessed using the Restrictive Emotionality subscale of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil et al., 1986). The 10-item Restrictive Emotionality Scale assesses men's difficulty and/or reluctance to express emotions (O'Neil et al., 1995). A sample item is, "I have difficulty expressing my tender feelings." Respondents are asked to report the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) with higher scores reflecting greater levels of restrictive emotionality. This scale had an average coefficient alpha of .84 across 11 studies (Good et al., 1995) and a 4-week test-retest reliability of .76 (O'Neil et al., 1986). Restricted emotionality has been shown to be related with alexithymia (Berger, Levant, McMillan, Kelleher, &

Sellers, 2005), shyness and toughness (Bruch et al., 1998), problems with relationship intimacy (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), depressive symptoms (Shepard, 2002), negative attitudes toward emotional expression (Wong et al., 2006), and a negative view of help-seeking (Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992).

For the purposes of the current study, two versions of the instrument were created. One was completed by participants about themselves, and one by participants about their spouses. Since it was necessary to examine the construct of restrictive emotionality not only in men, pronouns that referred only to men were changed or eliminated. In addition, in order to allow men and women to evaluate the presence of restrictive emotionality in their spouses, the wording of the instrument was changed in one version of the instrument to reinforce the idea that participants were to evaluate the restrictive emotionality of their spouses and not themselves ("I have difficulty expressing my tender feelings." changed to "My husband/wife has difficulty expressing his/her tender feelings"). The coefficient alphas obtained in the current study on the Restricted Emotionality self-rating instrument were .90 for female participants and .89 for male participants. The alphas obtained on the Restricted Emotionality spouse-rating instrument were .93 for female participants and .90 for male participants.

Marital satisfaction. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS; Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1981) is a frequently used 3-item questionnaire designed to assess satisfaction with marriage. Specifically, participants are asked to rate how satisfied they are with their marriages, how satisfied they are with their relationship with their husband/wife, and how satisfied they are with their husband/wife as a spouse. Participants respond on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7

(extremely satisfied) with higher scores reflecting greater levels of marital satisfaction. Test-retest reliability is reported to have been .71 over a 10-week period and to have ranged from .62 to .72 over 6 months (Mitchell, Newell, & Schumm, 1983). The KMSS has been correlated with constructs such as marital social desirability (.42-.54), locus of control (.18-.31) and personal depression (.33; Schumm, Paff-Bergen, Hatch, & Obiorah 1986). The scale has a coefficient alpha range of .81 to .98 (Schumm et al., 1981). The coefficient alphas obtained in the current study were .96 for female participants and .96 for males.

Participant perception of "fit" with partner. Two items were added to the assessments to measure the extent to which spouses believe that their partners match or complement their own level of expressiveness or emotionality. Participants are asked to rate, on a 7-point Likert-type scale, how much they agree or disagree with the following statements: "My partner matches my ideal in terms of emotional expressiveness," and "My partner's level of emotional expressiveness is a good match for me." These items were added to assess whether a perception of "fit" with one's spouse may be more important than similarity. That is, it is possible that a disparity in expressiveness may be preferred by some spouses, such that spouses who adhere to more traditional gender roles, for example, may prefer that their partners similarly display stereotypically gendered levels of emotional expressiveness. Alphas obtained in the current study were .93 for female participants and .89 for male participants.

**Procedures**

The collection method was twofold. Hard-copy packets including the instruments were distributed to couples through snowball sampling. In addition, couples were

recruited through e-mail contact and directed to a website which contained online versions of the instruments. Participants who completed the instruments online were asked to create a password which was used to link couple's responses by the investigator. This enabled couples to complete the instruments separately. In both online and hard-copy formats, participants were asked to read an informed consent form and complete the instruments. Self-addressed envelopes were provided to couples who completed hard copies of the instruments, and were returned to the examiner by mail. Consent will be implied by participants completing and returning the instruments. The order of the instruments was randomized in both conditions in order to control for any demand presented by the instruments. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Oklahoma—Norman Campus.

## RESULTS

The results supported previous research which found significant differences between men's and women's scores on a measure of self-rated restricted emotionality (Zamarripa et al., 2003). Men ($M$ = 2.96, $SD$ = 1.01) rated themselves as significantly more emotionally restricted than women ($M$ = 2.41, $SD$ = 0.96, $t(222) = -4.16$, $p < .001$). Overall, the sample appeared to be quite satisfied in their marriages with both men's and women's average satisfaction scores above 6 (on a 7-point Likert scale). A previous study suggested that average KMSS scores of 5.67 and below were indicative of marital distress (Russell, Middleton, & Bean, 2000). Men's satisfaction ratings ($M$ = 6.25, $SD$ = 1.07) did not differ significantly from those of women ($M$ = 6.18, $SD$ = 1.09, $t(111) = -$

0.60, $p = .551$). Tables 1 and 2 report the means and standard deviations of all variables, in addition to intercorrelations among variables.

*Are men's restrictive emotionality scores related to decreased marital satisfaction?*

Pearson correlations were computed for men's self-ratings of restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction and women's spouse-ratings of their husbands' restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction. Consistent with results of previous studies, both men's self-ratings of restrictive emotionality, $r(110) = -.178$, $p = .030$, and women's ratings of their husbands' RE, $r(110) = -.361$, $p < .001$, were significantly negatively correlated with their own satisfaction ratings. In addition, men's RE self-ratings were significantly negatively correlated with their wives' satisfaction ratings, $r(110) = -.187$, $p = .024$).

*Are women's restrictive emotionality scores related to decreased marital satisfaction?*

Pearson correlations were computed for women's RE self-ratings and satisfaction and men's spouse RE ratings and satisfaction. As predicted, women's self-ratings of restrictive emotionality were not significantly related to their own marital satisfaction ratings, $r(110) = -.034$, $p = .726$. The relationship between men's ratings of their wives' RE and their marital satisfaction ratings approached significance, $r(110) = -.182$, $p = .060$. Women's self-ratings of satisfaction were not significantly correlated with men's satisfaction ratings, $r(110) = -.131$, $p = .168$.

*Is RE similarity related to increased marital satisfaction?*

Restrictive emotionality similarity was measured by computing difference scores for each couple. In order to control for the significant difference between men's and women's restrictive emotionality, men's and women's RE self-rating scores were

converted to standardized scores before computing a difference score for each couple. Contrary to expectations, results indicated that RE similarity was not significantly related to men's or women's marital satisfaction scores. In addition, couples who scored similarly low on restricted emotionality did not differ significantly from those who scored similarly high on restricted emotionality.

*Are husbands' and wives' perceptions of similarity related to increased marital satisfaction?*

Perceptions of RE similarity were measured by computing difference scores for each individual using RE self-ratings and RE spouse ratings. Pearson correlations were then computed for perceptions of similarity and marital satisfaction. The results showed that both men's, $r(110) = -.158$, $p = .049$, and women's perceptions of RE similarity, $r(110) = -.336$, $p < .001$, were significantly correlated with satisfaction, such that as discrepancy increased, satisfaction decreased.

*Is the direction of similarity related to marital satisfaction?*

In order to test the hypothesis that those who were scored similarly low in restrictive emotionality would be more satisfied in their marriages than those who scored similarly high, both men and women were classified into high and low RE if they scored one standard deviation above or below the mean for each sex. Then couples who scored similarly high or low were identified. According to this criteria, only six couples from the current sample were found to score similarly low, and four couples were found to score similarly high on RE. A *t*-test was computed to determine if low RE couples scored significantly higher on marital satisfaction than high RE couples. Results indicated that women's satisfaction scores were significantly higher for low RE couples ($M = 6.67$, *SD*

= .42) than high RE couples ($M$ = 5.58, $SD$ = .50, $t(8) = 3.71$, $p$ = .006). However, men's satisfaction scores were not significantly different for high and low RE couples ($t(8) = 1.20$, $p$ = .263).

A similar procedure was used to identify high and low RE couples according to husbands' and wives' perceptions of their own and their spouses' level of restrictive emotionality. According to women's perceptions, nine couples were rated as similarly low in RE, and nine couples were found to be similarly high in RE. According to men's perceptions, six couples were found to be similarly low in RE, and six couples were found to be similarly high in RE. *T*-tests were computed to determine if low RE couples were more satisfied than high RE couples. Results indicated that according to their own self and spouse RE ratings, women's satisfaction scores were significantly higher for low RE couples ($M$ = 6.78, $SD$ = .37) than high RE couples ($M$ = 5.70, $SD$ = .75, $t(16) = 3.83$, $p$ = .001). However, men's satisfaction scores were not significantly different for high and low RE couples ($t(10) = 1.41$, $p$ = .188).

*Is the perception of "fit" or "match" with one's spouse related to marital satisfaction?*

Perception of fit between oneself and his or her spouse in terms of emotional expressiveness was computed by averaging the two "fit" items for each individual. Pearson correlations were computed for men's and women's perceptions of fit and marital satisfaction. For both men, $r(110) = .233$, $p$ = .014, and women, $r(110) = .277$, $p$ = .003, the perception that one "matches" with his or her spouse in terms of emotional expressiveness was significantly positively related to marital satisfaction.

*Does RE similarity or perception of fit predict satisfaction over and beyond self or spouse RE scores?*

Given the relationship between RE self-rating(for men) and RE spouse-rating (for women) and one's satisfaction, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine whether perceptions of couple similarity and perceptions of fit with one's spouse were able to make any independent contributions beyond self or partner score. A separate analyses was performed for each sex. In each regression, three predictors were used to predict satisfaction: For men, RE self-rating, difference score, and match score; for women, RE spouse-rating, difference score, and match score. Tables 3 and 4 report the betas and $R^2$s.

Women's satisfaction was significantly predicted by their RE spouse-ratings. Additionally, the three predictors together explained 16% of the variance in women's satisfaction scores. None of the three predictors were independently related to satisfaction scores, and the three predictors together explained 8% of the variance in men's satisfaction scores.

## DISCUSSION

The present study focused on the relationship of restrictive emotionality with marital satisfaction. Specifically, the study examined the relationship between women's levels of restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction, restrictive emotionality similarity and satisfaction, and perception of spousal match in terms of emotional expressiveness and satisfaction.

**Men's and women's restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction**

Results from the study provide mixed support for the hypotheses. First, results supported findings from previous studies demonstrating that men's restrictive emotionality is related to marital satisfaction. In this study, higher restrictive emotionality scores, as rated by men, were linked with decreased marital satisfaction for both men and women. Additionally, women's ratings of their spouses' restrictive emotionality were linked with decreased marital satisfaction ratings for women.

The current study also found that women's self-rated restrictive emotionality was found to be unrelated to either men's or women's marital satisfaction ratings. In addition, men's ratings of their wives' restrictive emotionality were unrelated to marital satisfaction. These results seem to offer support the notion that women's marital behaviors are less connected with marital satisfaction than men's behaviors (Cutrona, 1996; Gottman, 1998; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). For example, a study by Gottman and Porterfield (1981) found that both husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction was related to husbands' ability to accurately read their wives' nonverbal messages. In an earlier study, Gottman (1979) suggested that in dissatisfied marriages, men are less emotionally responsive to their wives than their wives are to them.

The results that men's, but not women's, RE is related to marital satisfaction also suggests that restrictive emotionality may be largely a male phenomenon, or at least a phenomenon associated with perceived gender roles, perhaps giving some credence to the gender role conflict theory. In fact, the current study found that men's average level of RE was significantly higher than that of women. Consequently, endorsement by men of

the traditional gender role norm of restrictive emotionality appears to be linked to decreased marital satisfaction for both men and women.

Given that the results are correlational in nature, it is possible that satisfaction results in greater changes in men's emotionality than womens'. As the data suggests that men tend to be more emotionally restricted than women, it may be that some men's confidence with emotional expression is more tenuous than women's. As a result, men may be more likely to open up emotionally when they feel comfortable and satisfied in relationships, and restrict emotional expressiveness when they feel less comfortable and dissatisfied. In this way, restrictive emotionality may not only be quantitatively different for some males than females, it may also be qualitatively different. In fact, men may be more prone to restrict their emotional expression based on how they feel in the relationship, whereas women may be more likely to express emotion more confidently and openly regardless of the state of the relationship. In fact, the literature on the demand-withdraw pattern suggests that men tend to withdraw more often than women when satisfaction decreases (Caughlin, 2002; Caughlin & Huston, 2002; Heavey et al., 1995).

The research seems to suggest that men's restrictive emotionality as rated by men or their spouses is particularly related to marital satisfaction, and especially for women. While men's RE self-ratings were significantly negatively correlated with both their own and their wives' satisfaction, women's ratings of their spouses' RE were most strongly linked to women's marital satisfaction. One explanation for this finding is that women may be both more attuned to, and place more importance on emotional expressiveness

than men. It's possible that differing socialization experiences of men and women account for differences in expressiveness.

**Similarity and satisfaction**

The hypothesis that spousal similarity of restrictive emotionality would be related to satisfaction was only partially supported by the research. Similarity based on self-ratings was not found to be related to marital satisfaction. However, similarity based on each spouse's self- and partner-ratings was related to satisfaction, such that as similarity increased, satisfaction increased. This appears to support previous research which found that perceptions of similarity may be more closely linked to satisfaction than actual similarity (Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004). However, since the data obtained was correlational in nature, it cannot be determined whether perceptions of similarity lead to satisfaction, or if satisfaction leads to perceptions of similarity. That is, it may be that those who are happy in their relationships are more likely to see similarity in their partners that may not exist in actuality (Murray et al., 2002).

Perception of a match with one's spouse in terms of emotional expression was also found to be related to marital satisfaction, such that as the perception of fit increased, satisfaction increased. However, as with similarity, perception of fit did not predict satisfaction over and beyond self- or spouse-ratings of restrictive emotionality.

**Limitations**

Based on previous research that has demonstrated differing relationships between expressions of positive and negative or hard and soft emotions, the instrument used in the current study presents a marked weakness in that it doesn't differentiate between the type

of emotion expressed (Gottman, 1994). It's possible that men and women may restrict positive and negative emotion differently, and the relationship with satisfaction may be linked specifically to the restriction of positive or soft emotions.

Another limitation of the current study is that the instruments did not account for cultural differences in communication styles. Some cultures place more emphasis on open expression of emotion, while others emphasize the need for restraint in communication of feelings. In addition, religious differences also impact the extent to which individuals are encouraged to share their emotions. One participant, for example, sent an e-mail to the researcher describing why she declined to participate in the study. She expressed the belief that uninhibited expression of emotion is not beneficial to marriage and indicated that she didn't think that she was able to identify her perspective using the provided instruments. Similarly, the sample obtained in the current study largely self-reported as White. A more representative sample of the general population may yield different results. Additionally, the small proportion of diverse groups represented in the sample prevented analysis of relationships based on self-reported culture or race.

Also related to sampling, the current study relied on volunteers to complete the instruments. It is unclear if participants who chose not to participate differed in any significant way from those who chose to participate.

Lastly, the study made no attempt to adjust scores for endorsement of stereotypical gendered responding, in regards to self-ratings or spouse ratings of restrictive emotionality. As suggested by Wester et al. (2002), what appear to be actual gender differences in emotion variables may instead be a result of gender role

expectations. That is, both men's and women's ratings of their own and their spouses' RE may be more a reflection of the gender role expectation that women are good at emotional expression and men are not, than a reflection of actual differences between men and women.

**Clinical Applications**

The current study provides further evidence of the relationship between men's restrictive emotionality and marital satisfaction, such that less emotionally restrictive men appear to have more satisfying marriages. To the extent that the restriction of emotion is related to traditional male socialization, marital therapy may be enhanced by examining the gender role beliefs of couples and exploring the impact on communication and satisfaction within the relationship. In addition, couples therapy approaches like Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy may facilitate greater comfort with expression of emotion among men, thereby increasing emotional intimacy among couples. A recent study suggested using psychoeducational approaches in raising men's awareness regarding societal messages about expression of emotion (Levant, Hall, Williams, & Hasan, 2009). This type of approach may be useful in preventing some marital distress that may be associated with restrictive emotionality. Alternatively, individual therapy for men with a focus on facilitating greater emotional range may be useful in minimizing marital problems linked with restrictive emotionality.

**Summary**

Results of the current study suggest that men's restrictive emotionality is particularly related to marital satisfaction for both men and women. Additionally, only individuals' perceptions of similarity in restrictive emotionality, as opposed to similarity

of RE self-ratings, are related to satisfaction. While it is expected that the measure of restrictive emotionality primarily addresses the restriction of soft emotions, future research may examine the types of emotions that are typically restricted and how they relate to marital satisfaction. Additionally, examining how culture and religious background impact emotional restriction and satisfaction may be important in understanding how RE is related to satisfaction. Lastly, research on clinical efforts to address restrictive emotionality with men or couples may provide important information on how RE impacts marital satisfaction.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Women's Self-ratings of Restrictive Emotionality, Ratings of Spouse's Restrictive Emotionality, Spouse's Self-ratings of Restrictive Emotionality, Restrictive Emotionality Discrepancy, Perceived RE Discrepancy, Marital Satisfaction, and Spouse's Marital Satisfaction*

| | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. RES Self | 2.41 | 0.96 | - | | | | | | | |
| 2. RES Spouse | 2.91 | 1.19 | .37** | - | | | | | | |
| 3. Spouse's RES | 2.96 | 1.01 | .04 | .41** | - | | | | | |
| 4. RE Disc. | 1.11 | 0.85 | .24** | .13 | .37** | - | | | | |
| 5. Perc. RE Disc. | 0.98 | 0.88 | .03 | .58** | .24* | .26** | - | | | |
| 6. Match | 4.26 | 1.47 | -.09 | -.46** | -.24* | -.12 | -.39** | - | | |
| 7. KMSS | 6.18 | 1.09 | -.03 | -.36** | -.19* | .02 | -.34** | .28** | - | |
| 8. Spouse's KMSS | 6.25 | 1.07 | -.13 | -.41** | -.18 | -.09 | -.30** | .31** | .32** | - |

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Men's Self-ratings of Restrictive Emotionality, Ratings of Spouse's Restrictive Emotionality, Spouse's Self-ratings of Restrictive Emotionality, Restrictive Emotionality Discrepancy, Perceived RE Discrepancy, Marital Satisfaction, and Spouse's Marital Satisfaction*

| | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. RES Self | 2.96 | 1.01 | - | | | | | | | |
| 2. RES Spouse | 2.64 | 0.96 | .28** | - | | | | | | |
| 3. Spouse's RES | 2.41 | 0.96 | .04 | .41** | - | | | | | |
| 4. RE Disc. | 1.11 | 0.85 | .37** | .15 | .24** | - | | | | |
| 5. Perc. RE Disc. | 0.93 | 0.80 | .46** | -.06 | -.16 | .40** | - | | | |
| 6. Match | 4.62 | 1.10 | -.26** | -.39** | -.20* | -.17 | -.23* | - | | |
| 7. KMSS | 6.25 | 1.07 | -.18 | -.18 | -.13 | -.09 | -.16 | .23* | - | |
| 8. Spouse's KMSS | 6.18 | 1.09 | -.19* | -.03** | -.03 | .02 | -.10 | .08 | .32** | - |

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 3

*Regressions predicting women's marital satisfaction from RE spouse-rating, difference score, and perception of fit*

| *Beta* | | | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| **RE Spouse-Rating** | **Difference Score** | **Perception of Fit** | |
| -.27** | -.12 | .13 | .16** |

** p < .01.

Table 4

*Regressions predicting men's marital satisfaction from RE self-rating, difference score, and perception of fit*

| *Beta* | | | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| **RE Self-Rating** | **Difference Score** | **Perception of Fit** | |
| -.10 | -.11 | .17 | .08* |

* $p < .05$.

APPENDIX B

Demographics

DIRECTIONS: Please complete biographical information below. In order to maintain confidentiality, please **do not** write your name on this questionnaire.

1. Sex:
   ___ Female
   ___ Male

2. Age:
   ___

3. Race/Ethnicity:
   ___ American Indian or Alaska Native
   ___ Asian
   ___ Black or African American
   ___ Latino or Hispanic
   ___ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   ___ White
   ___ Mixed/Multiracial
   ___ Other:_____

4. How many years have you been married (in your current marriage)?
   ___

5. How many times have you been married?
   ___

6. How many children do you have?
   ___

## APPENDIX C

### Restrictive Emotionality Scale (Self)

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the number that most closely reflects the extent to which you Agree or Disagree with each statement. Keep in mind there is no right or wrong answer. In order to maintain confidentiality, please do not write your name on this questionnaire. What is important is your reaction to each statement.

| strongly disagree | moderately disagree | mildly disagree | mildly agree | moderately agree | strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

1. I have difficulty telling others I care about them.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

2. Strong emotions are difficult for me to understand.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

3. Expressing feelings makes me feel open to attack by other people.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

4. Talking (about my feelings) during sexual relations is difficult for me.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

5. I have difficulty expressing my emotional needs to my partner.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

6. I have difficulty expressing my tender feelings.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

7. Telling others of my strong feelings is not part of my sexual behavior.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

8. I often have trouble finding words that describe how I'm feeling.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

9. I do not like to show my emotions to other people.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

10. Telling my partner my feelings about him/her during sex is difficult for me.
    *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

# APPENDIX D

## Restrictive Emotionality Scale (Spouse)

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the number that most closely reflects the extent to which you Agree or Disagree with each statement. Keep in mind there is no right or wrong answer. In order to maintain confidentiality, please do not write your name on this questionnaire. What is important is your reaction to each statement.

| strongly disagree | moderately disagree | mildly disagree | mildly agree | moderately agree | strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

1. My partner has difficulty telling others he/she cares about them.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

2. Strong emotions are difficult for my partner to understand.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

3. Expressing feelings makes my partner feel open to attack by other people.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

4. Talking (about his/her feelings) during sexual relations is difficult for my partner.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

5. My partner has difficulty expressing his/her emotional needs to me.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

6. My partner has difficulty expressing his/her tender feelings.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

7. Telling others of his/her strong feelings is not part of my partner's sexual behavior.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

8. My partner often has trouble finding words that describe how he/she is feeling.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

9. My partner does not like to show his/her emotions to other people.
   *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

10. Telling me his/her feelings about me during sex is difficult for my partner.
    *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

11. My partner matches my ideal in terms of emotional expressiveness.
    *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

12. My partner's level of emotional expressiveness is a good match for me.
    *Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree*

# APPENDIX E

## Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the number that most closely reflects your current level of satisfaction in your marriage. In order to maintain confidentiality, please do not write your name on this questionnaire.

| | | Extremely Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Mixed | Somewhat Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Extremely Satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | How satisfied are you with your marriage? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. | How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as a spouse? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. | How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband/wife? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

APPENDIX F

# INFORMATION SHEET FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Ryan Scott and I am a graduate student in the department of Educational Psychology at the University of the Oklahoma. I am requesting that you volunteer to participate in a research study titled “Emotion and Marital Satisfaction”. You were selected as a possible participant because you are married. Please read this information sheet and contact me to ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

**Purpose of the Research Study:** The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship between emotional expression and marital satisfaction.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: complete a short biographical information sheet and three instruments designed to assess emotional expression and marital satisfaction.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:** The study has the following risks: there is a minimal risk that completing the questionnaires could elicit unpleasant feelings related to one’s marital relationship. The benefits to participation are thinking about aspects of one’s marital relationship.

**Compensation:** You will not be compensated for your time and participation in this study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Length of Participation:** Completion of the included questionnaires should take no more than 5-10 minutes.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you as a research participant. Research records will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet, and records will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Only approved researchers will have access to the records.

**Contacts and Questions:** If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at (405) 818-4787 or rmscott@ou.edu. My supervisor, Cal Stoltenberg, Ph.D. can be contacted at (405) 325-5974 or cstoltenberg@ou.edu. You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the individuals on the research team, or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

*Please keep this information sheet for your records. By completing and returning this questionnaire, I am agreeing to participate in this study.*