Male Gender Role Conflict, Gay Men, and Same-Sex Romantic Relationships

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Some theorists have suggested that the traditionally socialized male reluctance to express intimacy is compounded within gay men's same-sex romantic relationships. In both Study 1 and Study 2, analysis-of-variance comparisons between single gay men and gay men in a same-sex relationship failed to confirm this assertion. At the same time, hierarchical regression results demonstrated a small negative relationship between the traditionally socialized male discomfort for expressing affection for other men and levels of gay men's relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: gay, male, relationships, gender role conflict

Men “whether [they are] sexually attracted to males, females, or both, [grow] up influenced by powerful beliefs about how to be a man” (Schwartzberg & Rosenberg, 1995, p. 264). Indeed, O’Neil (1981) was one of the first to describe what he termed the masculine mystique—a developmental process under which boys acquire gender role characteristics that can lead to psychological distress if used in situations that require less gender-typed behaviors. For example, one notion of traditional masculinity is that men should restrict their public expression of affection for other men (see Brooks & Good, 2001a; Levant & Pollack, 1995). Fearing how society will react to verbal expressions of affection, admiration, or love of other men, some men learn to avoid these behaviors and exhibit a more stoic persona. Unfortunately, while this can protect a man from negative reactions from others, it can also have negative effects on the closeness of their interpersonal relationships (Brooks, 1998).

This line of research has become associated with the construct of male gender role conflict (O’Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986), which is “a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others” (O’Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995, p. 155). It typically results from the competition between rigid, sexist, or overly restrictive male gender roles and incompatible situational demands (see O’Neil et al., 1995, for review). The available literature demonstrates that male gender role conflict positively correlates with heterosexual men’s increased (a) depression (Good & Mintz, 1990), (b) anxiety (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), and (c) relationship difficulties (Fischer & Good, 1995). More recently, and in recognition of the potential role of this construct in understanding the experiences of gay men, Simonsen, Blazina, and Watkins (2000) demonstrated that a sample of 117 gay men also experienced gender role conflict patterns, and that it positively correlated with anger, anxiety, and a reluctance to seek psychological services. However, despite an increase of late in writings about psychotherapy with gay men (Barber & Mobley, 1999; Dworkin, 2000; Dworkin & Gutiérrez, 1992; Haldeman, 2001), we were unable to locate any additional published empirical research explor-
ing gender role conflict and its effects on gay men.

As such, a number of questions still need to be addressed. First, while Simonsen et al. (2000) reported the results of an exploratory factor analysis that “approximated the four-factor model” (p. 86) of gender role conflict developed on heterosexual men, they also noted some item and scale overlap, thereby suggesting the need for further exploration of the gender role conflict factor structure. Therefore, in Study 1, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (e.g., Hoyle, 2000) on the male Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O’Neil et al., 1986). Work on heterosexual men has shown four specific factors (e.g., O’Neil et al., 1995) that make up gender role conflict: (a) Success, Power, and Competition; (b) Restrictive Emotionality; (c) Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; and (d) Conflict Between Work and Family Relations. On the basis of this, as well as Simonsen et al.’s results, we hypothesized a four-factor solution corresponding to these four subscales. However, at the same time, because Simonsen et al. did find some item overlap, and because this is only the second study of gender role conflict as it occurs for gay men, we also developed and tested three-, two-, and one-factor models.

Second, although Simonsen et al. (2000) explored how gay men might experience gender role conflict, they made no mention of how it occurs for men in same-sex romantic relationships, despite recent theoretical advances in understanding how to counsel gay male couples (e.g., Ossana, 2000). Therefore, Study 1 also examined the relative impact of gender role conflict variables for gay men both currently in a romantic relationship and not in such a relationship. Given that this is an emerging area of research, we make no specific hypotheses. Two outcomes, however, seem possible. First, it is possible that gay men may be significantly affected by male gender role conflict. Sexual attraction to other men so violates society’s expectations of gender role masculine that “the incongruity between others’ expectations and [a gay man’s] own developing sense of self is apt to leave him isolated and ashamed” (Schwartzberg & Rosenberg, 1995, p. 266). Indeed, Harrison (1995) framed the issue most succinctly: “Homosexual men have sometimes been considered not to be ‘real’ men—that is, to have failed to fulfill the [socially determined heterosexual] male role” (p. 359). Furthermore, the published literature addressing counseling gay men implies that the potential consequences of the traditional male gender role socialization (e.g., Brooks, 1998; L. Brown, 1995; Hawkins, 1992; Rubin, 1983) are in effect “doubled” (Hawkins, 1992, cited in Ossana, 2000, p. 277) by the combined developmental legacies of two men. As such, competition between socialized male gender role expectations to be heterosexual and one’s sexual orientation might lead to increased gender role conflict scores.

At the same time, however, while all men may be influenced to some degree by society’s prescribed masculine roles, not all men internalize these beliefs to the same degree. Indeed, gay men in particular may be less negatively affected by the male role, given that research suggests gay men may not conform to traditional male gender roles (Green, Bettinger, & Zachs, 1996). Furthermore, it may be the case that by the time they are able to enter into and sustain a romantic relationship with another man, some gay men have transcended the limitations placed on them by a traditional gender role. L. S. Brown (1988), for example, detailed how the developmental process associated with coming out often results in “an enriched life perspective” characterized by a “dual affiliation allow[ing] gay people to be fluent in the ways of at least two cultures—the heterosexual mainstream and the rich, multifaceted subculture of gay [life]” (p. 269). This bicultural perspective may result in some gay men experiencing reduced gender role conflict.

Study 1

Method

Sampling Procedure

Because of the potential difficulties associated with obtaining a large sample of gay men, we decided to use the Internet as our primary means of data collection. Specifically, postings were made to 87 gay male online message boards in which a Web site link was embedded; individuals willing to participate accessed it and were directed to an informed consent letter. The nature of the study was briefly described, and those who agreed were directed to our demo-
graphic questionnaire and our measure of male gender role conflict, both of which were in HTML format written, because of software limitations, to solicit exclusively categorical responses. On completion of these measures, participants double clicked a submit button, and their responses were transmitted to a secure server via e-mail. To ensure confidentiality, return email addresses were deleted. Security of our data was ensured by verifying respondents’ computer IP address (Reips, 2000; see also Schmidt, 2000); 11 duplicates were eliminated.

Participants

Seven hundred and one men participated in this study. Our sample was predominantly gay (n = 649; 93%); only 52 (7%) described themselves as bisexual. Our sample was divided between those who described themselves as single (n = 411; 59%) and those that described themselves as currently in a same-sex romantic relationship (n = 290; 41%). Additional demographic data are provided in Table 1.

Measures

Demographics. The Demographic Data Sheet (DD) was developed for this study to obtain information about participants’ age, educational level, income level, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and length of relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>&gt; $60,000</td>
<td>21.8% (189)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–29 years</td>
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<td>30–39 years</td>
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<td>40–49 years</td>
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<td>Associate</td>
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<td>22.8% (197)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>8.8% (76)</td>
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</table>

Gender role conflict. Participants’ experience of gender role conflict was measured using the GRCS (O’Neil et al., 1986). The GRCS is a measure of men’s reactions to the gender role expectations they face in current society. It consists of 37 items dedicated to assessing the four areas of gender role conflict on four subscales: (a) Success, Power, and Competition (SPC: 13 items); (b) Restrictive Emotionality (RE: 10 items); (c) Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (RABBM: 8 items); and (d) Conflict Between Work and Family Relations (CBWFR: 6 items). A sample item is “Hugging other men is difficult for me.” Respondents rate their agreement with each item on a 6-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). The scale is reverse scored so that higher subscale scores indicate greater degrees of conflict associated with that specific aspect of the male role.

Principal-components factor analysis, conducted during scale development with samples of heterosexual men, indicated that the GRCS taps four factors, corresponding to the four subscales, which accounted for 36% of the total variance (O’Neil et al., 1995; O’Neil et al., 1986). Research summarized by O’Neil and Owen (1994) demonstrated that the SPC subscale had an average alpha of .86, the RE subscale had an average alpha of .84, the RABBM subscale had an average alpha of .84, and the CBWFR subscale had an average alpha of .80. For Study 1’s sample of gay male participants, the SPC subscale had an alpha of .90, the RE subscale .87, the RABBM subscale .80, and the CBWFR subscale .91.

Results

Means and standard deviations for, as well as correlations between, the four GRCS subscales are provided in Table 2.

Factor Structure

We conducted our confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL 8.54. While we hypothesized that the four-factor solution would be consistent with gender role conflict theory (e.g., O’Neil et al., 1995), we also tested three-, two-, and one-factor models in order to address the item overlap reported by Simonsen et al. (2000) and to explore which best explained our data.
Specifically, the four-factor model was constructed using the items/subscales as suggested by O’Neil et al. (1986). The three-factor solution was developed by dividing the GRCS items into three groups consistent with gender role conflict theory: (a) emotions and emotional expression, (b) family, and (c) success and achievements. The two-factor model was developed the same way, but resulting in two groups of items: (a) emotions and emotional expression and (b) success, achievement, and work. Finally, the one-factor model involved all 37 of the GRCS items.

As the chi-square statistic tends to be affected by large sample sizes (e.g., Hatcher, 1994), we used several indexes to assess the degree to which this four-factor model fits our data: Bentler’s (1989) Comparative Fit Index (CFI; .95 or above), the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR; .08 or below), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA; .06 or below). As expected, given our large sample size, the chi-squares of all four of our models were statistically significant. However, an evaluation of our additional indices (see Table 3) suggested that we obtained the most reasonable fit to our data using the four-factor model; CFI was .96, above the criteria of .95, and the SRMR was .06, below the criteria of .08. Furthermore, the RMSEA was .06 at the point of cutoff. For the three-factor, the two-factor, and the one-factor models, none of the fit indices reached the appropriate levels. This suggests that they did not provide an improvement over the four-factor model, thereby confirming the published four-factor structure of the GRCS (O’Neil et al., 1995) previously demonstrated only with samples of heterosexual male participants.

Demographic Data

As this is only the second study addressing gender role conflict as experienced by gay men, exploration of our sample demographics seemed appropriate. We conducted a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) in which the categorical variables age, educational level, and financial status each served as separate independent variables. RABBM, RE, SPC, and CBWFR served as dependent variables. Sexual orientation (gay or bisexual) was excluded from these analyses because of disparities in cell size (649 vs. 52). We used an ANOVA, here as well as in Study 2, rather than a multivariate analysis of variance because our interest was in the poten-

<table>
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<th>Subscale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>10.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. RABBM</td>
<td>18.76</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>.73*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SPC</td>
<td>40.93</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.38*</td>
<td></td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CBWFR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.35*</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. GRCS = Gender Role Conflict Scale; RE = Restrictive Emotionality; RABBM = Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; SPC = Success, Power, and Competition; CBWFR = Conflict Between Work and Family Relations.

*.05.

Table 3
Study 1 Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Competing Models of the 37-Item GRCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One factor</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>9.466*</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.21 (CI = .21–.21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two factor</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>5.958*</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.13 (CI = .13–.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three factor</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>3.290*</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08 (CI = .08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four factor</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>2.828*</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06 (CI = .06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. GRCS = Gender Role Conflict Scale; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; CI = 90% confidence interval.

*.05.
tial for differences associated with individual demographic variables rather than in omnibus results (see Huberty & Morris, 1992, for a complete discussion).

Results indicated group differences, but only on the variables RABBM and SPC and only associated with participant age: $F(4, 697) = 3.71, p < .01, \eta = .14$; $F(4, 697) = 7.21, p < .01, \eta = .20$. Specifically, post hoc Tukey’s indicated that the age group of less than 24 years had RABBM and SPC scores higher than the four remaining age groups (25–29 years: $p < .05$; 30–39 years: $p < .05$; 40–49 years: $p < .05$; and older than 49 years: $p < .05$). Our sample size was such that we were operating with sufficient power (.90) to detect even small effect sizes. This finding strengthens our results, as well the four remaining age groups (25–29 years: $p < .05$; 30–39 years: $p < .05$; 40–49 years: $p < .05$; and older than 49 years: $p < .05$). Our sample size was such that we were operating with sufficient power (.90) to detect even small effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). In effect, our youngest participants experienced the greatest levels of conflict associated with the expression of affection with other men as well as success, power, and competition. This finding is consistent with overall gender role conflict theory (e.g., O’Neil et al., 1995), which suggests that gender role stresses are greatest at younger ages and in college environments. It is also somewhat consistent with published samples of men among differing age groups in which younger men experienced higher levels of RABBM and SPC (e.g., Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995). As such, participant age will be statistically controlled in further analyses.

To determine how our sample compared with other published samples of gay men (e.g., Simonsen et al., 2000), we compared our samples’ scores on RABBM, RE, SPC, and CBWFR using four independent sample $t$ tests. Although our participants’ scores on RABBM ($M = 18.76, SD = 7.31$), RE ($M = 25.72, SD = 10.21$), SPC ($M = 40.93, SD = 13.83$), and CBWFR ($M = 20.00, SD = 8.22$) appeared somewhat different than those obtained by Simonsen et al. (2000), they were not statistically different: RABBM, $t(816) = 1.71, p = .10, d = .12$; RE, $t(816) = -0.71, p = .10, d = .05$; SPC, $t(816) = -1.21, p = .10, d = .08$; and CBWFR, $t(816) = -1.13, p = .10, d = .08$. As before, our sample size was such that we were operating with sufficient power (.90) to detect even small effect sizes. This finding strengthens our results, as well as those of Simonsen et al., by showing that our combined conclusions can be generalized with increasing confidence to the larger population of gay men.

**Gender Role Conflict**

By comparing the GRCS scores of those gay men currently engaged in a romantic relationship to those of gay men not engaged in such a relationship, we sought to determine if gender role conflict is greater within the context of a same-sex romantic relationship. It may be possible that gay men within a romantic relationship may experience significant male gender role conflict, given the degree to which intimacy in such a situation violates the prescribed male gender role. However, given that research suggests gay men may not conform to a traditional male gender role socialization (Green et al., 1996), and that this is only the second study to explore gender role conflict as it occurs for gay men, the reverse is equally possible. We conducted a series of analyses of covariance in which the categorical variable relationship status (single or coupled) served as the independent variable and the categorical variable participant age served as the covariate. RABBM, RE, SPC, and CBWFR each served as separate dependent variables.

Results determined that, with the effects of participant age—RABBM, $F(1, 700) = 31, p < .01, \eta = .20$; RE, $F(1, 700) = 11.71, p < .01, \eta = .13$; SPC, $F(1, 700) = 94.93, p < .01, \eta = .35$; and CBWFR, $F(1, 700) = 7.73, p < .01, \eta = .10$—controlled, there remained statistically significant differences between our groups on the subscales RABBM, $F(1, 700) = 17.41, p < .01, \eta = .16$, and RE, $F(1, 700) = 15.32, p = .00, \eta = .15$. With only two groups (single vs. coupled), examination of the means indicated that the scores of those gay men currently engaged in a romantic relationship were lower (RABBM: $M = 1.7, SD = .67$; RE: $M = 2.4, SD = 1.00$) than the scores of single gay men (RABBM: $M = 2.0, SD = .76$; RE: $M = 2.7, SD = 1.00$). As before, our sample size was such that we were operating with sufficient power (.90) to detect even small effects. Thus, single gay men seem to experience greater levels of conflict associated with the constructs RABBM and RE than do coupled gay men.

It should also be noted at this point that in conducting this research we explicitly wanted to avoid comparisons between gay men and non-gay men (e.g., Lowe & Mascher, 2001) for three reasons. First, we recognize that such comparisons are often commonplace, ostensibly in this
case to understand how men outside of the majority group contend with conflicting gender role messages. However, a potential, albeit unintended, consequence (e.g., Messick, 1995) of such a comparison is the use of a deficit model to understand the results, “polarizing so-called opposites” (McGoldrick & Giordano, 1996, p. 23), and the labeling of one group as worse or less than the other group (e.g., Fiske, 1998). Second, recent work in the study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered issues (e.g., Garnets, 2000) identifying the degree to which sexual orientation is more continuous than dichotomous makes such direct comparisons inappropriate. Finally, and in some ways most important, this type of comparative approach seems similar to what Quintana, Troyano, and Taylor (2001) labeled the use of proxy variables rather than actual psychological constructs to explain findings. In effect, sexual orientation, rather than variables associated with sexual orientation but more directly related to gender role conflict, could become the explanation for any demonstrated differences between gay and non-gay men. Accordingly, we decided to avoid such comparisons.

Study 2

Our finding that the RABBM and RE scores of gay men engaged in a same-sex romantic relationship were lower than those of gay men not in such a relationship seems to confirm the possibility that by the time gay men are able to enter into and sustain a same-sex romantic relationship, they are less affected by gender role conflict than the literature would suggest. This is surprising, especially in light of the counseling gay males literature that suggests that the potential consequences of the traditional male gender role socialization are potentially doubled within the context of such a relationship. Indeed, Hawkins (1992) went so far as to state that “when two men try to build a relationship, [difficulties with intimacy are] compounded because both are lacking in the interpersonal skills needed” (p. 82). Additionally, Schwartzberg and Rosenberg (1995) pointed out that “two gay men, each with a legacy of male independence and an expectation of doing what he wants, may face particular obstacles in balancing autonomy and intimacy and sustaining romantic relationships” (p. 265). More recently, however, Ossana (2000) cautioned that increased “research is needed to clarify the various ways gender role socialization might affect gay male relationships” (p. 280).

Hence, we decided to conduct Study 2 in order to collect another sample of gay male participants and again explore the degree to which RABBM and RE scores differ as a function of relationship status. Our goal in doing so was to confirm the results of Study 1. We made no specific hypotheses in this regard; if the findings of Study 1 were accurate, then those gay men currently in a romantic relationship should produce lower RABBM and RE scores than those gay men not currently in such a relationship. However, at the same time, if the idea that the factors associated with traditional male gender role socialization are doubled is accurate, then the reverse is possible.

Participants completed only the RABBM and RE subscales for three reasons. First, our goal in Study 2 was to focus exclusively on interpersonal variables and their impact on relationship satisfaction; of the four subscales on the GRCS, RABBM and RE seem the most focused on interpersonal variables. Second, we were somewhat concerned that the length of our questionnaire might deter responses. To increase our return rate, therefore, we shortened our measure by focusing on the two subscales of interest. Finally, and perhaps most important, the RABBM and RE subscales were the only two subscales on which participants in Study 1 evidenced differences based on their relationship status.

Study 2 also afforded us the opportunity to assess the impact of male gender role socialization on the additional variable romantic relationship satisfaction. Although Simonsen and colleagues (2000) addressed several intrapersonal variables (i.e., anger, anxiety), they did not address interpersonal variables such as relationship satisfaction. If, as it has been suggested (Scher, 2001), traditional male gender role socialization teaches some men to devalue and suppress those interpersonal behaviors that also “provide [them with] some of the essential ingredients for successful intimacy” (Ossana, 2000, p. 280), then exploring such interpersonal variables would seem a critical step. Gender role conflict theory, albeit supported by studies of heterosexual men (see O’Neil et al., 1995, for review), would suggest that variables such as a
reluctance to express affection for another man, while perhaps not greater in the context of male–male relationships, might still interfere with the development of relationship satisfaction (e.g., Brooks & Good, 2001a, 2001b). Indeed, it may be that this very situation presents a paradox for some gay men; expression of affection is vital for romantic success, yet contrary to a traditionally socialized male role. This would seem to suggest a possible source of gender role related distress that we hypothesize would have a negative effect on relationship satisfaction. However, at the same time, given the findings of Study 1, it is equally possible that RE and RABBBM would predict little if any relationship satisfaction.

**Method**

**Sampling Procedure**

To obtain another sample of gay male participants, we again made contacts via the Internet in the form of both e-mails and posting to gay male online message boards. We used the same procedure here as in Study 1; IP addresses were used to avoid duplicate data, as well as to confirm that individuals participating in Study 2 had not previously participated in Study 1. This resulted in 150 participants. Additionally, we began making personal contacts within the surrounding urban, Midwestern gay male community so as to increase the number of respondents. This resulted in another 145 respondents. For all participants, the nature of the study was briefly described to such individuals, and they were asked for assistance in (a) completing the questionnaire or (b) making similar contacts across the United States.

**Participants**

Two hundred and ninety-five gay men participated in Study 2. They were predominantly gay (n = 287; 97.31%); only 8 (2.7%) described themselves as bisexual. One hundred and fifty (50.81%) described themselves as not currently involved in a same-sex romantic relationship, while 145 (49.21%) reported as being involved in such a relationship. Additional demographic characteristics are noted in Table 4.

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<th>Frequency (n)</th>
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<td>Financial status</td>
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<td>34.6% (102)</td>
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<td>3–5 years</td>
<td>16.6% (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5–8 years</td>
<td>14.5% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8–12 years</td>
<td>10.3% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12–15 years</td>
<td>6.9% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
<td>13.1% (19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measures**

**Demographics.** We again used our DD.

**Gender role conflict.** Participants’ experience of gender role conflict was again measured using the GRCS (O’Neil et al., 1986). However, participants completed only the RABBBM and RE subscales. The alphas for these two scales were .82 and .90, respectively.

**Relationship satisfaction.** Those 145 participants who self-disclosed that they were currently engaged in a same-sex romantic relationship completed the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). The RAS is a seven-item global measure of romantic relationship satisfaction (RS). An example item is “How well does your partner meet your needs?” The items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale and are totaled to attain a general satisfaction score. The higher the score, the more satisfied the person is with his or her current romantic relationship. Hendrick (1988) reported an internal consistency of .86. Vaughan and Matyastik-Baier (1999) conducted zero-order correlations between the RAS and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) to test the validity of the RAS. The authors showed that the zero-
order correlation between the RAS and DAS was .84, indicating that the two measures were, in fact, assessing similar aspects of relationship satisfaction. They concluded that the RAS may be a more useful measure of relationship satisfaction because of its length and the fact that it is not specific to married couples (e.g., Vaughan & Matyastik-Baier, 1999). For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .87.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The means, standard deviations, and correlations between RE and RABBM and RS are provided in Table 5.

Demographic data. Because, in the case of Study 1, participant age had a statistically significant impact on GRCS scores, we again conducted a series of ANOVAs on the categorical demographic variables age, educational level, and income. Sexual orientation (gay or bisexual) was excluded from these analyses because of disparities in cell size (287 vs. 8). RE and RABBM served as dependent variables. Contrary to the findings of Study 1, however, these ANOVAs produced no statistically significant or of noticeable effect size differences (all Fs < 1.5, all ps > .1, all ηs < .1, power .70 to detect small effects).

Additionally, we explored our sample in order to see if there were differences associated with the method of recruitment. We conducted an ANOVA in which recruitment methodology served as the independent variable while the demographic variables age, educational level, and income as well as the variables RE and RABBM served as dependent variables. Results determined that there were no statistically significant group differences on the demographic variables age, educational level, and income. However, there were statistically significant group differences on the variables RE, $F(1, 292) = 13.91, p < .01, \eta = .21$, and RABBM, $F(1, 292) = 4.42, p < .05, \eta = .12$. With only two recruitment methods, examination of the means indicate that those individuals recruited over the Internet had higher RE ($M = 27.2$) and RABBM ($M = 19.1$) than those individuals recruited locally: RE ($M = 24.6$) and RABBM ($M = 16.1$). Therefore, because there were no differences between the samples on the demographic variables, we felt comfortable combining them for subsequent analyses.

Generalizability. As Study 2 represents yet another sample of gay men, who in this case provided responses to the RABBM and RE subscales, we again compared their scores to those of a previously published sample of gay men (Simonsen et al., 2000) as well as to those of Study 1 using independent sample $t$ tests. As was the case with Study 1, although our Study 2 participants’ scores on RABBM ($M = 17.7, SD = 7.0$) and RE ($M = 25.9, SD = 10.7$) appeared somewhat different than both those obtained by Simonsen et al. as well as those provided to us by our Study 1 participants, they were not statistically different: RABBM, $t(409) = 0.11, p = 0.10, d = 0.01$; RE, $t(409) = -0.41, p = 0.10, d = 0.04$; RABBM, $t(993) = -2.22, p = 0.10, d = 0.14$; and RE, $t(993) = 0.31, p = 0.10, d = 0.02$, respectively. As before, our sample size was such that we were operating with sufficient power (.80) to detect even small effects, thereby increasing our confidence that these results can be generalized to the larger population of gay men.

Gender Role Conflict

By comparing the RE and RABBM scores of those gay men not in a same-sex romantic relationship to those scores of gay men currently in such a relationship, we attempted to confirm the results of Study 1—that RE and RABBM were less pronounced for gay men involved in a male–male romantic relationship. Two outcomes are possible. First, gay men in the context of such a relationship might experience increased difficulties as the result of the compounded male gender role socializations, an ef-
fect also suggested by gender role conflict theory (e.g., Scher, 2001) as well as the counseling gay male relationship literature (e.g., Hawkins, 1992). However, given the results of Study 1, the reverse is equally possible. We conducted two one-way ANOVAs in which relationship status (single or couple) served as the independent variable. RABBM and RE served as dependent variables. Results determined that there was a statistically significant difference between our groups on RABBM, $F(1, 292) = 13.9, p < .01$, $\eta = .21$. However, our samples of single and coupled gay men evidenced no difference on the RE subscale, $F(1, 292) = 4.41, p < .04$, $\eta = .12$. Consistent with the results of Study 1, the RABBM scores of those gay men engaged in a same-sex romantic relationship were lower (RABBM: $M = 16, SD = 6$) than the scores of single gay men (RABBM: $M = 19, SD = 7$). As before, our sample size was sufficient to detect the small effects. All told, our sample of single gay men experienced greater levels of conflict associated with the expression of affection between men than did our sample of gay men currently engaged in a romantic relationship while evidencing no differences associated with the expression of emotion. These findings partly validate those of Study 1: Traditionally socialized male gender roles related concerns about the expression of affection to other men were not necessarily greater within the context of men’s same-sex romantic relationships.

**Relationship Satisfaction**

For this analysis we used only the responses of those participants currently in a romantic relationship ($n = 145$) to explore the degree to which RABBM and RE affected gay men’s RS. If traditional male gender role socialization does present gay men with situational difficulties, perhaps in the form of devaluing those very behaviors that could be considered important to romantic relationship satisfaction, then RABBM and RE should predict a large and statistically significant amount of RS variance. However, given the results of Study 2 to date, as well as those of Study 1, the reverse is equally possible.

In conducting our regression analysis, we noticed that our respondent’s RE, RABBM, and RS scores were significantly skewed. Accordingly, we transformed these variables by means of a natural log. To address potential concerns about multicollinearity, we determined the mean of each variable and subtracted it from that variable. We used these transformed scores, as well as an interaction term representing the combinations of $RABBM \times RE$, as predictor variables in our hierarchal regression analysis (see Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Venter & Maxwell, 2000, for discussions); we entered RABBM in Step 1, RE in Step 2, and the interaction term ($RABBM \times RE$) in Step 3. Relationship satisfaction served as the criterion variable. It should be noted that a version of this article included internalized homophobia in this analysis. However, it did not significantly contribute to the prediction of RS. Accordingly, and to save space, it has been deleted from this version. Results are available from Stephen R. Wester.

As seen in Table 6, regression results partially supported our hypothesis. The overall proportion of RS variance accounted for by RABBM (Step 1) was small (5%) but statistically significant. However, the inclusion of RE (Step 2), as well as the interaction term representing $RABBM \times RE$ (Step 3), did not result in a statistically significant contribution ($\Delta R^2 = .00002, F_{\Delta} = .0003; \Delta R^2 = .01, F_{\Delta} = .10$, respectively) despite the fact that the overall regression model remained statistically significant. More important, an examination of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step/Variable</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$F_{\Delta}$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1/RABBM</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-.28*</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2/RE</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.93</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3/RABBM × RE</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $n = 145$. RABBM = Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; RE = Restrictive Emotionality.

* $p < .05$. 
Cohen’s (1988) tables indicates that our sample size provided high power (.90) to detect any medium effects and moderate power (.40) to detect small effects. Therefore, while we affirmed our hypothesis—that the GRCs interpersonal variable RABBM did predict RS—the amount of variance explained (5%) was less than expected, and neither RE nor the interaction of RE and RABBM significantly contributed to the regression.

General Discussion

The findings of both Study 1 and Study 2 suggest that gay men in same-sex romantic relationships, while they do experience conflict associated with RE and RABBM, do not experience a doubling of the interpersonal and expressive deficits stereotypically associated with the socialized male gender role (e.g., Hawkins, 1992; Scher, 2001). Study 2 affirmed these findings while also demonstrating that RABBM accounted for only 5% of participants’ relationship satisfaction scores; this is generally less than that found in studies of heterosexual men, suggesting that much of what contributes to the relationship satisfaction of gay men is not related to conflicts associated with a traditionally socialized male role. Indeed, it seems as if Ossana’s (2000) concerns over the uncritical acceptance of the doubling hypothesis (e.g., Hawkins, 1992) were appropriate: Our findings provide no evidence that gay male couples are potentially characterized by the presence of two traditionally socialized male gender roles and thereby lack “the interpersonal skills needed” (Hawkins, 1992, p. 82) for relationship success.

One potential explanation for these results is that perhaps there is something unique about gay men’s developmental socialization that actually decreases the impact of gender role conflict within the context of a romantic relationship. Barber and Mobley (1999), for example, described how gay men’s difficulties associated with the “task of coming out to self and others” (p. 161) may actually result in “a good set of survival skills” (p. 165; see also LaSala, 2000), perhaps allowing them to transcend more traditional male gender role socialization-related difficulties as they enter into same-sex romantic relationships. Furthermore, some gay men within the context of their romantic relationship may have negotiated with their partner the management of socialized male gender role variables. This would be consistent with the ideas of L. S. Brown (1988) who wrote about the bicultural perspective potential afforded to gay men that allowed them to be fluent in both the heterosexual and the gay cultures. In effect, such individuals work in concert to create a relationship that recognizes and validates each member’s socialized way of expression drawing on those aspects from both cultures that suit their ideals. This would have the effect of negating both of the conditions under which men typically experience gender role conflict related psychological distress.

Consistent with this assertion are the mixed findings regarding the effect of gender role conflict variables on relationship satisfaction. For example, RABBM scores accounted for 5% of RS variance, whereas RE did not contribute to the prediction. This fits with previous research: Simonsen et al. (2000) noted that “RAB[BM] emerged as a very important GRC variable” (p. 88), and, from a broader gender role conflict perspective, the socialized male tendency to experience reluctance in the expression of affection between men (O’Neil et al., 1995) is one of the strongest aspects of the traditional male role. All men, regardless of sexual orientation, grow up “influenced by powerful beliefs about how to be a man” (Schwartzberg & Rosenberg, 1995, p. 264); individuals working with gay men need to guard against drawing inappropriate conclusions about how strongly male gender role socialization is related to romantic relationship satisfaction within gay male couples (e.g., LaSala, 2001; Ossana, 2000).

Our findings should not be taken as a rejection of gender role conflict theory as applied to the gender role related experiences of gay men. Indeed, both our confirmatory factor analysis and our comparison of GRCs scores to those of previously published samples of gay men indicate that the structure of the items on the GRCs is similar for gay as well as nongay men. Our data replicated the four-factor solution developed with heterosexual men (O’Neil et al., 1995), and results indicate that the scores of both Study 1 and Study 2 were not significantly different from those of the only other published sample of gay men (e.g., Simonsen et al., 2000). As such, our data are congruent with this work, and our combined findings seem generalizable to the larger population of gay men with an.
increasing degree of certainty. At the same time, it might be important to consider reevaluating this construct from a more inclusive perspective. Examination of specific GRCS items within our confirmatory factor analysis, for example, suggested that some items may not apply as clearly for gay men—not surprising because the development of gender role conflict occurred through a primarily heterosexual worldview. Future research might consider adding items written to include a gay male perspective and examining the totality of men’s experiences with their socialized gender role (e.g., Kiselica, 1999).

Future Research

Advantages to the current set of studies include an examination of two large samples of gay men, the congruence of our data with published research (e.g., Simonsen et al., 2000), and the continued extension of the “new psychology of men” (Levant & Pollack, 1995, p. xiv) to include the predictive value of RABB in gay men’s romantic relationship satisfaction. However, some limitations should also be noted. The majority of our participants were Caucasian, therefore precluding any specific comments about how gay men of color experience conflicts associated with their socialized gender role and romantic relationship satisfaction. Our Internet sample reported higher levels of gender role conflict than our locally recruited sample; future research needs to explore potential explanations for this, given that said sample did not differ on demographic characteristics. Also, the participants in this study were obtained from versions of the snowball sampling technique; that is, asking people who self-identified as having personal or professional ties with gay men to facilitate the distribution of our questionnaire, as well as over the Internet. Such a methodology may have skewed our findings because it resulted in a sample of gay men who in some cases may have been more (a) connected with the gay male community, (b) highly educated, and/or (c) in a longer term and committed relationship. While we believe that the characteristics of our participants actually aided our study of RS because they decreased the possibility that alternative explanations (i.e., less RS resulting from shorter term relationship, financial difficulties, age and developmental variables) could invalidate our findings, it is important that future research consider methods for reaching different segments of the gay male community.

Future research should also consider working toward an understanding of how developmental factors such as gay identity (Cass, 1979) and “male reference group identity dependence” (Wade, 1998, p. 349) influence gay men’s experience of traditional male gender role socialization. This would promote a more complex understanding of gay men’s gender role development, just as work on racial identity (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990) has increased our understanding of the developmental experiences of people of color. Furthermore, within-group research, exploring the occurrence of gender role conflict using a gay male couple as the unit of analysis, could increase researchers’ understanding of how gender role issues intersect with sexual orientation. Finally, although our sample size was sufficient to detect small effect sizes (e.g., Cohen, 1988), future research should consider working toward even larger samples so as to confirm our results. Additional validity work, and correlations between the GRCS and other measures of the interaction between gender roles and sexual orientation, perhaps should be required before researchers, counselors, and educators automatically assume that the construct of male gender role conflict (Levant & Pollack, 1995; O’Neil et al., 1986) accounts for the experiences of all men regardless of sexual orientation. Pursuit of these ideas, as well as this overall line of research, can only serve to better the profession of counseling psychology by expanding the definition of multiculturalism to include the variations and components of male gender role development.

Conclusion

In 1991, the Journal of Counseling and Development published a special issue devoted to multicultural counseling (Pederson, 1991), labeling it the “fourth force” (p. 4) and equating its impact with those of psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic therapies. Since that milestone, the field has continued to expand by integrating an understanding of people’s different identities (e.g., gender, culture, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity) and the degree to
which they affect their quality of life (Lowe & Mascher, 2001). In the area of gay, lesbian, and bisexual studies, for example, counselors have called on researchers to develop a more sophisticated conceptualization of how differing aspects of identity interact with sexual orientation so as to affect a person’s quality of life. Accordingly, our findings suggest that, while some gay men do experience reactions to society’s expectations of the male gender role, there is no evidence to support the idea that male gender role variables are “doubled” within the context of a same-sex romantic relationship. It seems as if the time has come for those who work with male clients to develop an appropriately complex understanding of men (e.g., Kiselica, 1999) by examining questions about how variables such as gender role socialization and sexual orientation intersect with individual-specific situational demands.

References


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