HUSBANDS' GENDER ROLE CONFLICT AND WITHDRAWAL DURING MARITAL INTERACTION

A Thesis

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by

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

It can be frustrating to be taught one thing and then asked to do another. This is, however, the experience of many men who have been trained to be stereotypically masculine and then, upon aging into adult roles, are expected to be relationally skilled and emotionally available (Englar-Carlson & Shepard, 2005). The transition is not always smooth, and the personal and interpersonal consequences not always pleasant, either for the stereotypically masculine men or for those around them. In his book, *I Don’t Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression*, psychotherapist Terrence Real argues that, “to the degree which a man learns to be ‘strong’ and to devalue weakness, his compassion toward frailty not just in himself but in those around him may be limited or condescending. In this and many other ways, the loss of expressivity and the loss of vulnerability inevitably lead to diminished connection with others” (1997). Because of the emotional and relational demands of marriage, it is likely that this diminished connection would be especially evident in the marital relationship. Thus, the primary purpose of this investigation is to examine the relations between husbands' gender role conflict and both psychological and marital adjustment of their wives. In particular, we are seeking to establish the role of the demand/withdraw
communication pattern (Christensen & Heavey, 1990) as a process connecting husband
gender role conflict with wife dysphoria and marital adjustment.

1.2 Masculinity and its Discontents

Beginning at a young age, boys learn how to be “masculine” according to societal
norms (David & Brannon, 1976). For example, boys are often discouraged from
expressing emotions, as too much emotional expression is viewed as indicating
vulnerability, weakness, and femininity. Instead, male children are encouraged to be
more self-reliant, tough, and competitive. Characteristics associated with femininity or
homosexuality are discouraged or even shunned (Real, 1997). Once men age into
demanding interpersonal roles in the home as husbands and fathers or in the workplace as
managers, employees, and co-workers, they are asked to draw upon emotional and
interpersonal skills the masculine socialization process has not given them (Levant,
1995). Perhaps because of the discrepancy between masculine gender role socialization
and interpersonal role demands, excessive masculine role identification can be
deletorious. Indeed, several recent studies have found masculine gender role socialization
to be related to higher rates of psychopathology, which, when coupled with the increased
resistance to help-seeking associated with masculinity, produces a potentially significant
mental health problem (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Good & Wood, 1995; O'Neil,
Good, & Holmes, 1995).
1.3 Gender Role Conflict

O'Neil and colleagues (1995) define gender role conflict as “a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others” (p.166). Through the development of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS), O'Neil & colleagues (1986) identified four elements of conflict, reflected in subscales of the GRCS. The Success, Power, and Competition subscale refers to men's desire to gain power and success and win over others (e.g., “Moving up the career ladder is important to me”). The Restrictive Emotionality subscale measures men's discomfort with expressing emotions and with others' emotional expression (e.g., “I have difficulty expressing my tender feelings”). The Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men subscale refers to men's reluctance to express caring feelings towards other men (e.g., “Men who touch other men make me uncomfortable”). The Conflict Between Work and Family Relations subscale measures the extent to which work stress interferes with the ability to enjoy leisure activities and time with family (e.g., “My needs to work or study keep me from my family or leisure more than I would like”).

Strict adherence to traditional male gender roles is thought to produce both intrapersonal and interpersonal struggles (O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b). Intrapersonal conflict refers to men's internal reactions to the incongruity between their real self-image and the ideal masculine image they struggle to achieve (O'Neil et al., 1995). Interpersonal conflict refers to conflicts of a social nature that are associated with rigid gender roles, inflexibility, dominance, and emotional distance (Mahalik, 1999).
There is extensive research showing that gender role conflict is related to negative psychological and intrapersonal consequences for men. For example, gender role conflict has been associated with low self-esteem (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), depression and anxiety (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good & Mintz, 1990; Good & Wood, 1995; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), and obsessive-compulsiveness (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000). In addition, male gender role conflict is related to men's unwillingness to obtain psychological help (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Wisch, Mahalik, Hayes, & Nutt, 1995), increased rates of substance abuse (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Ritter & Cole, 1992), and career problems (Rochlen & O'Brien, 2002).

Gender role conflict may also be associated with interpersonal problems. For example, men higher in gender role conflict have more difficulty with intimacy (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991) and poorer marital adjustment than men with less gender role conflict (Breiding, 2004; Campbell & Snow, 1992). Husbands' gender role conflict has also been shown to be positively correlated with general levels of hostility (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000).

Although there is abundant literature on gender role conflict and negative consequences for men, few empirical studies have investigated the association between men's gender role conflict and problems for people around them. The consequences could be especially detrimental to men's relationships with women. For example, research has uncovered a relationship between gender role conflict, especially the Success, Power, and Competition subscale, and men's tolerance of sexual harassment (Kearney, Rochlen, & King, 2004). Men who are more tolerant of sexual harassment may be more likely than other men to harass women (Kearney, Rochlen, & King, 2004). In
addition, a study involving men in a court-mandated domestic violence treatment program showed that higher scores on the Success, Power, and Competition subscale were related to physically abusive behaviors, and higher scores on the Restrictive Affectionate Between Men scale were related to men's isolation of their partners (Schwartz, Waldo, & Daniel, 2005).

Breiding's (2004) study of 60 married couples was the first investigation to assess the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' mental and marital adjustment from the perspective of both spouses. Not surprisingly, Breiding (2004) found that husbands' gender role conflict was associated with wives' marital adjustment and dysphoria. More interestingly, the study also uncovered a significant correlation between husbands' gender role conflict and their observed hostility toward their wives (Breiding, 2004). In fact, Breiding (2004) found that observed hostility mediated the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment. Observed hostility, however, did not mediate the association between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' depressive symptoms. The current study seeks to replicate and expand those findings by examining the association between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment and dysphoria in a much larger sample of 150 couples, 60 of whom were in the original Breiding (2004) study. We are also investigating husbands' interpersonal behaviors that might further explain the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' dysphoria and marital adjustment. We predict that this relationship may be related to the way in which the husband communicates with his wife. In particular, we believe that husbands' gender role
conflict may be evident in a specific style of marital communication known as the demand/withdraw pattern.

1.4 Demand/Withdraw in Conflict Discussions

Demand/withdraw is a communication pattern in which the demanding partner seeks change in the withdrawing partner, whereas the withdrawing partner attempts to avoid these demands (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). Extensive research is available relating the demand/withdraw pattern to decreased marital satisfaction (e.g., Berns, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1999; Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995). For example, the use of demand and withdraw during marital conflict results in both spouses feeling less understood by their partners (Weger, 2005). Furthermore, the demand/withdraw pattern seems to account for variance in marital satisfaction exceeding that which is explained by partners' negativity and affectional expression (Caughlin & Huston, 2002). The specific pattern of wife demand/husband withdraw is harmful to the quality of the relationship (Christensen & Heavey, 1993; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993; Jacobson, 1989). In a study investigating the longitudinal impact of the demand/withdraw communication pattern on relationship functioning, the wife demand/husband withdraw communication pattern was a significant predictor of long-term distress, but only when the wife chose the topic of discussion (Heavey et al., 1995). Also, wife demand/husband withdraw has been shown to be a significant predictor of divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 2000).

Although the tendency for wives to demand and husbands to withdraw during marital conflict has been widely established, little is known about why there are such
gender discrepancies. Gender role conflict may shed light on this process. Berns et al. (1999) postulate that spouses who demand generally desire more intimacy, whereas spouses who withdraw typically want more autonomy. It is likely that a husband who is high in gender role conflict would desire more autonomy and would therefore tend to withdraw more frequently. Jacobson and colleagues have suggested that those who demand often have less power in the relationship, whereas those who withdraw do so to maintain power over their spouse (Jacobson, 1989; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Klinetob and Smith (1996) further suggest that as long as men continue to benefit from maintaining the marital status quo, men will withdraw more frequently than women. In light of evidence that men withdraw in order to gain autonomy and maintain power, it follows that a husband who is high in gender role conflict, particularly on the Success, Power, and Competition subscale, would be likely to withdraw during marital conflict. Ward, Bergner, & Kahn (2003) studied the association between men's self-reported “distancing” (i.e., avoiding or withdrawing) behaviors in conflict situations with their female partners and several other self-report variables related to masculine socialization and negative expectations that the researchers believed would be associated with distancing. In this study, the researchers defined “distancers” as those men who comprised the bottom 30% of all participants on the distancing scale. Results of a discriminant function analysis of the variables showed that discomfort with emotional expression (in self and others) was more likely to occur in distancers vs. nondistancers. In fact, “discomfort with expressing own emotions” was more powerful than any other variable in its ability to discriminate distancers from nondistancers (Ward, Bergner, & Kahn, 2003). Therefore, it appears likely that a man who endorses high levels of
restrictive emotionality would likely have difficulty expressing his feelings during conflict with his wife and would potentially withdraw from the conflict discussion.

Research on the demand/withdraw pattern has also revealed that these behaviors may differ depending on how the discussion topic is chosen. Some studies have shown that when men chose the topic of discussion, no gender differences related to demand/withdraw were observed. When women chose the discussion topic, however, a clear pattern of wife demand/husband withdraw emerged (Heavy, Layne, and Christensen, 1993; Verhofstadt, Buysse, De Clerco, & Goodwin, 2005). These findings imply that the structure of the discussion may augment or mitigate the gender differences typically observed in the demand/withdraw literature. It appears that husbands are more likely to withdraw when discussing a topic identified by the wife. The current study is distinctive in that both spouses agreed on the topic that is discussed. As such, we will be able to explore whether the effect of conflict structure is still evident even when the husband acknowledges that he could improve/change something about himself. Although the discussion topic in the current study is mutually agreed upon, it still focuses on change/improvement in one spouse. Thus, we anticipate that men in the current study will be more likely to withdraw when discussing something they should work on or change about themselves vs. when they are discussing their wives' shortcomings.

1.5 Hypotheses

1. Husbands' gender role conflict, especially their scores on the Restrictive Emotionality subscale and the Success, Power, and Competition subscale will be positively correlated with their withdraw behaviors.
2. Husbands' gender role conflict will be positively correlated with wives' dysphoria.

3. Husbands' gender role conflict will be negatively correlated with wives' marital adjustment.

4. Husbands high in gender role conflict will withdraw especially if they are the focus of the discussion. In other words, we hypothesize an interaction between husbands' gender role conflict and discussion role in relation to husbands' withdrawal.

5. Husbands' level of withdrawal will moderate the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' dysphoria. In other words, we predict that the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' dysphoria will be stronger for those couples in whom husbands have higher levels of withdrawal.

6. Husbands' level of withdrawal will moderate the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment. In other words, we hypothesize that the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment will be stronger for those couples in whom husbands show higher levels of withdrawal.
CHAPTER 2

METHOD

2.2 Participants

One-hundred fifty married couples from a mid-sized Midwestern community were recruited for participation in this study. As part of a larger study investigating criticism and depression, couples were recruited via newspaper advertisements, flyers, and referrals from practitioners at a local mental health center. For a variety of reasons, 19 of the 150 couples did not complete the questionnaire packet and/or videotaped discussion and were not included in relevant analyses. All participants were treated in accordance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association. The first 96 couples were paid $50. Due to the unexpectedly lengthy nature of the study and difficulty recruiting couples, compensation for the study was eventually increased. The remaining 54 couples were paid $100 for their participation.

The majority of husbands identified as Caucasian (80.7%). The rest of the sample consisted of 10.0% African-American, 3.3% Hispanic, and 1.3% identified as Other. Seven husbands (4.7%) did not provide their race/ethnicity. For wives, 80.0% identified

\[1\] Breiding's study of the relationship between husband gender role conflict and wife adjustment (2004), and the mediation of this relationship by hostility and dominance, was based on a 60 couple subsample of the current sample of 150.
as Caucasian, 6.7% as African-American, 4.0% as Hispanic, and 5.3% identified as Other. Six wives (4%) did not provide their race/ethnicity. The average age of the wives was 39.81 years (SD = 13.37). Husbands' average age was 41.82 years (SD = 13.96). The mean years of education was 14.01 years for wives (SD = 2.90) and 14.12 years for husbands (SD = 2.96). Wives reported that they had been married an average of 12.33 (SD = 13.33) years. Husbands' self-reported marriage length averaged 12.39 (SD = 13.41) years. The average self-reported family income for wives was $43,769 (SD = $28,320). For husbands, average self-reported family income was $48,349 (SD = $30,419).

2.3 Measures

*Gender Role Conflict.* The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS: O'Neil et al., 1986) was used to assess male gender role conflict. This 37-item questionnaire comprises four subscales of gender role conflict, developed using factor analysis with oblique rotation. The subscales are: Success, Power, and Competition; Restrictive Emotionality; Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; and Conflict Between Work and Family Relations (O'Neil et al., 1986). Confirmatory factor analysis has validated the 4-factor model (Moradi, Tokar, Schaub, Jome, & Serna, 2000). Higher scores reflect higher levels of GRC. These four subscales, tested over a 4-week period, show adequate test-retest reliability ranging from .72 to .86 (O'Neil et al., 1986) and internal consistency ranging from .76 to .87 (Moradi et al., 2000). Concurrent validity has been established through associations between the four subscales and attitudes about masculinity, fear of intimacy,
and social desirability (Good et al., 1995). Participants respond using 6-point scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

**Depressive Symptoms.** Depressive symptoms were measured using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI: Beck, Steer, & Garbin, 1988) and the Beck Depression Inventory- Second Edition (BDI-II; Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996). The first 19 couples in the study completed the BDI, and the remainder of the couples completed the BDI-II. Using a table from the BDI-II manual, the BDI scores were converted to BDI-II scores (Beck et al., 1996). The BDI is a 21-item measure assessing depressive thoughts, symptoms, and behaviors. The respondent rates each item on a scale ranging from 0 to 3, with higher numbers reflecting higher levels of depressive symptoms. The concurrent validity of the BDI has been demonstrated through significant correlations with other depression measures (Mahalik & Kivlighan, 1988) and with clinicians' assessment of depressive symptoms (Beck, 1967; Corcoran & Fisher, 1987). The BDI also demonstrates adequate internal consistency, with split-half reliabilities ranging from .78 to .93 and test-retest reliabilities varying from .48 in clinical samples after 3 weeks to .74 in college samples after 3 months (Beck, 1967). The BDI-II (Beck et al., 1996) also consists of 21 items measured on a scale of 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating higher levels of depressive symptoms. This revised scale was developed in order to better correspond with the depression criteria outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition. The BDI-II correlates strongly with other depression-related self-report measures (Steer, Ball, Ranieri, & Beck, 1997). The BDI-II also demonstrates high internal reliability coefficients ranging from .92 in an outpatient sample to .93 in a college sample. Discriminant validity has been substantiated through weak associations
with measures of anxiety and other psychopathology (Steer et al., 1997). The BDI and the BDI-II have a .93 correlation with each other (Beck et al., 1996).

*Marital Adjustment.* Marital adjustment was measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS: Spanier, 1976). The DAS is a 32-item scale ranging from 0 to 151, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of marital adjustment. The DAS correlates significantly with other widely accepted measures of relationship satisfaction, with coefficients ranging from .85 to .90 (Heyman, Sayers, & Bellack, 1994). Internal consistency has been shown to be .95, using Cronbach's alpha (Heyman et al., 1994). The validity of the DAS has also been substantiated by its ability to discriminate between married and divorced couples (Spanier, 1976).

*Observed Demand/Withdraw Behavior.* Each couple participated in a discussion in which one spouse was chosen as the “focus” of the discussion. See the Procedures section for a more detailed description of the discussion task. Couples' videotaped interactions were rated using a shortened version of the Couples Interaction Rating System (CIRS; Heavey, Gill, & Christensen, unpublished manuscript). The CIRS is a coding manual consisting of 19 behavioral categories, each scored on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 to 9, with higher scores reflecting greater frequency and/or intensity of the behavior. Each partner is rated as he or she is discussing a problem in the relationship. Average internal consistency alphas for the CIRS have ranged from .75 for the demand subscale to .85 for the withdraw subscale (Verhofstadt, Buysse, De Clerco, & Goodwin, 2005).

Because of our specific interest in demand and withdraw behaviors, we did not code for all 19 CIRS variables; rather, we coded only behaviors comprising the demand
and withdraw subscales of the CIRS. The withdraw subscale consists of three behavioral variables: “avoidance,” “withdraws,” and “discussion.” The demand subscale consists of two behavioral variables: “blame” and “pressure for change.” The Appendix includes our shortened form of the CIRS, which provides descriptions of each of the behavioral variables rated in this study.

Coding was done in accordance with the “cultural informant” approach suggested by Gottman and Levenson (1986), in which we assume that coders have a familiar understanding of the behaviors reflecting the phenomena of interest. This type of coding is often called naïve coding as it relies on peoples' innate or learned understanding of psychological constructs (Schulz & Waldinger, 2005). Recent research has shown that untrained coders' pooled ratings of emotional expression during marital interaction were highly reliable and were also correlated with marital satisfaction and marital stability after five years (Waldinger, Schulz, Hauser, Allen, & Crowell, 2004). In fact, the authors of the latter study note that, when coding for emotional expression, pooled ratings by naïve coders offer several advantages over manually-trained coding systems such as increased sensitivity to subtle expressions of emotion, good interrater reliability, strong ecological validity, and the ability to code for multiple emotions expressed simultaneously (Waldinger et al., 2004). In keeping with this approach, we chose the CIRS because this coding system provides a general guideline for coders while allowing each coder to contribute their own unique ideas, experiences, and emotions to the coding process.

Before beginning the actual coding process, raters were provided with the shortened form of the CIRS that included brief descriptions of each of the demand and
withdraw behaviors. All raters then participated in a training session in which they watched a random subset of videos together in order to gain a comprehensive grasp of the different behaviors. After all raters appeared to understand the definitions of demand and withdraw during a marital interaction (via discussion and video examples), they were randomly assigned in groups of three to a subset of 25 videos. After viewing the entire 10-minute video of the marital interaction, raters coded the discussion for the demand and withdraw variables. Separate scores for husbands and wives on the withdraw scale were computed by averaging the scores on withdraw and avoidance and adding the reverse of the discussion score. Separate scores for husbands and wives on the demand scale were computed by averaging the scores on blame and pressures for change. Reliability was assessed part way through the coding process and, after being deemed adequate according to the .70 standard for reliability (Barrett, 2001), coding of the remaining videos was completed.

2.4 Reliability Analyses

In the current study, we calculated Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICCs) for each of the demand and withdraw subscales across all three raters as well as for composite demand and withdraw scores across raters. For husbands, ICCs for blame and pressures for change were .73 and .18, respectively. The ICC for husbands' composite demand score across raters was .62. ICCs for withdrawal, avoidance, and discussion were .78, .65, and .84, respectively. The ICC for husbands' total withdrawal score was .83. For wives, ICCs for blame and pressures for change were .86 and .90, respectively. The ICC for wives' composite demand score across raters was .91. ICCs for withdrawal,
avoidance, and discussion were .66, .47, and .81, respectively. The ICC for wives' total withdraw score was .77.

2.5 Procedure

Before taking part in the study, couples were asked to provide informed consent. As part of a larger study investigating the relationship between criticism and depression among married couples, each spouse separately and independently recorded a five-minute speech sample about what kind of person their spouse is and how the two get along together. Each spouse also underwent a diagnostic interview and completed a packet of questionnaires that included the BDI (Beck et al., 1988) and the DAS (Spanier, 1976) as well as several other questionnaires included in the larger study but not relevant to the current study. In addition, men completed the GRCS (O'Neil et al., 1986).

Following completion of the interview and questionnaires, the couple reunited in the same room to begin the marital interaction task, a discussion in which one spouse was selected as the “focus.” In order to serve the purpose of the larger study investigating criticism and depression, focus selection was quasi-random. If one spouse met DSM-IV criteria for Major Depression, they were automatically chosen as the focus. If no spouse was depressed, the focus was determined based on a coin flip. Following selection of the focus, both people were asked to write down a list of 5 things they would like the focus spouse to work on or change about himself/herself. For example, if the husband was chosen as the focus, both spouses would think of things they would like to change about the husband. After completing their lists, each spouse was asked to rank-order their lists according to subjective level of importance. The research assistant then selected the
highest ranking item that appeared on both lists. If there was no overlap between the two lists, the assistant asked the nonfocus spouse to choose an item from the focus spouse's list. Next, the couple was videotaped discussing the chosen topic for 10 minutes. Afterwards, each spouse separately watched the tape of the discussion and filled out a corresponding questionnaire.

Finally, the couple was debriefed and reminded of a community referral list they were given at the beginning of the study should they find themselves in psychological or marital distress. Each spouse completed the Negative Affect Scale of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) to assess for any psychological distress experienced as a result of the study. Before leaving, the couple received payment by check.
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS

The analysis of couples data requires special techniques not typically used in analysis of individual data. Since we recruited couples rather than married individuals, our data analyses took into account the nonindependence of scores obtained from each member of a couple. Nonindependence is expected in couples data because spouses are likely to be similar before they marry, spouses are exposed to many of the same external influences during marriage, and partners' personality characteristics are likely to influence those of each other (Kenny, 1995). Because their scores were nonindependent, couples were treated as matched-pairs.

Table 1 contains means and standard deviations for demographic information and relevant self-report data. Paired-sample t tests revealed that husbands were significantly more maritally adjusted than their wives ($p < .01$). Wives were significantly more depressed than their husbands ($p < .001$). Means and standards deviations for the observer ratings of the demand and withdraw behaviors are presented in Table 2. Paired sample t tests were also conducted on the behavioral variables. Husbands evidenced significantly higher levels of withdrawal overall ($p < .01$), whereas wives evidenced significantly higher levels of demand ($p = .05$). Using an analysis of variance, we tested for differences on demand and withdraw behaviors according to focus status. There were no significant differences for husbands on demand or withdraw, regardless of whether they were the
focus of the discussion. Wives, however, were significantly more demanding ($p < .005$) when their husbands were the focus of the discussion and showed significantly higher levels of withdrawal when they were the focus of the discussion ($p < .05$).

### TABLE 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND SELF-REPORT DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Husband report</th>
<th>Wife report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>41.82</td>
<td>13.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior marriages</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (years)</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined income ($)</td>
<td>48,349</td>
<td>30,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years married</td>
<td>12.39</td>
<td>13.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAS</td>
<td>105.14</td>
<td>19.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDI-II</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td>9.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCS</td>
<td>128.06</td>
<td>25.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** DAS= Dyadic Adjustment Scale; BDI-II= Beck Depression Inventory-Second Edition; GRCS= Gender Role Conflict Scale.
TABLE 2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF BEHAVIORAL VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Husband focus</th>
<th>Wife focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband demand</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband withdraw</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife demand</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife withdraw</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intercorrelations of relevant study variables are shown in Table 3. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Breiding, 2004; Campbell & Snow, 1992), results showed a significant association between gender role conflict and marital adjustment in men. Results also indicate a significant association between gender role conflict and dysphoria in men. A significant relationship between husbands' withdrawal and wives' demand was also shown ($r = .23, p < .01$).

3.2 Hypothesis Tests

*Hypothesis 1: Correlation between husbands' gender role conflict and withdrawal.* Correlations between husbands' GRCS scores and withdrawal during the marital interaction were conducted (Table 3). We predicted that gender role conflict,
TABLE 3
CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total GRCS</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SPC</td>
<td>.78***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. RE</td>
<td>.77***</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. RABBM</td>
<td>.67***</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CBWF</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.56***</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Wife BDI-II</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Wife DAS</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.43***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Husband withdraw</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>-.30***</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Wife demand</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.44***</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: GRCS = Gender Role Conflict Scale; SPC = Success, Power, and Competition; RE = Restrictive Emotionality; RABBM = Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; CBWF = Conflict Between Work and Family; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-Second Edition.

*p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
especially the Success, Power, and Competition and the Restricted Emotionality subscales, would be associated with husbands' withdrawal during the discussion. Contrary to our hypothesis, total scores on the GRCS were not significantly correlated with husbands' withdrawal. Husbands' withdrawal was, however, significantly associated with the Restrictive Emotionality ($r = .20, p < .05$) and Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men ($r = .19, p < .05$) subscales.

Given that the Restrictive Emotionality and the Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men subscales are expected to measure two different aspects of men's gender role conflict, regression analyses were conducted on these variables to determine if either variable predicted husbands' withdrawal over and above the other. When entered into separate regression equations, both subscales were significant predictors of husbands' withdrawal. However, when entered into the same regression equation, neither subscale remained a significant predictor of husbands' withdrawal after controlling for the other.

**Hypothesis 2. Correlation between husbands’ gender role conflict and wives’ dysphoria.** Correlation analyses between husbands' GRCS scores and wives' BDI-II scores were conducted (Table 3). As predicted, husbands' total GRCS scores were significantly correlated with wives' BDI-II scores ($r = .38, p < .001$). This relationship between wives' depressive symptoms and husbands' gender role conflict was significant for all four GRCS subscales.

**Hypothesis 3. Correlation between husbands’ gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment.** Correlation analyses between husbands' GRCS scores and wives' DAS scores were conducted (Table 3). As hypothesized, husbands' total GRCS scores
were significantly related to wives' marital adjustment ($r = -.24, p < .01$). This relationship, however, was significant only for the Restrictive Emotionality ($r = -.28, p = .001$) and Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men ($r = -.25, p < .01$) subscales.

*Hypothesis 4. Husbands' role in the discussion will moderate the relationships between husbands' gender role conflict and withdrawal during the discussion.*

We used moderated multiple regression analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) to determine whether husbands tend to withdraw more when they are the focus of the discussion. As indicated in Table 4, discussion role did not moderate the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and withdrawal.

**TABLE 4**

**HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE MODERATING EFFECT OF DISCUSSION ROLE ON HUSBANDS' WITHDRAWAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion predictor</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$β$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCS</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion role</td>
<td>-1.73</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>-.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCS x Discussion role</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: GRCS= Gender Role Conflict Scale. $ΔR^2 = .01, F(1, 128) = 1.74, ns$, for addition of interaction term.
Hypothesis 5. Husbands' withdrawal will moderate the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment. The potential moderating effect of husbands' withdrawal was assessed to determine whether husbands' gender role conflict was more strongly related to wives' marital adjustment for those couples in whom the husband had a higher level of withdrawal. As indicated in Table 5 and as shown in Figure 1, husbands' withdrawal moderates the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment. In other words, the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment is stronger for those couples in whom the husband shows higher levels of withdrawal during the discussion.

Hypothesis 6. Husbands' withdrawal will moderate the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' depressive symptoms. The potential moderating effect of husbands' withdrawal was assessed to determine whether husbands' gender role conflict was more strongly related to wives' depressive symptoms for those couples in whom the husband has a higher level of withdrawal. The results shown in Table 5 indicate that husbands' withdrawal does not moderate the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' depressive symptoms.

3.3 Influence of Gender Role Conflict on Withdrawal, Controlling for Wives’ Demand

Given the significant relationship between wives' demand and husbands' withdrawal, regression analyses were conducted to determine if husbands' restricted emotionality predicted husbands' withdrawal over and above wives' demand. As indicated in Table 6, husbands' restricted emotionality was significantly associated with
husbands' withdrawal even after controlling for wives' demand. Similarly, husbands' restricted affectionate behavior between men was significantly associated with husbands' withdrawal after controlling for wives' demand.

FIGURE 1.
Withdrawal as a moderator in the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment.
### TABLE 5

REGRESSION MODELS OF THE MODERATING EFFECT OF HUSBANDS' WITHDRAWAL ON OUTCOMES FOR WIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion predictor</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wife DAS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>79.39</td>
<td>21.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCS</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband withdraw</td>
<td>12.75</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>.88*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCS x Husband withdraw</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-1.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wife BDI</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-14.04</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCS</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband withdraw</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCS x Husband withdraw</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** DAS= Dyadic Adjustment Scale; GRCS=Gender Role Conflict Scale; BDI=Beck Depression Inventory. $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 128) = 7.02$, $p < .01$, for addition of interaction term into the first equation. $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(1, 128) = .01$, $ns$, for addition of interaction term into the second equation. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.}
### TABLE 6
REGRESSION MODELS OF THE EFFECTS OF HUSBANDS' RESTRICTED EMOTIONALITY AND RESTRICTED AFFECTIONATE BEHAVIOR BETWEEN MEN ON HUSBANDS' WITHDRAWAL, CONTROLLING FOR WIVES' DEMAND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion predictor</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband Withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife demand</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband RE</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife demand</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband RABBM</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.17*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: RE= Restrictive Emotionality; RABBM=Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men. $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 126) = 4.77$, $p < .05$, for addition of RE into the first equation. $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 126) = 3.86$, $p = .05$, for addition of RABBM into the second equation.  
*p < .05. ** p < .01.
CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that the extent to which husbands experience gender role conflict is related to their levels of withdrawal during marital communication. However, only certain aspects of gender role conflict, namely restricted emotionality and restricted affectionate behavior between men, were shown to be associated with husbands' withdrawal during marital interaction. Indeed, the two subscales shared a large amount of variance in their ability to predict husbands' withdrawal, suggesting these two reportedly different aspects of men's gender role conflict may be better conceptualized as one construct representing men's discomfort with emotional and affectional expression, at least insofar as their relations with withdrawal are concerned.

Contrary to our predictions, men's preoccupation with success, power, and competition was not related to their withdrawal during the interaction task. Perhaps these men, who likely have a strong desire to win, would tend to try and “one-up” their partners rather than withdraw from them. Men who score highly on this subscale may also strive to appear intellectually or morally superior to their wives, thereby behaving critically or condescendingly rather withdrawing from marital discussions. Furthermore, men who are preoccupied with success, power, and competition are likely to value or possess agentic characteristics that may contribute to their professional success. Thus, withdrawal may be
an atypical form of communication for men who possess these characteristics. Our findings suggest that discomfort with emotional and/or affectional expression may be the most critical aspects of gender role conflict in terms of their relations to destructive marital communication patterns such as withdrawal. In fact, men who are restricted in their ability to share their feelings and be affectionate with other men are likely to withdraw even more than what can be accounted for by their wives' demandingness, suggesting that withdrawal is not merely a reaction to a demanding partner, but instead a possible by-product of masculine socialization.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

This study expanded our understanding of the associations between gender role conflict and harmful interpersonal behavior by identifying the kinds of men who may be predisposed towards withdrawal during marital communication. Given that withdrawal was not associated with the Success, Power, and Competition subscale, our findings suggest that men's withdrawal has less to do with maintaining authority and dominance and more to do with men's discomfort with being emotionally vulnerable. Expanding previous research (e.g., Breiding, 2004) on the association between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment, we found that this association was moderated by husbands' withdrawal during marital communication. In other words, the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment was strongest for those men who exhibited the highest levels of withdrawal during the marital interaction task.
These findings also have implications for the measurement properties of the Gender Role Conflict Scale. In a previous study, Walker, Tokar, and Fischer (2000) used principal-components analysis to examine the fundamental structure of several different masculinity measures. The analysis revealed that the four subscales of the Gender Role Conflict Scale loaded on three different factors pertaining to separate aspects of masculinity. In fact, the Success Power, and Competition subscale loaded on a factor entitled Masculine Ideology. The Conflict Between Work and Family Relations subscale actually loaded on a factor called Liberal Gender Role Attitudes. The remaining subscales—Restricted Emotionality and Restricted Affectionate Behavior Between Men—loaded on a factor entitled Comfort With Emotionality and Affectionate Behavior Between Men. The authors therefore concluded that the Gender Role Conflict Scale may be a multidimensional scale measuring constructs other than purely masculine role conflict.

Our findings appear to support the multidimensionality of the Gender Role Conflict Scale. Essentially, husbands' comfort with emotionality and being affectionate with other men, not their gender role conflict per se, is what appears to be associated their withdrawal during marital interaction as well as with their wives' marital adjustment. Our findings, coupled with the results of the Walker et al. (2000) study, suggest that the Gender Role Conflict Scale may not be an appropriate title for the seemingly multidimensional masculinity scale used in this study. Furthermore, given that the Gender Role Conflict Scale appears to tap into several aspects of men's experiences, future masculinity research would benefit from the development of a typology of gender role conflict. Researchers, particularly those interested in the behavioral manifestations of
gender role conflict, may wish to analyze their data based on the Gender Role Conflict Scale subscales rather than on the global measure in order to explore the differential behavioral correlates of the various aspects of gender role conflict. From these kinds of studies, we could develop a more accurate description of how these men might relate to others. Researchers could use such a typology to develop tailored psychological and behavioral interventions for these men and their loved ones.

4.3 Clinical Implications

These results also have implications for marital therapy. Clinicians who observe husbands' withdrawal during marital communication may find it helpful to explore fears and insecurities regarding expression of feelings in romantic relationships and in friendships with other men that would likely be related not only to withdrawal, but to other harmful interpersonal behaviors as well. Englar-Carlson and Shepard (2005) advocate the importance of addressing men's experiences with masculine socialization during marital counseling and offer research-based strategies for helping men reduce their discomfort with emotional expression. Moreover, given that withdrawal was a moderator in the relationship between husbands' gender role conflict and wives' marital adjustment, therapists may find it helpful to encourage husbands to become more actively engaged in marital discussions, thereby protecting wives' marital adjustment from the otherwise potentially harmful effects of gender role conflict.
4.4 Limitations

As noted in Breiding (2004), the cross-sectional design of the study prohibits the establishment of any causal relationships. Future studies employing longitudinal designs are needed to determine whether husbands' gender role conflict has causal effects on wives' dysphoria and marital adjustment. Also, given that our study comprised a community sample of couples who were, on average, fairly happily married, it is unclear whether the results would generalize to clinically depressed or more maritally distressed couples. Future studies should include clinically depressed or more maritally distressed couples. It is worth noting, however, that the study had several advantages over previous studies on masculine role conflict and intimate relationships in that married couples, rather than undergraduate men, were assessed.

Furthermore, since no measure of social desirability was included in the study, it is impossible to determine the level of bias in the self-report measures. Our coding system may also have been vulnerable to bias. Since our coders consisted mostly of Caucasian, female undergraduate and graduate students, the experiences and ideas they brought to the coding process may have been culturally biased, and consequently their ability to detect behavioral nuances of our more demographically diverse sample may have been limited. Furthermore, social desirability may have affected couples' behavior during the videotaped discussion such that couples' interactions may have been different from what occurs in the home environment.
APPENDIX

Couples Interaction Rating System (CIRS)

Christopher L. Heavey, Debra Gill, & Andrew Christensen

Introduction.

The Couples Interaction Rating System consists of 19 categories that are used to rate an individual spouse as he or she is interacting with partner about a problem in their relationship. For this particular project, we are only coding for the five categories related to demand/withdraw. Each category is rated on a scale of 1 to 9 after the coder has observed the entire interaction (10 minutes). The 9 point scale is anchored at one end by “none” (or not at all) and at the other end by “a lot.” The coder makes a judgment based on the extent to which the spouse being observed displays the behavior or attribute in question relative to other spouses. Therefore, the coder must have a sense of what is typical for spouses in these kinds of interactions. This sense will be developed during a training period when coders practice the system with a series of couples' interaction tapes.

The rating categories are defined below. They are not mutually exclusive; any behavior or reaction by a spouse might be an exemplar of more than one category. In making the ratings, the coder should consider the extent that the category in question is displayed. The frequency of particular behaviors, their intensity, and the context in which they occur can all be used to determine the appropriate rating.
If, while viewing the tape, coders miss or do not understand what occurs during a particular segment, they should immediately stop the tape and replay that segment. After viewing the entire tape, coders should evaluate whether they have enough information to make ratings on all of the categories. If not, they are permitted to re-view the entire discussion once more. Then all the ratings must be made.

Rating Categories

1) Blame: Blames, accuses, or criticizes the partner, uses critical sarcasm; makes character assassinations such as “You're a real jackass,” and “Why are you such a jerk about it?”

2) Pressures for change: Requests, demands, nags, manipulates, seduces, or otherwise pressures for change in the other partner. This pressure can be either positive or negative (critical or complimenting and supportive). This pressure can be IMPLICIT as well as explicit. In other words, it need not be as explicit as “I want you to play with our son.” It must, however, carry in it an implicit should statement, which clearly indicates what the partner “should” be doing. Examples of this include “You never play with our son,” and “If you spent more time at home, our child would probably not act out as much at school.” These statements both carry implicit “shoulds” that the parent should carry out his/her parental duties by spending more time with the child. Remember, character assassinations do not belong here; “you're a jackass” does not carry any clear implicit suggestions as to what should be done to correct or lessen this condition.
3) Withdraws: More passive than Avoidance. Withdraws, becomes silent, refuses to
discuss a particular topic, looks away, refuses to argue or fight about the issue, does not
actively defend self, pulls back, retreats, and disengages self from the discussion.

4) Avoidance: More Active than Withdraws. Actively avoids discussing the problem
(e.g. hesitates, changes topics, diverts attention, or delays discussion).

5) Discussion: Tries to discuss the problem, is engaged and involved in the topic;
approaching, interested, willing to discuss the issue (whether it makes them happy or
upset).
REFERENCES


Heavey, C.L., Gill, D., & Christensen, A. *Couples interaction rating system*. Unpublished manuscript.


