The Role of Masculine Norm Conformity in Men’s and Women’s Relational Satisfaction

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................ i
Table of Contents............................................................................................................ iii
List of Appendices......................................................................................................... viii
List of Tables................................................................................................................ ix
List of Figures............................................................................................................... x
Abstract........................................................................................................................ xi

CHAPTER ONE.............................................................................................................. 1
The Role of Masculinity in Men’s and Women’s Relational Satisfaction……. 1
  Overview of Chapters .............................................................................................. 7

CHAPTER TWO.......................................................................................................... 10
Brief Overview of the Concept of Masculinity......................................................... 10
  Male Sex Role Identity Theory.............................................................................. 10
  Androgyny Theory................................................................................................. 11
  Gender Role Strain Paradigm............................................................................... 13
  Measures of Masculinity....................................................................................... 20
  Research on Masculinity and Psychological Outcomes.................................... 22

CHAPTER THREE..................................................................................................... 26
Masculinity and Men’s Relational Satisfaction....................................................... 26
  Masculinity and Relationship Satisfaction....................................................... 26
    Summary of masculinity and relationship satisfaction ..................................... 33
  Masculinity and Sexual Satisfaction................................................................. 33
    Summary of masculinity and sexual satisfaction............................................. 38

CHAPTER FOUR....................................................................................................... 40
Masculinity and Female Partners’ Relational Satisfaction..................................... 40
Masculinity and Relationship Satisfaction ........................................ 40
  Summary .................................................................................. 46
Masculinity and Sexual Satisfaction ............................................. 46
  Summary .................................................................................. 49
CHAPTER FIVE ............................................................................. 51
Mediating Influences ..................................................................... 51
  Communication and Relational Satisfaction ................................. 52
    Self-disclosure ........................................................................ 53
    Sexual self-disclosure ............................................................. 55
    Conflict resolution .................................................................. 57
  Summary of communication and relational satisfaction .............. 61
  Communication and Masculinity ................................................. 62
    Communication as a mediator of masculinity and relational
    satisfaction ............................................................................. 66
  Summary of masculinity and communication behaviours .......... 67
CHAPTER SIX ................................................................................ 69
  The Present Study ...................................................................... 69
CHAPTER SEVEN .......................................................................... 75
  Study One .................................................................................. 75
    Study Aims and Hypotheses .................................................... 75
    Method ..................................................................................... 76
    Participants .............................................................................. 76
    Measures ................................................................................ 77
    Procedure ............................................................................... 81
    Results .................................................................................... 82
Data Screening................................................................. 82
Descriptive Statistics..................................................... 84
Differences in masculinity norms based on age......................... 84
Differences in relationship satisfaction based on age and
relationship type........................................................... 86
Differences in sexual satisfaction based on age and relationship
type.............................................................................. 86
Primary Analysis – Path Analysis........................................ 87
Direct effects...................................................................... 92
Indirect, mediational effects................................................ 93
Conclusion.......................................................................... 97
CHAPTER EIGHT................................................................. 98
Study Two......................................................................... 98
Study Aims and Hypotheses.................................................. 98
Method............................................................................. 99
Participants......................................................................... 99
Measures........................................................................... 100
Procedure.......................................................................... 104
Results............................................................................. 105
Data Screening.................................................................. 105
Descriptive Statistics......................................................... 106
Differences in relationship satisfaction based on age and
relationship type............................................................. 107
Differences in sexual satisfaction based on age and relationship
type.............................................................................. 109
Primary Analysis – Path Analysis ................................................. 109

Direct effects ................................................................................. 113

Indirect, mediational effects....................................................... 115

Conclusion .................................................................................... 117

CHAPTER NINE ............................................................................ 118

Discussion ..................................................................................... 118

Summary of Findings for Study One ........................ ....................... 119

Direct Effects ................................................................................. 121

Masculine norms on relationship satisfaction ......................... 121

Masculine norms on sexual satisfaction ................................. 123

Indirect, Meditational Effects ...................................................... 124

Relationship satisfaction ............................................................. 125

  Emotional control, playboy, heterosexual self-presentation, and
  relationship satisfaction ............................................................ 125

  Self-reliance and relationship satisfaction ............................. 128

Sexual satisfaction ............................................................... 130

  Playboy and sexual satisfaction ........................................... 130

  Emotional control and sexual satisfaction ........................... 132

  Heterosexual self-presentation and sexual satisfaction ....... 132

  Winning, pursuit of status, and sexual satisfaction ............ 133

  Risk-taking and sexual satisfaction ....................................... 135

Summary ................................................................. 137

Summary of Findings for Study Two ........................................ 138

Direct Effects ................................................................................. 140

  Masculine norms on relationship satisfaction ........................ 140
List of Appendices

Appendix A – Ethics Approval Letter……………………………….. 191
Appendix B – Online Questionnaire for Study One…………………. 192
Appendix C – Plain Language Statement for Study One…………… 203
Appendix D – Questionnaire for Study Two……………………… 206
Appendix E – Plain Language Statement for Study Two…………… 215
List of Tables

Table 7.1. Internal Consistencies and Scale Ranges for Current Measures for Study One………………………………………………………………………………. 81
Table 7.2. Means, Standards Deviations, and Correlations for Study One………………………………………………………………………. 85
Table 7.3. Comparisons of Means on Masculine Norms between Different Age Groups…………………………………………………………….. 86
Table 7.4. Respecification of Path Model……………………………………… 92
Table 7.5. Indirect Effects of Masculine Norms on Relationship Satisfaction……………………………………………………………………………….. 95
Table 7.6. Indirect Effects of Masculine Norms on Sexual Satisfaction……….. 96
Table 8.1. Internal Consistencies and Scale Ranges for Current Measures for Study Two……………………………………………………………... 103
Table 8.2. Means, Standards Deviations, and Correlations for Study Two………………………………………………………………………………. 108
Table 8.3. Respecification of Path Model……………………………………….. 112
Table 8.4. Indirect Effects of Masculine Norms on Relationship Satisfaction……………………………………………………………………………….. 116
Table 8.5. Indirect Effects of Masculine Norms on Sexual Satisfaction……………………………………………………………………………….. 117
List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Model for the interrelationship among men’s conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction……………………………………………………… 6

Figure 1.2. Model for the interrelationship among women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction……………….. 6

Figure 7.1. Significant direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on relationship and sexual satisfaction…………………………………………………… 91

Figure 8.1. Significant direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on relationship and sexual satisfaction…………………………………….…………....... 113

Figure 9.1. Direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on men’s relationship satisfaction…………………………………………………… 120

Figure 9.2. Direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on men’s sexual satisfaction………………………………………………………………… 121

Figure 9.3. Direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on women’s relationship satisfaction…………………………………………………… 139

Figure 9.4. Indirect effects of masculine norms on women’s sexual satisfaction…………………………………………………………………… 140
Abstract

Masculine gender role norms inform expectations regarding the values, standards, and behaviours to which men should ideally conform and consequently, exert an influence on how men function interpersonally, including within their intimate relationships. There is evidence to suggest that the extent to which men adhere to traditional masculine norms are associated with the quality of men’s and their female partners’ romantic relationships; however, this area of inquiry remains largely unexplored. Few empirical studies have examined how masculine norms feature in the sexual relationship, particularly in regard to female partners’ experiences. Although masculinity is a multidimensional construct, studies have generally utilised a global score of masculinity or examined a narrow range of norms, which limits our understanding of the specific dimensions of the masculine gender role that are most salient to men and their female partners’ relationship and sexual well-being. Furthermore, the potential interpersonal processes by which masculine norm conformity may be associated with relational factors has received limited empirical attention. Therefore, the current thesis investigated the extent to which men’s conformity to a broad range of traditional masculine norms were associated with men and their female partners’ relationship and sexual satisfaction, as well as the mediating effects of self-disclosure patterns and conflict resolution styles. Study One examined these prospective relationships with a sample of 223 adult males in dating, cohabitating, and married heterosexual relationships. Participants completed an online, anonymous questionnaire evaluating their conformity to masculine norms, self-disclosure patterns, use of conflict resolution tactics, relationship
and sexual satisfaction. Path analysis revealed that the masculine norm of playboy had a negative direct and indirect effect on relationship and sexual satisfaction. The norms of playboy, emotional control and heterosexual self-presentation had a negative indirect effect on relationship satisfaction through general self-disclosure, while the norm of self-reliance was indirectly related to relationship satisfaction through compliance. The norms of emotional control, playboy, heterosexual self-presentation, status, and winning had a negative indirect effect on sexual satisfaction through various constructive communication behaviours, whereas risk-taking had a positive indirect effect on sexual satisfaction through positive problem solving. In Study Two, 300 women in dating, cohabitating, and married heterosexual relationships completed an online, anonymous questionnaire examining women’s perceptions of their male partners’ masculine norm conformity, their perception of their male partners’ self-disclosure patterns and use of conflict resolution tactics, and women’s own relationship and sexual satisfaction. Results demonstrated that the norms of winning and power over women had a negative direct effect on relationship satisfaction. The norms of emotional control, playboy, and self-reliance had a negative indirect association with relationship and sexual satisfaction through different constructive communication behaviours. The norms of power over women and dominance had a negative direct association with relationship satisfaction through conflict engagement, while the norm of risk-taking had a positive indirect effect on relationship satisfaction through conflict engagement. Collectively, these two studies highlight the importance of incorporating a gender-sensitive approach to therapy by considering the role of men’s personal constructions.
of masculinity, from both partners’ perspectives, in the assessment and
treatment of problems with relationship or sexual satisfaction. Furthermore,
the present results emphasise the utility of modifying unhealthy
communication and conflict resolution behaviours among men who adhere to
traditional masculine norms when addressing the quality of the romantic or
sexual relationship. Exploring how gender roles are relevant to men’s and
women’s relationship and sexual well-being is an area that warrants further
attention in future research.
Chapter 1

The Role of Masculine Norms in Men’s and Women’s Relational Satisfaction

The quality of individuals’ relationships has important implications for one’s psychological and physical health. Those with satisfying romantic and sexual relationships reportedly experience better psychological well-being, physical health, and longevity (Celenk, van de Vijver, & Goodwin, 2011; Wade & Coughlin, 2012). As such, researchers have long been interested in understanding possible determinants of and impediments to relational satisfaction, with studies repeatedly demonstrating that factors such as communication behaviours, personality traits, and attachment styles are important correlates. Despite significant progress in this field, limited empirical attention has been given to the impact of gender role on relationships. Gender role is defined as the culturally and socially constructed norms, standards, and expectations that are considered acceptable for men and women (Mahalik et al., 2003; World Health Organisation, 2014).

Gender role norms are an organising principle in people’s lives and subsequently, guide and constrain the way in which individuals behave, experience, and respond to their intimate relationships (Addis, 2008; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Levant et al, 2003). Therefore, exploring gender-related predictors of relational satisfaction would seem an important area of inquiry. Indeed, scholars have argued for an increased focus on how socialised gender roles are related to the quality of individuals’ relationships (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004; Wade & Coughlin, 2011). The masculine gender role is of particular interest given the
demonstrated association between traditional masculinity and deleterious outcomes, including poorer psychological health, for both men and their female partners (Levant & Richmond, 2007; O’Neil, 2008; Parent & Moradi, 2011; Windle & Smith, 2009). As such, the current thesis is interested in masculine gender role norms. As gender role norms are culturally specific and may vary according to sexual orientation (Levant, 2011; Wade & Donis, 2007), it is important to highlight that the focus of this thesis is on how masculinity is enacted by heterosexual men within Western cultures.

In order to effectively research the role of masculine gender in men and women’s relational lives, a clear understanding about the way in which gender can be conceptualised is firstly needed (Addis & Cohane, 2005). To date, studies within the relationship and sexual literature have commonly conceptualised “gender” as biological sex and, hence, have adopted a sex differences approach to understanding men’s and women’s interpersonal behaviours and relational experiences (Faulkner, et al., 2005; Mickelson, Claffey, & Williams, 2006; Vanwesenbeeck, 2009). As such, men’s and women’s experiences of their relationships and sexuality are understood by comparing and identifying average differences between the two sexes (Addis, 2008; Kilmartin, 2010). Although such research is necessary and may provide useful information, by primarily focusing on sex differences, men and women are treated as homogeneous groups with the members of each group being seen to share uniform behaviours, attitudes, and interests (Addis, 2008; Gerson, 1987). Subsequently, their relational behaviours and experiences are reduced to a set of generalisations (Wong & Rochlen, 2005). Treating gender from this perspective can severely limit an understanding of within-group
differences among men and women, and therefore, leaves many questions unanswered (Addis, 2008). For example, why do some men withdrawal during conflict and others do not, and how do these differences contribute to the quality of their relationships? As masculine gender roles are thought to shape how men behave in and experience their relationships, such individual variability may be associated with one’s level of adherence to gender role norms. Therefore, by focusing on the socially constructed nature of masculine gender role as an organising framework, researchers can meaningfully explore potential individual differences in how gender may contribute to the quality of men’s and women’s relationships, rather than simply comparing men and women on relational variables of interest.

The Gender Role Strain (GRS) Paradigm, developed by Pleck (1981, 1995), provides a framework for understanding the relationship between masculine gender role norms and the quality of men’s and women’s relationships (Burn & Ward, 2005). According to this model, masculinity is a multidimensional construct comprised of different norms that reflect the prevailing cultural and socially defined standards and expectations about what it means to be a man. However, Pleck (1981, 1995) argued that masculine norms are often contradictory, inconsistent, and restrictive. As such, men’s rigid adherence to masculine roles can have negative outcomes on men themselves and those close to them, such as their female partner. Indeed, particular norms that some men internalise and adhere to, such as emotional stoicism, can lead to problems for men and their female partners in intimate relationships (e.g., Burn & Ward, 2005; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004; Windle & Smith, 2009).
Consistent with GRS theory, the small body of research that has examined masculine gender roles in the context of men’s relational experiences, has found that men who adhere to greater levels of traditional masculinity experience less satisfying romantic and sexual relationships (Burn & Ward, 2005; Carpenter, Nathanson, & Kim, 2009; Wade & Coughlin, 2011). Surprisingly, however, fewer studies have examined how men’s masculine roles are associated with female partners’ relational experiences (Breiding, Windle, & Smith, 2008; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Existing research has observed that women’s perception of their male partners’ masculinity adherence is negatively associated with women’s own relationship satisfaction (Burn & Ward, 2005; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2006); however, no identified studies to date have investigated how women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms may contribute to their sexual satisfaction. Given that the socialised masculine role is thought to have implications for both men and women, it is important to also examine women’s experiences of their partners’ masculinity and how it may contribute to their relationships.

Furthermore, a large proportion of previous research has used an overall score of adherence to masculine norms (e.g., McGraw, 2001; Wade & Donis, 2007). As masculinity is considered to be multidimensional in nature, distinct norms may be differentially related to men and their female partners’ relational satisfaction. However, there is a dearth of literature that has investigated these relationships. Moreover, examining the mechanisms by which adherence to masculine norms may be linked to relational outcomes is an important, yet often neglected factor, in understanding the role of
masculine norms in men’s and women’s relational lives. Given that gender roles are thought to prescribe and proscribe behaviour, it could be expected that masculine gender roles would manifest in men’s interpersonal behaviour, such as communication and conflict resolution styles. Communication patterns are well-established predictors of relationship and sexual satisfaction (Caughlin, 2002; Hendrick, 2004; MacNeil & Byers, 2009), and therefore the extent to which masculine norm adherence influences men’s communication behaviours could have implications for the quality of men and their female partners’ relationships.

This thesis aims to clarify the extent to which heterosexual men’s conformity to a broad range of masculine norms may be associated with heterosexual men and their female partners’ relationship and sexual satisfaction. It will further investigate the potential mediating influences of men’s self-disclosure patterns and conflict resolution strategies. Specifically, two studies will be conducted. The first study will examine the interrelationship among men’s conformity to masculine norms and men’s communication behaviours on their relationship and sexual satisfaction. The second study is designed to empirically investigate Pleck’s (1981, 1995) proposition that men’s masculine role conformity is associated with problems for those close to men, in this case their female partners. As such, the interrelationship between women’s perceptions of both their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction will be examined. For both studies a path model will be utilised to examine the direct and indirect effects of masculine norm conformity and communication behaviours on relationship and sexual
satisfaction. Please see Figure 1.1 for a visual illustration of the proposed model for men and Figure 1.2 for women.

**Figure 1.1.** Model for the interrelationship among men’s conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction.

**Figure 1.2.** Model for the interrelationship among women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction.
Overview of Chapters

Chapter Two

Chapter Two reviews the theoretical frameworks that have guided gender related research and how these have contributed to the emergence of contemporary models of masculinity based on the socially constructed nature of the masculine role, namely the Gender Role Strain Paradigm. The chapter discusses the nature of the Gender Role Strain Paradigm and measures of masculinity that are aligned with such contemporary theories. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of research examining the role of masculinity in psychological outcomes for men and women.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three reviews the empirical evidence for the association between adherence to masculine norms and heterosexual men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. The chapter will also highlight the gaps in the literature that have contributed to the development of the present study.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four explores the findings of studies that have examined how masculine norms may be related to the relationship and sexual satisfaction of female partners of heterosexual men. Specific areas requiring further research will also be emphasised and discussed.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five discusses communication related variables that potentially may mediate the association between men’s masculine norm conformity and relational satisfaction. Specifically, the chapter reviews studies that have investigated how communication and conflict resolution
patterns are related to relationship and sexual satisfaction, and also masculinity.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six presents a summary of the literature review and rationale for further exploring the role of conformity to masculine norms in men’s and female partners’ relationship and sexual satisfaction, and the possible mechanisms by which these variables are related. The goals of Study One, which specifically investigates men’s experiences, and Study Two that examines women’s experiences, will also be provided.

Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven outlines the aims and hypotheses of Study One. It describes the methodology by which the identified hypotheses will be investigated and includes a description of the participants, materials and methodological procedure. The chapter also presents the results of the study, including data screening, descriptive statistics and the primary analysis conducted to assess the hypotheses.

Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight provides an outline of the aims and hypotheses of Study Two. The methodology including an overview of the participants, materials and procedure used to recruit participants is described. The results of the study are presented including a description of the data screening process, descriptive statistical analyses, and primary analysis used to examine the hypotheses.

Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine examines the key findings of Study One and Study Two in the context of previous research findings. An analysis of the clinical and
theoretical implications of the corresponding integrated results across the two studies is provided. Limitations and recommendations for future research are also discussed.
Chapter Two

Brief Overview of the Concept of Masculinity

Male Sex Role Identity Theory

From the 1930s to the 1970s research on men and masculinity was guided by the Male Sex Role Identity paradigm (MSRI). Based on an essentialist perspective, the MSRI paradigm proposed that individuals have an inherent psychological need to acquire a traditional sex role necessary for normal psychological and personality development (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1981). Sex role identity was conceptualised in terms of a single personality trait of masculinity or femininity that existed at opposite ends of the same continuum (Kimmel, 1996; Pleck, 1981; Smiler, 2004). Masculinity was associated with specific traits such as technical mastery, physical strength and rational thinking. These traits were deemed innate to men and thereby, historically and culturally invariant (Pleck, 1981; Smiler, 2004). Those males who successfully developed stereotypical masculine characteristics were considered well adjusted, whereas failure to embrace the appropriate sex role identity was seen as a predictor of poor adjustment, including homosexuality, negative attitudes toward women, delinquency, and violence (Kimmel 1996; Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1981). However, empirical evidence did not support these predicted relationships (Kimmel, 1996; Smiler, 2004). Identification with the same-sex parent was a key factor in acquiring sex typed characteristics, and therefore males who lacked an appropriate role model were predicted to have feminine identities (Kimmel, 1996). Contrary to expectations, studies found such males often had higher masculine scores than those considered to have the appropriate influences (Kimmel, 1996).
Androgyny Theory

The women’s liberation movement of the 1960s/70s challenged the legitimacy of sex-role identity theories and prompted a serious re-evaluation of restrictive gender roles (Bem & Lenney, 1976; Kimmel, 1987). In a landmark paper, Constantinople (1973) extensively reviewed the empirical literature, and suggested that the available research did not support masculinity and femininity as a bipolar or unidimensional construct. Gender roles were subsequently reconceptualised as two distinct independent dimensions as reflected by Bem’s (1974) theory of androgyny. This was based on the trait perspective, which proposed that gender orientation was rooted in actual differences between socially desirable characteristics of men and women (Thompson & Pleck, 1995). Masculinity was commonly associated with traits of an instrumental orientation, such as ambition, responsibility and assertiveness, whereas femininity was dominated by expressive traits including affiliation, empathy and emotional nurturance (Baucom, 1980; Bem, 1974). According to Bem (1974), individuals could possess both masculine and feminine stereotyped traits rather than being restricted to one or the other. She asserted that highly sex-typed individuals would be inhibited by stereotypical traits, a view that challenged the traditional assumption that sex-typed persons were psychologically better adjusted. An androgynous individual, however, could have expressive and instrumental capabilities, which would enable more flexible and effective use of behaviours across situations, and subsequently, healthier psychological adjustment.

This conceptual shift in gender role orientation was accompanied by the development of scales that operationalised the concepts of masculinity,
femininity and androgyny, the most popular being the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI, Bem, 1974) and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ, Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Empirical interest in the correlates of gender role orientation flourished, but studies yielded unexpected results. Research repeatedly demonstrated that androgyny and masculinity were more strongly positively associated than femininity with a range of specific and global measures of psychological adjustment, while no significant differences in adjustment between masculinity and androgyny were found (Adams & Sherer, 1985; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991 Taylor & Hall, 1982). Other studies, however, reported that those with higher levels of masculine traits were significantly better psychologically adjusted than those males and females with androgynous traits (e.g., Adams & Sherer, 1985). In essence, the empirical evidence suggested that masculinity was associated with healthier psychological functioning.

Although some aspects of androgyny theory represented a conceptual shift from the MSRI paradigm by positioning masculinity and femininity as independent dimensions and emphasising the negative implications of possessing sex-typed traits, certain aspects of androgyny were largely criticised for being consistent with the earlier identity theory (Pleck, 1981; Smiler, 2004). Overall, androgyny research positioned masculinity as a superior standard for human behaviour and psychological health, which contradicted the underlying assumptions of androgyny. Factor analytical studies highlighted methodological concerns, including an unreliable classification of traits that reflected factors associated with personality rather than gender roles (Adams & Sherer, 1985; Pedhazur & Tetenbaum, 1979).
Men who possessed certain personality traits were considered to “have” masculinity, meaning it resided within the individual. As such, the androgynous conception was deemed essentialist in nature, and therefore consistent with the MSRI perspective (Pedhazur & Tetenbaum, 1979; Pleck, 1981; Smiler, 2004; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). Measures were further criticised for not tapping the negative aspects of masculinity and focusing predominantly on highly desirable traits; in contrast, feminine items combined both negative and positive behaviours (Pedhazur & Tetenbaum, 1979; Taylor & Hall, 1982). In sum, the MSRI paradigm and androgyny theory inadequately explained how gender was experienced and its effect on psychological outcomes. However, certain aspects of androgyny represented a departure from the MSRI perspective, which facilitated the emergence of new and contemporary theories (Pleck, 1981).

**Gender Role Strain Paradigm**

In response to the women’s movement and subsequent radical revision of scholarship on gender, masculinity studies emerged as an area of inquiry devoted to examining men’s experiences as men, rather than as the idealised, normative referent against which both men and women were historically assessed (Cochran, 2010; Kimmel, 1987; Smiler, 2004). Through a focused critique on men’s socialisation and developmental experiences, masculinity became recognised as an ambiguous, complex and problematic construct that could also be oppressive and destructive for men, despite men remaining privileged relative to women (Kimmel, 1987; Levant, 1997a; Pollack & Levant, 1998; Segal, 2007). As various theories about masculinity emerged, Pleck (1981, 1995) developed the Gender Role Strain (GRS) paradigm as a
way to conceptualise and integrate these ideas into a systematic theoretical framework, which is central to understanding the psychology of men and masculinity.

The Gender Role Strain paradigm provides a basis for which the relationship between masculinity and relational outcomes may be understood. Pleck’s (1981, 1995) framework offered an alternative to the essentialist nature of the gender role identity and androgyny paradigms by treating masculinity as socially constructed and therefore varies across cultures, time, and place (Levant, 2011). From this perspective, masculine gender roles are determined by the prevailing cultural and socially defined standards and expectations taught to the individual through socialisation by parents, teachers, peers, media, and the community (Levant 2011; Levant & Richmond, 2007). Through this process males internalise cultural beliefs and attitudes about the values, standards and behaviours to which men should ideally conform, conceptualised in the GRS paradigm as masculinity ideology (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1995; Thompson & Pleck, 1995).

Although there is a diverse range of ideologies that differ for men according to their social class, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and life stage, within this diversity there exists a constellation of standards and expectations that prevail in the Western world (e.g., the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom), commonly referred to as traditional masculinity ideology (Levant 2011; Pleck, 1995; Levant & Richmond, 2007). A range of norms are reflective of traditional masculinity ideology, including being self-reliant, competitive, achievement oriented, status seeking, and willing to take risks (Levant, 1997a; Richmond et al., 2012). At the root of
male socialisation is the avoidance of any behaviour or activity that may be perceived as feminine (e.g., help-seeking, emotional support or connection, compromise, empathic understanding) even when these characteristics may serve a necessary and functional purpose (Good, Thomson, & Brathwaite, 2005; Lease et al., 2010; Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998; Rochlen, 2000).

Men are often taught to conceal sensitive or vulnerable emotions while, paradoxically, they are encouraged to express anger and be aggressive, dominant and physically tough (Good et al., 2005; Pollack & Levant, 1998; Richmond et al., 2012). Furthermore, displays of vulnerability or femininity may be perceived as homosexual, and subsequently, men may be socialised toward fear and devaluation of homosexuality. As Western culture often maintains that sexuality and gender are intertwined, homophobia can further serve the purpose of proving one’s heterosexuality (Anderson & McGuire, 2010). Traditional socialisation processes may further encourage men to validate their masculinity by exercising power and control over women at both social and personal levels (Mahalik & Morrison, 2006).

The cultural messages men receive about being a “real man” also often include many prescriptions about appropriate sexual expression and behaviour (Burns, Hough, Boyd, & Hill, 2009; Kilmartin, 2010). Social forces can shape beliefs and attitudes toward sexual conquest and promiscuity, sexual competence, and sexual interactions that are disconnected from any emotional or relational attachment (Levant, 1997b). Sexuality is further embedded in the wider context of masculinity ideology, such that men may view sexuality as one arena in which they can satisfy traditional gendered expectations of
achievement, status, and competitiveness amongst others (Kilmartin, 2010; Kimmel, 1987).

Pleck (1981, 1995) posited that normative standards of masculinity are restrictive and lead to gender role strain as a result of men experiencing difficulty integrating and maintaining the expectations prescribed of them. He proposed three types of strain, namely, discrepancy, trauma and dysfunction strain. Discrepancy strain occurs when men experience difficulty or deviate from fulfilling internalised cultural beliefs and standards of masculinity. This discrepancy can have negative implications for one’s psychological well-being as well as lead to social condemnation (Pleck, 1995). Trauma strain results from traumas inherent in the gender socialisation process that can have long term-negative consequences on the men’s emotional experiences (Pleck, 1995). For example, the socialisation process encourages men to avoid emotional expression and vulnerability, which can lead to difficulties with intimacy and detachment from feelings as adults (Pleck, 1995; Pollack, 1995). Lastly, dysfunction strain implies that conforming to certain requirements of the masculine gender role can be dysfunctional, as many of the prescribed standards and behaviours of masculinity, such as dominance and emotional stoicim, can have negative outcomes on men themselves and those close to them, including their spouse or partner. For example, in an extensive review of the problems that result from dysfunction strain, Brooks and Silverstein (1995) asserted that significant health and social issues are a by-product of the masculine gender role. They highlighted that relationship dysfunctions, including inadequate emotional partnering, non-nurturing fathering and non-
participative household partnering, result from rigid adherence to traditional masculine ideologies.

Pleck (1985, 1991) further proposed that masculine gender roles are inconsistent and contradictory as a result of changes in cultural, historical, and social contexts. World War II marked the movement of women from domestic labour to the public workforce, while the women’s liberation movement lead to a dramatic increase of women’s participation in the public domain, such as the workforce and higher education, along with increased control over fertility (Kimmel, 1987). Such social changes have impacted the definition of masculinity and a man’s role within a familial and relational context (Kimmel, 1987). More recently, legislative changes in regard to paternity leave across the Western world have, in some respects, liberated men and broadened masculine scripts in the realms of work and family life. Historically, the role of breadwinner and financial provider was the ultimate demonstration of a man’s masculinity and inextricably bound together in his sense of self. Breadwinning has justified men’s lack of nurturance, emotional support, and involvement in home duties, which are considered feminine, while success as a husband or partner, and therefore a male, has been associated with being a successful provider (Cohen & Durst, 1998; Silverstein, Auерbach, & Levant, 2002). However, in light of societal changes, some women no longer feel the same degree of dependency on their male partner and expect egalitarian relationships, characterised by their partner demonstrating greater competence in physical and emotional availability, nurturance and intimacy (Maurer & Pleck, 2006; Silverstein et al., 2002). Subsequently, men have been presented with expectations that often contradict and challenge traditional masculine
identities. Indeed, despite the traditional male socialisation process, there is evidence to suggest that men are taking the initiative to reconstruct and expand traditional versions of masculinity by actively creating new definitions that combine elements of the traditional role, such as financial provider, with more egalitarian and contemporary values (Jones & Heesacker, 2012; Silverstein et al., 2002). For example, some men have assumed greater involvement in household and child-care tasks, albeit to around a third of total domestic duties (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009; Greenstein, 2009), and prioritising quality time with their partner and families (Marsiglio & Pleck, 2005). Other studies have revealed that men have greater emotional awareness and are more comfortable emotionally connecting to their partners (Silverstein et al., 2002), and integrating sexuality with love and relational connectedness (Carpenter et al., 2009; Levant, 1997b). Furthermore, in a culture of declining homophobia, for some men their construction of masculinity is not predicated on homophobic sentiment, necessary to protect one’s heterosexuality, but rather include the expression of emotional intimacy and physical affection between men, and acceptance of different sexual orientations (Anderson & McGuire, 2010).

Despite changing expectations in men’s lives, however, traditional masculinity ideology continues to prevail in the wider society, such that certain characteristics, including self-reliance, power and competitiveness, and avoiding feminine behaviours, are held up as desirable for men (Doucet, 2004; Maurer & Pleck, 2006; Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010). These contradictory societal messages about masculine roles highlight the
unique challenges associated with masculine role socialisation in the context of changing cultural expectations (Good et al., 2005).

One of the central tenets of the GRS paradigm is that masculinity is considered a multidimensional construct and the extent to which men internalise cultural norms about masculinity varies across and within different groups of men in any given culture (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1995). Although the socialisation process teaches men societal expectations of masculinity, whether a man chooses to conform to those normative messages often depends on what constitutes masculinity in one’s own life (Mahalik et al., 2003). However, often an individual’s manliness will be judged according to traditional cultural expectations and violations of these can render men vulnerable to ridicule and shame (Good et al., 2005; Kimmel, 1987; Richmond et al., 2012). Indeed, research has shown that individuals who deviate from gender role norms are more likely to be evaluated negatively and experience group rejection compared to those of a similar background who are gender conforming (Mahalik, Talmadge, Locke, & Scott, 2005; Moss-Racusin, et al., 2010). Furthermore, compared to women, men face greater pressure to conform to gender role norms and are evaluated more harshly when they are nonconforming (Mahalik, et al., 2005; Richmond & Levant, 2003).

The GRS paradigm further argues that biological differences between the sexes do not constitute masculinity (or femininity) as a result of the socially constructed nature of gender (Levant, 2011). Indeed, scholars have asserted that differences between the sexes on a number of psychological
variables are minimal and that “within-gender variability is typically greater than between-gender variability” (Levant, 2011, p. 767).

**Measures of Masculinity**

Various instruments have been designed to measure masculinity, which are consistent with the GRS paradigm. For example, some scales have been developed to assess the conflict or stress associated with adopting traditional masculine norms. O’Neil (1986) developed The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS), which measures patterns of behaviour associated with adherence to restrictive masculine gender roles. O’Neil (2008) defined masculine gender role conflict as a “psychological state in which socialised gender roles have negative consequences for the person or others” (p. 362). The scale measures four patterns: (a) Success, Power and Competition; (b) Restrictive Emotionality; (c) Restrictive Affectionate Behaviour Between Men; and (d) Conflict Between Work and Family Relations. The Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRS Scale; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) assesses the extent to which men cognitively appraise gender role related situations as stressful. The scale is comprised of five dimensions: (a) Physical Inadequacy; (b) Emotional Inexpressiveness; (c) Subordination to Women; (d) Intellectual Inferiority; and (e) Performance Failure.

Additionally, a number of measures have been designed to assess the level of adherence to a range of norms that characterise traditional masculinity ideology (Parent & Moradi, 2011; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). For example, the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS; Brannon & Juni, 1984) defined four patterns of masculinity ideology: (a) avoid appearing feminine and conceal emotions (no sissy stuff); (b) play the role of breadwinner and strive for
success and respect (the big wheel); (c) appear both tough and confident (the sturdy oak); and (d) seek violence and adventure (give ‘em hell).

Thompson and Pleck (1986) factor analysed the BMS and reduced the number of basic masculinity dimensions to three (a) toughness; (b) success-status (the expectation of career success); and (c) anti-femininity (avoidance of stereotypical feminine behaviours or occupations) as reflected in their Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS).

The Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI; Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, & Cozza, 1992) theorised seven normative standards: (a) avoidance of femininity; (b) restrictive emotionality; (c) toughness and aggression; (d) self-reliance; (d) emphasis on achievement and status; (e) non-relational attitudes toward sex; and (f) homophobia. The scale also included a 12-item subscale measuring non-traditional attitudes toward masculinity. However, in a revised version of the MRNI (MRNI-R; Levant, Rankin, Williams, Hasan, & Smalley, 2010) the non-traditional attitudes subscale was omitted as a result of low internal reliability often being reported in studies utilising the MRNI.

Mahalik and colleagues (2003) developed the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI) to measure individual variability in the level of conformity to a broad range of socially constructed and empirically grounded norms. Through a rigorous and extensive scale development process eleven norms emerged, including winning, emotional control, risk-taking, violence, playboy, self-reliance, primacy of work, power over women, dominance, pursuit of status, and disdain for homosexuals, which was later termed heterosexual self-presentation by Parent and Moradi (2009). The CMNI reflects the multidimensional nature of masculinity by the inclusion of
multiple masculine norms beyond those represented in other measures of masculinity ideology (Parent & Moradi, 2009). The CMNI also differs from measures that assess the conflict or stress associated with adherence to traditional masculinity (e.g., GRCS) by focusing on personal conformity or non-conformity to various norms (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2009). The CMNI is intended as a research and clinical tool for examining men’s problems, including how masculinity may be related to relationship issues (Burn & Ward, 2005; Mahalik et al., 2005). Furthermore, Mahalik et al. (2003) proposed that the extent to which an individual chooses to conform or not conform to various norms may produce positive psychological benefits or may be associated with stressors. For example, conforming to restrictive emotionality may result in emotional detachment from the family, but can be useful in dealing with problems and staying calm during a crisis (Mahalik et al., 2005; Silverstein et al., 2002). As such, the CMNI offers the benefit of exploring the potential adaptive or maladaptive correlates of men’s level of conformity to a range of masculine norms (Parent & Moradi, 2011).

**Research on Masculinity and Psychological Outcomes**

During the past thirty years, a substantial body of empirical research has established a connection between traditional masculinity norms and psychological issues for men. Specifically, studies have indicated that higher levels of adherence to masculine gender roles are related to higher levels of depression and anxiety (e.g., Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Liu, Rochlen, & Mohr, 2005; Syzdek & Addis, 2010; Wong, Owen, & Shea, 2012), increased risk of suicide (e.g., Burns & Mahalik, 2011; Houle, Mishara, & Chagnon, 2008), lower self-esteem (e.g., Mahalik, Locke, Theodore, Cournoyer, &...
Lloyd, 2001; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Shek & McEwen, 2012), and higher rates of alcohol abuse and alcohol related problems (e.g., Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Iwamoto, Corbin, Lejuez, & MacPherson, 2014; Uy, Massoth, & Gottdiener, 2014). Additionally, a link between traditional masculinity adherence and a reluctance to seek psychological help has been well evidenced in the empirical literature (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; O’Neil, 2008; Vogel, Heimerding-Slavens, Hammer, & Hubbard, 2011).

More recently, there has been increased interest in positive psychological correlates of masculine norms (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013; Parent & Moradi, 2011). Conformity to the masculine norm of winning has been associated with increased self-acceptance (Liu & Iwamoto, 2007) and using exercise as a way to cope with depressive symptoms (Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006). Hammer and Good (2010) found that the masculine norms of risk taking, dominance, primacy of work, and pursuit of status were predictive of psychological well-being factors, including personal courage, autonomy, endurance, and resilience. Consistent with Mahalik et al.’s (2003) proposition, collectively, these studies demonstrate the costs and benefits associated with conformity to masculine norms.

Despite significant progress in research on men and masculinity, comparatively less empirical attention has been given to the role of masculine gender norms in men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. Some studies have demonstrated a connection between endorsement of traditional masculine roles and difficulties with intimacy (e.g., Cournoyer & Mahlik, 1995; Mahalik et al., 2001) and poorer marital and relationship quality (Burn & Ward, 2005; Campbell & Snow, 1992). However, how masculinity is related to men’s
relationship and sexual satisfaction remains largely unexplored, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Furthermore, limited research has empirically examined Pleck’s (1981, 1995) argument that adherence to traditional masculine standards can have negative implications for those close to men, such as their partner or spouse. Indeed, research has investigated the link between masculinity and men’s negative attitudes towards women, with findings indicating that men who endorse greater levels of traditional beliefs about the masculine role report greater tolerance of sexual harassment (e.g., Kearney, Rochlen, & King, 2004), sexually aggressive behaviours (e.g., Locke & Mahalik, 2005; Rando, Rogers & Brittan-Powell, 1998), and tend to hold attitudes and beliefs supportive of date rape (Truman, Tokar, & Fischer, 1996), and rape myth acceptance (e.g., Davis & Liddell, 2002; Rando et al., 1998; Thompson & Cracco, 2008). Although these studies do not directly assess women’s experiences, such harmful behaviours and attitudes seem logically related to the quality of women’s lives.

Fewer studies have examined women’s experiences of their male partners’ masculinity and the effect it may have on their psychological and relationship well-being (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004; Windle & Smith, 2009). The small amount of empirical research that has been conducted demonstrates that men’s adherence to masculinity contributes to women’s greater levels of depression and anxiety, and lower relationship satisfaction (e.g., Breiding, 2004; Breiding, Windle, & Smith, 2008; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). These findings provide support for Pleck’s (1981, 1995) argument; however, further research is needed to clarify these findings and improve our understanding of
how masculine gender roles may contribute to the experiences of others. As such, the current study is designed to further explore how masculinity ideology is related to women’s relational outcomes, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.
Chapter Three

Masculinity and Men’s Relational Satisfaction

Masculinity and Relationship Satisfaction

Changing societal expectations of masculinity have naturally accompanied shifting constructions of men’s relationships (Shay & Maltas, 1998; Silverstein et al., 2002). However, early socialisation practices toward emotional control, self-sufficiency, and dominance, poorly equip some men with the skills necessary for developing healthy intimate relationships, such as emotional self-disclosure, acknowledgment of dependence, and empathy (Kilmartin, 2007; Shay & Maltas, 1998). Despite the increasing acceptance of more flexible masculine roles, many men feel caught between traditional masculine standards and contemporary expectations regarding relationship behaviours as well as their own intimacy needs (Kilmartin, 2010; Levant, 2011; Shay & Maltas, 1998). As such, some men continue to endorse aspects of the traditional masculine role that may hamper the use of skills that could enable them to develop truly satisfying and intimate relationships (Shay & Maltas, 1998).

Over the past 20 years a small body of research has investigated the connection between traditional masculinity and relationship quality, with findings supporting the notion that adherence to traditional masculinity ideology is related to poorer relational outcomes, as predicted by Pleck’s (1995) Gender Role Strain paradigm. Burn and Ward (2005) conducted the only located published study on the association between relationship satisfaction and endorsement of a range of individual masculine norms as measured by the CMNI. They hypothesised that conformity to each of the
individual norms would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, except for heterosexual self-presentation for which they did not predict a direction. The sample comprised of 170 male undergraduate university students who were either currently in, or had previously been in a romantic relationship. Bivariate correlations analysis revealed that men’s relationship satisfaction was negatively associated with the norms of playboy, risk-taking, dominance, violence, and power over women. These findings suggest that men who subscribed more to non-relational sex and desire for multiple partners (playboy), engage more in high risk behaviours (risk taking), prefer to have personal control over situations (dominance), were more likely to use physical force (violence), and view women as subservient to men (power over women), experienced less satisfying relationships. Multiple regression analysis was then performed to determine the unique variance each of the individual norms explained in this relationship. Results demonstrated that the eleven subscales collectively explained 26% of the variance in men’s relationship satisfaction. However, playboy was the only subscale that contributed a significant unique portion of the variance when controlling for all other norms. A major strength of this study was the evaluation of men’s experiences across a range of norms, which elucidated the particular aspects of masculinity most salient to these men’s relationships.

In formulating their hypotheses, Burn and Ward (2005) contended that conformity to masculine norms would be associated with decreased relationship satisfaction because adherence to traditional norms would compromise the use of effective conflict resolution and communication behaviours necessary for the maintenance of satisfying relationships. This
suggests that communication and conflict tactics may be mechanisms through which masculine norms are associated with relationship quality. However, Burn and Ward (2005) did not investigate this possibility, but such relationships are worthy of future investigation to understand the potential processes that may explain the association between masculinity norms and relationship satisfaction. A further limitation involved the use of a university-aged sample consisting primarily of individuals in dating situations, which reduces the ability to generalise the findings to those in long term cohabitating relationships. The effect of gender roles on relationship functioning may vary depending on the nature and stage of the relationship. Therefore, further research is needed to assess whether these results would be replicated in other populations. An additional problematic feature of the study was the use of participants who were not necessarily in a current relationship, which therefore, necessitated participant’s retrospective reporting of their relationship experiences. Results may have been distorted by potential bias in participant responses, an issue inherent in retrospective reporting. Future research should address such limitations by examining the variables in question within the context of current relationships.

Using a shortened version of the CMNI scale, Rochlen, McKelley, Suizzo, and Scaringi (2008) explored stay-at-home-fathers’ experiences of their masculinity and whether it was a predictor of relationship satisfaction in a sample of 213 primarily married men with a mean age of 37 years (SD=4.80). They found stay-at-home-fathers conformed significantly less to traditional masculine norms as compared to a sample of fathers in the paid labour force (who were recruited for a separate study). In comparison to the
sample of men from Burn and Ward’s (2005) research study, the men in this study also reported significantly higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Based on multiple regression analyses, results showed that masculinity was not a predictor of stay-at-home-fathers’ relationship satisfaction, which varied from the findings of Burn and Ward (2005), who reported a significant result. These findings may indicate that choosing a traditionally female role and adhering less to traditional masculine norms has no bearing on these men’s relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the sample was comprised of older men in cohabitating relationships, and hence was a different population to Burn and Ward’s (2005) study. However, these results may have been confounded by the use of a shortened version of the CMNI scale, which provides an overall score of masculinity rather than exploring the implications of conformity to a broad range of individual masculine role norms and beliefs. As masculinity is considered to be a multidimensional construct, the use of the 11-subscale version of the CMNI and an evaluation of individual norms may produce a more comprehensive understanding of which specific aspects of masculinity are most important to men’s relationship satisfaction.

In a sample of 90 heterosexual cohabitating or married couples, McGraw (2001) investigated male partners’ endorsement of masculine ideologies, as measured by the MRNI, and how it related to satisfaction within the relationship. The mean age of the men in this sample was 42 years (SD=13). The results showed that men’s relationship satisfaction was negatively correlated with their adherence to traditional masculine ideology. However, a global score of masculinity was used to examine this relationship rather than investigating the impact of specific masculine ideologies. In order
to comprehensively understand the role of masculinity in relationships, an understanding of the specific gendered beliefs and attitudes that are relevant to men’s experiences of relationships is necessary.

Similarly, Wade and Donis (2007) used the MRNI to examine the association between men’s endorsement of both traditional and non-traditional masculine ideologies and relationship quality in a sample of 50 heterosexual men with a mean age of 20.6 years (SD=2.15). Relationship quality was assessed according to characteristics of trust, communication, empathy, genuineness, comfort with partner, engagement in activities together, agreement on important matters, and satisfaction within the relationship. After controlling for age and employment/student status, they found that men who endorsed higher levels of traditional masculinity reported lower levels of relationship quality; however, adherence to non-traditional attitudes toward masculinity was not found to significantly correlate with relationship quality. Interestingly though, based on hierarchical regression analyses, non-traditional masculinity was a significant positive predictor of relationship quality, whereas traditional masculinity was not found to be a significant predictor. This finding suggested that men who violate traditional notions of masculinity experience higher quality relationships. However, the non-traditional masculinity subscale in this study yielded low internal reliability (α=.59), which is less than what is generally considered an “acceptable” level (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Furthermore, a total scale score for traditional masculinity was used rather than sub-scale scores measuring individual norms. Therefore, the study does not provide insight into the specific aspects of the masculine role that may be associated with poorer relationship
outcomes. Additionally, 38% of the participants were not in a current relationship and therefore reported retrospectively on their last relationship. As mentioned previously, relying on retrospective self-reports can be problematic due to potential bias in participant responses.

Empirical support for the association between relationship quality and traditional and non-traditional masculine ideology has been demonstrated in samples of men in current romantic relationships who ranged in age from 20 to 80 years. Specifically, Wade and Coughlin (2012) found in a sample of 90 married, cohabitating, and dating men that those who adopted traditional masculine ideologies experienced less satisfying relationships, whilst those who were more non-traditional in their masculinity reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Moreover, Coughlin and Wade (2012) investigated the role of masculinity ideology in men’s relationship quality within a sample of 47 married and non-married men earning less income than their partner, and hence not assuming the traditional role of “breadwinner”. They found that traditional masculinity was significantly negatively associated with relationship quality, while non-traditional masculinity was significantly positively associated with relationship quality. Furthermore, it was reported that the importance men placed on income disparity with their partners significantly partially mediated the relationship between both traditional and non-traditional masculinity and relationship quality. Their findings suggested that men who adhered more to traditional masculine ideologies had poorer quality relationships, in part, because of the importance they placed on the difference in incomes with their partner. Conversely, men who were more flexible in their masculinity and subscribed to non-traditional norms were less
concerned about income disparity and therefore were more likely to experience greater levels of relationship quality. Strengths of these studies were the inclusion of participants from a wide age range and different relationship types, hence improving the generalisability of the results. Furthermore, the use of meditational analyses extends previous research by exploring the mechanisms through which conformity to masculinity may relate to men’s romantic relationship experiences. However, again, these studies relied upon a global measure of traditional masculinity, rather than examining subscales that reflect the array of beliefs and attitudes pertaining to masculine ideology.

Other studies have investigated how masculine gender role conflict may relate to men’s relationship satisfaction in samples comprised of married men across different age groups ranging from young to older adults. Whilst empirical findings indicated that specific patterns of gender role conflict are significantly related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction, the results varied across studies. For example, Campbell and Snow (1992) found that men who reported higher levels of conflict between work and family responsibilities, and difficulty in expressing emotions experienced less satisfying relationships. Sharpe, Heppner, and Dixon (1995) also reported that men’s greater discomfort with emotional expression was related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction, but did not find a significant result for conflict between work and family. In contrast to these findings, Breiding (2004) found that men who were preoccupied with success, power, and competition reported being less satisfied with their relationships. Despite the variability in the above findings, these studies provide greater research and
clinical utility than studies that have relied on global indices of masculinity by elucidating the salient dimensions of masculine gender role conflict that are relevant to men’s relationships.

**Summary of masculinity and relationship satisfaction.** Whilst empirical support for the association between masculine norms and men’s relationships, for the most part, has been demonstrated within this small body of research, further research is needed to clarify these findings within larger samples of men across a broad age range and in current relationships. Furthermore, few studies examined individual dimensions of masculinity in relation to men’s relationship satisfaction, but rather utilised a global score of masculinity, which ignores its multifaceted nature and may result in a loss of important information. Therefore, research that examines masculinity as a multidimensional construct is needed in order to validate the role of masculinity norms in men’s relationship satisfaction.

**Masculinity and Sexual Satisfaction**

Sexuality is considered central to a man’s sense of masculinity and is one of the most powerful contexts in which there is pressure to fulfill traditional gendered expectations (Kilmartin, 2010; Sanchez, Crocker, and Boike, 2005). Men who conform to traditional masculine roles are thought to validate their masculinity and sense of worth through their sexual capacity, competence, and performance (Burns et al., 2009). Traditional expectations for sexual prowess, winning, and achievement demands that men are perpetually ready to perform, to be in complete control of their sexual functions, while frequently providing a sexually satisfying experience for their partner (Kilmartin, 2010). Additionally, men who endorse traditional
masculine norms may view sex in a machine-like manner and engage in unwanted sexual activity, which can detract from the relational and pleasurable aspects of sex (Kilmartin, 2010; Levant & Brooks, 1997; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012). Indeed, endorsing beliefs related to non-relational sex and promiscuous sexual activity may limit a man’s capacity to fully connect and enjoy an emotionally intimate sexual experience with his partner, leading to difficulties in achieving sexual satisfaction (Levant, 1998; Warehime & Bass, 2008).

Moreover, traditional scripts of dominance and power can dictate that men should assume a directive role in their sexual interactions and take responsibility for initiating and determining the nature of sexual activities (Sanchez, Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Good, 2012). The perceived pressure to be sexually powerful and dominant may hamper intimacy, erode confidence as a sexual partner, or even lead to engagement in harmful or risky behaviours (Kimmel, 2008; Locke & Mahalik, 2005). Indeed, researchers have found that men who endorse traditional gender roles are more likely to engage in sexually aggressive behaviour (Locke & Mahalik, 2005; Thompson & Cracco, 2008; Truman et al., 1996). Consequently, it would appear that aspects of the traditional masculine role are unlikely to foster sexually satisfying and pleasurable experiences for men; however, a paucity of empirical research has investigated the role of masculine gender norms in men’s sexual satisfaction.

The majority of the limited studies that have investigated the association between masculine gender roles and men’s sexual satisfaction have been guided by the gender-role identity framework. Hence, studies have utilized the BSRI or PAQ as measures of masculinity. For example, Daniel
and Bridges (2013) investigated the role of body image and masculinity, as measured by the PAQ, on sexual satisfaction in a sample of 153 primarily single male university students with a mean age of 21.43 (SD=4.05) years. Multiple regression analysis revealed that, contrary to hypotheses, higher levels of masculinity uniquely predicted higher levels of sexual satisfaction. In contrast, alternative studies using the PAQ to measure masculinity, have not found an association between masculine gender role and sexual satisfaction in samples of both young single (Peters, 2002) and married middle-aged adult men (Varga, 1998). Earlier studies that utilized the BSRI also reported mixed results. For example, Rosenzweig and Dailey (1989) explored the relationship between gender role orientation and sexual satisfaction in a sample of 148 married and cohabitating male university employees. Men who perceived themselves as androgynous reported significantly greater sexual satisfaction as compared to those who were assessed as sex-typed. However, Obstfeld, Lupfer and Lupfer (1985) found that higher levels of masculine traits were associated with greater levels of men’s sexual satisfaction among a sample of 60 married couples. Collectively, these mixed findings may be explained by methodological limitations. As previously discussed, the BSRI and PAQ are based on a conceptualisation of gender as being equivalent to one’s personality traits and therefore, do not adequately represent masculine gender role norms or ideologies. Although these studies provide insight into gender-related correlates of men’s sexual satisfaction, to overcome the above limitations, exploring men’s sexual experiences within the context of a more contemporary gender role framework, such as the GRS paradigm, is warranted.
Other studies have focused on examining how particular aspects of traditional gendered beliefs about sexuality relate to men’s sexual satisfaction. Carpenter, et al., (2009) found in a sample of middle-aged men that adherence to the traditional masculine role of non-relational sex was negatively associated with men’s sexual satisfaction. This finding suggested that those men who disapproved of non-relational sex were significantly more likely to experience sexually satisfying interactions with their partner.

Kiefer and Sanchez (2007) explored the role of traditional gendered sexual attitudes regarding male dominance and female passivity in men’s sexual experiences with a sample of 160 single and partnered first year undergraduate male students. They found that endorsing traditional sexual roles of male dominance and female passivity was not significantly related to men’s sexual satisfaction. In a second study examining the same variables within a sample of a broader age range (18 to 71 years) of single and partnered men, Kiefer and Sanchez (2007) again did not find a direct link between sexual satisfaction and endorsement of sexual attitudes toward male dominance and female passivity. Taken together, these findings suggested that traditional gendered roles are not important to men’s experience of a satisfying sexual relationship. However, gendered sexual roles were measured by combining scores on both male dominance and female passivity, and therefore, potentially confounded the results. Future research that examines masculine and feminine gendered roles separately is needed to clarify how masculine gender role norms may be associated with men’s sexual satisfaction.
Sanchez et al. (2005) examined whether investment in gender norms was negatively related to sexual satisfaction indirectly through basing self-worth on others’ approval, thus undermining sexual autonomy. Investment in gender norms was measured using a four-item scale that assessed both the importance of conforming to ideal gendered expectations, based on how the participant believes society defines the ideal man, and the importance of deviating from typical representations of the ideal man. The sample comprised of 117 men and, although age range and mean age were not provided, participants were recruited from a first year university psychology subject pool, so participants were likely to be young adults. Furthermore, although all participants identified themselves as sexually active, there were no details provided on their relationship status. The results of structural equation modeling indicated that investment in the prevailing cultural beliefs of masculinity was related to an increased need to meet others’ approval, which in turn, lowers sexual autonomy, which was subsequently associated with less sexual satisfaction. However, avoiding gender deviance was not related to sexual satisfaction directly or indirectly. The authors concluded that adhering to traditional masculine norms may hamper satisfying sexual experiences because “performing” gender places pressure on men to behave in certain ways that may not be consistent with their sexual desires.

The above study was strengthened by investigating factors that may explain the relationship between gender roles and men’s sexual satisfaction. An assessment of the influence of additional variables allows for a more robust, complex and practical understanding of the association between masculinity and men’s sexual experiences. However, the study was limited by
the use of a measure that assessed a narrow definition of gender norms. Investment in gender norms was designed to measure feeling pressure to conform to a gendered ideal as perceived by the individual. Although conceptually different to actually adhering to gender role norms, this scale does not explicitly account for the multifaceted nature of masculinity. Furthermore, as the participants were first year university undergraduates, results are not necessarily representative of a broader cross-section of society.

**Summary of masculinity and sexual satisfaction.** Whilst there is some evidence to suggest that masculine gender role conformity features in the quality of men’s sexual relationships, there is a dearth of empirical evidence supporting this relationship. The use of measures that rely upon a narrow conceptualisation of masculinity excludes a range of variables that may be relevant and significant to men’s sexual lives. Therefore, utilising a multidimensional construct of masculinity would glean better insight into the particular components of masculinity that are salient to men’s sexual well-being.

Furthermore, results of studies that investigated men who identified their relationship status as single may not be applicable to men in a relationship and therefore samples including participants who were either single or partnered may have confounded the results. Given that gender roles are not static and may vary dependent on particular contexts, the impact of masculinity on a man’s sexual experiences may potentially vary according to his relationship status. For example, single men may be more inclined to endorse traditional ideologies of engaging in non-committed or non-relational sex with multiple partners than men who are in a relationship. Therefore, the
use of a sample that includes exclusively partnered participants is necessary to further understand the role of masculinity in the sexual experiences of men in current relationships. Moreover, the majority of studies utilized samples of young adult men, and therefore future research would benefit from examining the association between masculinity and sexual well-being across a broad range of age groups.
Chapter Four

Masculinity and Female Partners’ Relational Satisfaction

Masculinity and Relationship Satisfaction

Although the majority of research investigating traditional masculinity and relational well-being has focused on men’s experiences, a small number of studies have also examined how traditional masculinity may be associated with women’s experiences of their relationships. This is an important area of inquiry given that GRS theory predicts that problematic aspects of traditional masculine norms can adversely affect those close to men. Indeed, a body of research has demonstrated that men who adhere to greater levels of traditional masculine norms are more likely to be tolerant of or engage in behaviours, such as sexual harassment or physical aggression, that can impinge on the quality of women’s lives (Berke, Sloan, Parrot, & Zeichner, 2012; Locke & Mahalik, 2005).

Researchers have theorised that certain aspects of the masculine role may be logically related to the quality of women’s romantic relationships. For example, women with inexpressive male partners may feel disconnected from their partners and isolated within the relationship, whereas women with emotionally available partners may experience greater levels of intimacy and satisfaction (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Similarly, men who prioritise their career, and are focused on success and status may invest less time and attention in the relationship. This may result in their female partners’ needs not being met and compromise their feelings of worth in the relationship. Conformity to masculine norms of violence, dominance, and power over women may lead to abusive, harmful, and disrespectful behaviours that
undermine conditions necessary for healthy and satisfying relationships (Burn & Ward, 2005).

The empirical literature has demonstrated that aspects of traditional masculine ideology are related to women’s relationship satisfaction. As described in the previous section on men, Burn and Ward (2005) conducted the only located published study on the association between relationship satisfaction and traditional masculine norm conformity as measured by the CMNI. The authors investigated how women’s perceptions of their male partners’ masculine role conformity, rather than measuring whether the male partner’s perception of their own conformity related to women’s relationship satisfaction. Indeed, relationship researchers have found that partners’ perceptions of the other are related to the extent individuals feel satisfied in the relationship (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). In a sample of 137 female undergraduate university students, bivariate correlation analysis indicated that women who reported their partners as less conforming to the norms of dominance, emotional control, playboy, risk-taking, self-reliance, violence, heterosexual self-presentation, winning, power over women, and primacy of work experienced greater levels of relationship satisfaction. A non-significant association was found between women’s relationship satisfaction and their perception of their partner’s pursuit of status. The eleven different norms explained 42% of the variance in women’s relationship satisfaction. Similarly to the men’s results, multiple regression analysis showed that only the norm of playboy was a significant unique predictor of women’s relationship satisfaction. This finding suggests that women experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction when they perceive their
partner as conforming more to beliefs regarding non-relational sex and sexual promiscuity, over and above conformity to other traditional norms.

Rochlen and Mahalik (2004) investigated whether women’s perception of their male partners’ masculine gender role conflict was associated with women’s relationship satisfaction in a sample of 176 female college students with a mean age of 20.94 years (SD = 3.07). Bivariate correlations showed that women experienced less relationship satisfaction when they perceived their male partners as emotionally restricted, being uncomfortable with emotional expression with other men, focusing more on being successful, powerful, and competitive, and as having more difficulty balancing work and home life. However, according to multiple regression analysis only two of the subscales, adherence to success/power/competition and restrictive emotionality, uniquely predicted lower relationship satisfaction scores. These findings indicated that women were less satisfied with their relationships when they perceived their partners as adhering more to being successful, powerful and competitive, and having higher levels of emotional control. One limitation of the study, however, was that approximately 47% of the participants were not in a current relationship and therefore reported retrospectively on a past partner. As mentioned previously, relying on retrospective reporting can be problematic due to potential bias in participant responses.

Similarly, other studies have demonstrated an association between husbands’ self-reported gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment among samples of married couples ranging in age from young to older adults. For example, with a sample of 150 married couples, Windle and Smith (2009)
demonstrated that wives experienced less satisfying relationships when husbands reported being more restricted in their emotional expression and more uncomfortable with emotional and affectionate behaviour between men. Furthermore, it was also found that husbands’ withdrawal communication behaviours moderated the relationship between husbands’ gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment, such that husbands’ higher level of withdrawal tactics strengthened the negative relationship between husbands’ gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment. This study extended previous research by considering the moderating effect of a third variable. However, as the overall score for gender role conflict was used in the moderation analysis, conclusions cannot be drawn regarding which patterns of gender role conflict may be more strongly related to wives’ marital adjustment in the context of husbands’ withdrawal behaviours.

Furthermore, Breiding (2004) demonstrated that husbands’ self-reported restrictive emotionality, discomfort with emotional and affectionate behaviour between men, and adherence to success, power, and competition were significantly negatively correlated with wives’ marital adjustment in a sample of 60 married couples ranging in age from young to older adults. The relationship between husbands’ adherence to restrictive gender roles and wives’ marital adjustment was mediated by husbands’ observed hostility during a marital interaction task. Similarly, Breiding et al. (2008) examined the mediating effect of spousal criticism on husbands’ gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment with a sample of 72 married couples ranging in age from young to older adults. Preliminary bivariate correlation analysis yielded the same results as Breiding (2004) in regard to the relationship between
gender role conflict factors and wives’ marital adjustment. Husbands’ spousal criticism was found to mediate the relationship between husbands’ gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment. Collectively, these findings suggest that men who experience greater conflict associated with adherence to traditional masculinity are more likely to use negative communication behaviours of withdrawal and criticism, which in turn, reduces the quality of the marital relationship for their wives’. Although these studies extended the literature by examining the processes that underlie the association between masculinity and the quality of female partners’ relationships, by using a global score of the GRCS, these studies were unable to elucidate which specific aspects of gender role conflict were related to women’s marital adjustment indirectly through men’s communication behaviours. Therefore, further research that examines the mediating role of communication behaviours on specific dimensions of the masculine role and relationship satisfaction is needed to clarify these findings.

In a sample of cohabitating and married couples, McGraw (2001) assessed how male partners’ self-reports of their masculine ideology adherence, as measured by the MRNI, related to women’s satisfaction within their relationships. It was found in the sample of 90 women (mean age = 40, SD = 12), that their relationship satisfaction was negatively associated with their male partners’ adherence to traditional masculinity. However, as a global score of masculinity was used, conclusions cannot be drawn about which specific masculine norms were related to the quality of women’s relationships. The study also examined females’ perceptions of their partners’ relationship behaviours and found that women in relationships with more
traditionally masculine men perceived their partners to be lower in warmth, nurturance and caregiving, and higher in anger and dominance. These findings provide some insight into the possible behavioural manifestations of traditional masculine ideology. However, it was unfortunate that the interrelationship between masculinity ideology, relationship behaviours, and relationship satisfaction was not examined within a more complex model in order to elucidate the potential mechanisms underlying the link between masculinity and relationship satisfaction.

In an alternative yet relevant vein of research, women’s relationship satisfaction has been positively associated with men’s adoption of egalitarian attitudes toward marital and family roles, such as work arrangements, household and child-care responsibilities (Faulkner et al., 2005; Walker-O-Neal & Futris, 2011). An extensive body of research has demonstrated that women experience increased marital distress in relationships where men have not assumed equal responsibility for household and child-care tasks (e.g., Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly, & Robinson, 2002; Ross & Van Willigen, 1996). Although providing valuable insight into the relationship dynamics of couples, focusing mainly on the distribution of household and child care tasks may limit a couples understanding of their relational issues. For example, women may perceive their partner who places greater emphasis on his career at the expense of family and household responsibilities as insensitive and unsupportive, when in fact he is striving to fulfil socialised gendered expectations of being the primary financial provider. Therefore, examining men’s masculinity ideology may provide a broader understanding of gender related influences on the quality of women’s relationships.
Summary of masculinity and relationship satisfaction. Although traditional masculinity has been shown to be related to women’s relationship satisfaction, the empirical evidence is limited and few studies have examined how conformity to a broad range of masculine norms are related to the quality of women’s relationships. Therefore, further research is needed to clarify these findings as well as elucidate which particular masculinity norms may be most salient to women’s relationships. The extant research could further be enhanced by using samples of women in current relationships, which would eliminate any potential distortions in the data resulting from retrospective reporting of a previous relationship. Additionally, the reliance on primarily Caucasian US college-educated individuals reduces the generalisability of the findings and therefore future research is needed to assess whether these results would be replicated in other populations. Moreover, as an individual’s perception of one’s partner is related to the quality of one’s relationship, future research would benefit from examining how women’s perceptions of their male partners’ masculinity, rather than male partners’ perception, is related to women’s relationship satisfaction.

Masculinity and Sexual Satisfaction

In recent decades, women’s experiences and expectations of their sexuality have become increasingly egalitarian, largely as a result of the feminist movement prompting the liberalization of women’s sexuality. Traditional gender roles and norms tended to afford men power and dominance during sexual interactions, while women were expected to assume a submissive role (Rosenthal, Levy, & Earnshaw, 2012; Sanchez, Fetterolf et al., 2012). However, as women have been permitted greater freedom to
explore and embrace their sexuality, they have increasingly adopted a more pro-active role in their sexual interactions, while men are reportedly increasingly supportive of egalitarian sexual roles and behaviours (Carpenter, et al., 2009; Sanchez, Phelan et al., 2012). Furthermore, women expect sex that involves greater levels of emotional intimacy and relational connectedness with their partner. Indeed, research has shown that some men reject traditional sexual roles and desire emotionally attached sexual relationships (Levant, 1997b). Despite these cultural shifts in expectations, traditional sexual roles continue to persist in the wider society, which can have negative implications for the quality of women’s sexual experiences. For example, women who believe men should be sexually dominant may feel compelled to assume a submissive role, which undermines their ability to make decisions within the sexual relationship (Sanchez, Phelan et al., 2012). As previously discussed, men who endorse non-relational sex and are less emotionally expressive, may minimize the significance of the relational aspects of sex and experience it as primarily a physical activity. As a result, women may feel their emotional and intimacy needs are neglected, and experience dissatisfaction with their male partners who seem preoccupied with the physical nature of sex (Kilmartin, 2010). However, a paucity of research has investigated how conforming to gendered expectations impacts upon women’s sexual satisfaction. Studies that have pursued this line of investigation have focused on the effect of women’s own gender role attitudes and beliefs, rather than their male partners’ masculine ideology conformity. As such, in formulating our hypothesis, we reviewed relevant literature examining women’s gender role beliefs and sexual satisfaction.
Rosenzweig and Dailey (1989) explored the relationship between sexual satisfaction and gender roles, as measured by the BSRI, in a sample of 151 married and cohabitating females. Women who identified as androgynous or feminine reported significantly greater sexual satisfaction compared to those who identified as having a masculine gender role identity. This study supports the idea that traditional masculinity, as a construct, can be detrimental to women’s sexual experiences. However, other studies have found that women’s endorsement of masculine traits are significantly positively correlated with sexual satisfaction, whilst non-significant results have been reported for femininity (e.g., Kimlicka, Cross, & Tarnai, 1983). In contrast, a non-significant relationship between women’s sexual satisfaction and androgynous, masculine, or feminine gender roles, as measured by the PAQ, have been reported in a sample of 227 partnered women with a mean age of 24.5 years (SD=6.48) (Varga, 1998), and in a sample of 61 female university students ranging in age from 18 to 27 years (Peters, 2002). As a result of these mixed findings the relationship between masculinity and women’s sexual satisfaction remains unclear. Furthermore, it is important to note that the above studies examined women’s own gender-role identity, rather than that of their partners’. As was demonstrated previously, male partners’ adherence to traditional masculine norms has been linked to women’s relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it is likely that men’s masculine conformity may be meaningfully related to women’s sexual satisfaction, although further research is needed to explore this association. Moreover, as previously discussed, these studies are limited by the use of scales that are based on a limited conceptualization of gender as a personality-related trait.
As such, research that investigates the role of masculinity, as operationalized according to a social constructionist perspective, is needed.

A further study by Kiefer and Sanchez (2007) examined sexual satisfaction and conformity to attitudes about traditional sexual roles of male dominance and female passivity in a sample of 124 female undergraduate students. Traditional sexual attitudes were measured by a scale containing five statements regarding the extent to which an individual endorsed beliefs that men should adopt a dominant sexual role or women should adopt a passive sexual role. Bivariate correlation analysis yielded a non-significant result between women’s sexual satisfaction and traditional sexual attitudes. The same result was reported in a follow-up second study utilizing a sample of female participants with a broader age range (18 to 71 years). These findings suggest that male dominance and female passivity have no bearing on the extent to which women experience satisfying sexual interactions. Alternatively, these results may have been confounded by methodological limitations, such that the score for traditional sexual attitudes was determined from responses to items about both male and female sexual roles. Measuring the traditional roles of male dominance and female passivity separately may possibly clarify the implications of traditional gender roles on the quality of women’s sexual experiences.

**Summary of masculinity and sexual satisfaction.** Despite the seeming conceptual relevance of masculine norm conformity to women’s sexual satisfaction, the existing research has not specifically examined this association. The available data has focused on how women’s own masculine role identity and gender related sexual roles may be related to women’s sexual
experiences. Whilst providing useful insights into gender-related correlates of women’s sexuality, such research needs to be extended by examining the link between men’s adherence to a broad range of masculine norms and women’s sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, many of the previous studies have relied on samples of young adult females primarily in dating relationships, and therefore this area of research could be further enhanced by utilizing samples comprised of a broader age range of women across different relationship types.
Chapter Five

Mediating Influences

Despite a body of research that demonstrates an association between masculinity and the quality of men’s and women’s romantic and sexual relationships, a primary limitation of past research has been the limited examination of the underlying mechanisms that may explain this association (Breiding, 2004; Good, Heppner, DeBord & Fischer, 2004). Indeed, the lack of investigation of possible intervening variables in explaining men’s level of adoption of masculine norms to psychological outcomes is a methodological gap in the literature (Iwamoto et al., 2014; O’Neil 2008). Therefore, more complex models that assess mediating influences are needed to determine precisely how masculine ideologies are related to relationship and sexual outcomes. Furthermore, within the relationship and sexual empirical literature, researchers have argued for increased examination of socialised gender role issues within men’s and women’s romantic and sexual relationships (Keifer & Sanchez, 2007; Wade and Coughlin, 2007).

By considering the processes through which traditional masculine norms may be related to psychological outcomes, researchers can ask more sophisticated questions regarding how traditional masculinity may influence men’s and women’s intimate relationships and sexual experiences. Communication behaviours are variables worthy of investigation, as previous research has established an association with both relationship and sexual factors, and masculine gender role norms (Hendrick, 2004; Lease et al., 2010; Mahalik et al., 2005). A substantial body of research has identified communication patterns, including self-disclosure and conflict resolution
styles, as instrumental to healthy relational outcomes. Although the relationship between masculinity and communication behaviours has received comparatively less empirical attention, the extant literature has demonstrated that masculinity may manifest in men’s interpersonal behaviours (Brieding, et al., 2008; Lease et al., 2010). In support of examining various communication behaviours as a mediator between masculine norm conformity and relationship and sexual satisfaction, the present chapter will review findings of studies that have investigated the relationship between self-disclosure and sexual self-disclosure with relationship and sexual satisfaction. Findings that have demonstrated an association between conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction will also be reviewed. Next, a discussion of studies that have investigated how masculinity is related to men’s communication behaviours will be provided, followed by an analysis of research that has examined conflict resolution tactics as a mediator between masculinity and relationship adjustment.

Communication and Relational Satisfaction

Communication forms the foundation of close relationships and provides a context within which relationships can thrive or deteriorate (Hendrick, 2004). The quality of communication patterns are considered a primary determinant of relationship satisfaction, with certain communication styles undermining the quality of relationships (Caughlin, 2002; Feeney, Noller, and Ward, 1998). According to Gottman (1994), communication among satisfied couples is characterized by more positive interactions, such as greater levels of agreement, approval, humour and laughter, and less negative interactions, such as criticism, contempt, and defensiveness. Dissatisfied
couples, on the other hand, tend to engage in more negative and less positive interactions.

**Self-disclosure.** One fundamental aspect of communication is self-disclosure, which refers to voluntarily revealing one’s intimate feelings, thoughts, desires and needs to another person (Farber & Sohn, 2007; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Sharing such personal information can help individuals feel connected within themselves and with others, reduce stress by enabling self-clarification, assist in obtaining emotional support and self-confirmation from a partner, and serve to deepen relationship intimacy (Regan, 2011; Rosenfeld & Bowen, 1991; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). A number of studies have indicated that general self-disclosure is positively associated with both relationship satisfaction (Antill and Cotton, 1987; Byers & Demmons, 1999; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Rosenfeld & Bowen, 1991) and sexual satisfaction (Byers & Demmons, 1991; Larson, Anderson, Holman, & Niemann, 1998; MacNeil & Byers, 2005). For example, Farber and Sohn (2007) found in a sample of 48 married individuals that higher levels of self-disclosure to a spouse across a broad range of topics, including values, body concerns, sexuality, experiences of abuse, and distress, significantly predicted greater marital satisfaction. MacNeil and Byers (1997) examined the role of non-sexual communication in the sexual satisfaction of 87 men and women in long-term relationships. Results revealed that general communication positively and uniquely predicted sexual satisfaction.

Some studies have also investigated how one’s own level of self-disclosure and partner disclosure is related to the quality of men’s and women’s relationships. In a sample of 101 dating couples, Sprecher and
Hendrick (2004) demonstrated that males’ own self-disclosure and perceived partner disclosure were positively and significantly related to their relationship satisfaction. Women’s relationship satisfaction was positively and significantly related to their own self-disclosure, male partners’ reported disclosure, and women’s perception of their partners’ disclosure, with the latter yielding the largest effect size. Interestingly, a six-month follow-up study to determine whether self-disclosure was a predictor of relationship dissolution, revealed that women from separated relationships had reported significantly lower levels of perceived partner self-disclosure at Time 1 compared to women whose relationships remained intact (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). This finding demonstrates the importance of perceived partner disclosure in the quality of women’s relationships.

In a sample of 140 dating couples, Meeks, Hendrick and Hendrick (1998) found that an individual’s own self-disclosure and beliefs regarding their partners’ self-disclosure were positively and similarly correlated with men and women’s relationship satisfaction. Although the study reported on the total sample, these findings suggest that women’s perception of their male partners’ self-disclosure is related to their experience of satisfaction in the relationship. Moreover, Mark and Jozkowski (2013) examined the role of non-sexual communication in men’s and women’s sexual satisfaction with a sample of 133 dating and cohabitating couples. Results revealed that men’s self-reported non-sexual self-disclosure was positively associated with men’s and women’s sexual satisfaction.

Furthermore, Lee and Pistole (2012) investigated the mediating influence of an individual’s own self-disclosure on the association between
attachment style and relationship satisfaction in a sample of 536 dating, cohabitating, and married university undergraduate and graduate students in either geographically close or long distance relationships. Bivariate correlation analysis demonstrated that an individual’s own self-disclosure was positively associated with one’s relationship satisfaction, regardless of the physical proximity of the partner. Results of the mediation analysis revealed that self-disclosure mediated the relationship between both anxious and avoidant attachment styles, and satisfaction with the relationship. These findings suggested that individuals who reported higher levels of insecure attachment, self-disclosed less to their partner, which, subsequently contributed to a less satisfying relationship. Indeed, it is important to understand the factors that may influence and reinforce self-disclosure in the context of romantic relationships. As will be discussed later, although masculine gender role norms have conceptual relevance to communication, no located published studies have investigated whether self-disclosure mediates the association between masculinity and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, future research is needed to examine these potential relationships.

**Sexual self-disclosure.** Sexual self-disclosure refers to openly communicating one’s sexual needs, desires, and preferences and is considered essential to the development and maintenance of sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009). Sexual self-disclosure is thought to facilitate sexually satisfying experiences regardless of sexual problems, or differences between partners’ ideal sexual preferences. Openly communicating one’s sexual preferences allows the individual to negotiate and adjust their expectations, and ultimately improve the sexual relationship (Byers & Demmons, 1999;
MacNeil & Byers, 2009). Furthermore, although general self-disclosure is a vital component of relationship satisfaction, communication about sexual aspects of the relationship also appears to be important. Sexual self-disclosure may enhance intimacy and a sense of connectedness between partners, and improve the overall quality of the relationship (MacNeil & Byers, 2009).

Empirical studies have shown that communicating one’s sexual preferences is associated with higher levels of an individual’s sexual and relationship satisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990). For example, with a sample of 85 married and cohabitating individuals, MacNeil and Byers (1997) found that one’s own sexual self-disclosure made a positive and unique contribution to the prediction of men’s and women’s sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, Byers & Demmons (1999) demonstrated that self-reported sexual self-disclosure was positively associated with relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction with a sample of 99 dating individuals.

Rehman, Rellini, and Fallis (2012), investigated the role of self-reported and partner-reported sexual self-disclosure in sexual satisfaction with a sample of 91 married and cohabitating couples. Results indicated that self-reported sexual self-disclosure was positively associated with men and women’s sexual satisfaction. However, partner-reported sexual self-disclosure was significantly and positively associated with only men’s sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest that partner sexual self-disclosure is more important to the experience of a sexually satisfying relationship for men than for women. Other studies have found that an individual’s own sexual self-disclosure, rather than partner sexual self-disclosure, is predictive of both men’s and women’s sexual satisfaction with samples of couples in long term
relationships (MacNeil & Byers, 2009) and dating relationships (MacNeil & Byers, 2004).

Timm and Keiley (2011) also found that individuals’ own sexual communication was positively associated with both sexual and marital satisfaction in a sample of 205 married men and women. Furthermore, results of mediation analysis revealed that sexual communication mediated the relationship between differentiation of self, defined as, “the process by which a person manages individuality and togetherness in a relationship” (Timm and Keiley; 2011, p.208), and both sexual and marital satisfaction. Sexual communication was further found to mediate the relationship between attachment and sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest that individual processes influence the extent to which a person will openly communicate about sexual matters, which, in turn, contributes to their relational experiences.

**Conflict resolution.** A further important aspect of communication and major indicator of relationship functioning is conflict resolution. Conflict, defined as, disagreements, incompatibilities, and/or differences in points of view, are an inevitable aspect of romantic relationships (Egeci and Gencoz, 2006). The nature and intensity of conflict, and each partner’s individual style of resolving and coping with issues may affect the maintenance and stability of the relationship, and also the extent to which a relationship is experienced as satisfactory. Therefore, managing conflict is an important task in maintaining a relationship (Egeci and Gencoz, 2006; Kurdek 1994; Sierau & Herzberg, 2012). Examining how different styles of conflict resolution are linked to relationship satisfaction is important in understanding how conflict
may facilitate or hinder relationship quality. A commonly researched style is the demand-withdrawal pattern, a relational dynamic in which the demanding partner seeks change in the withdrawing partner, whereas the withdrawing partner attempts to avoid these demands (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). The wife demand-husband withdrawal configuration seems to be more destructive to the relationship than the husband demand-wife withdrawal pattern (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). As wife demand does not account for all the variability in husband withdrawal, it is likely that there are personal characteristics that might distinguish men who often withdraw from those who do not have a tendency to withdrawal. Components of the masculine gender role may offer insight into these differences (Christensen & Heavey, 1996; Windle & Smith, 2009).

Although there is strong empirical support for the association between the demand-withdrawal pattern and relationship satisfaction, additional conflict resolution styles play an important role. Kurdek (1994) identified four styles of conflict resolution comprised of destructive or constructive tactics. Destructive styles included: conflict engagement (e.g., losing control and personal attacks); withdrawal (e.g., avoiding or refusing to discuss issues); and compliance (e.g., not defending one’s position and giving in). Constructive conflict resolution style included positive problem solving (e.g., negotiating and compromising). Empirical research has found that the use of constructive conflict resolution strategies support satisfaction with a relationship, while destructive conflict resolution styles have been linked to poor relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2000; Kurdek, 1995; Meeks et al., 1998; Sierau & Herzberg, 2012).
Kurdek (1994) examined the link between conflict resolution strategies and marital satisfaction in a sample of 207 married couples at two time points. Results revealed that husbands’ self-reported greater use of conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance tactics were associated with less relationship satisfaction; while frequent use of positive problem solving was linked to greater levels of marital satisfaction. A 12-month follow-up study was conducted to examine the relationship between time one conflict resolution tactics and change in relationship satisfaction. Positive problem solving was found to predict positive change in marital satisfaction, while conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance did not yield a significant finding. In regard to wives, at time one, wives’ perceptions of their husbands’ conflict engagement and withdrawal was significantly and negatively related to wives’ marital satisfaction; while wives’ perceptions of their husbands’ use of positive problem solving was positively related to their marital satisfaction. At the 12-month follow-up, conflict engagement was predictive of negative change in wives’ marital satisfaction and positive problem solving was predictive of positive change.

Sierau and Herzberg (2012) investigated conflict resolution styles as a mediator between attachment styles and men’s and women’s relationship satisfaction in a sample of 207 couples who had been living together for at least six months. Bivariate correlation analysis indicated that men who reported more frequent use of conflict engagement or withdrawal tactics experienced less relationship satisfaction; while greater use of positive problem solving was linked to higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, it was found that self-reported conflict engagement, withdrawal
and positive problem solving mediated the relationship between different attachment characteristics and one’s relationship satisfaction. Results also indicated that partner-reported positive problem solving and compliance mediated the relationship between different attachment styles and one’s own relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that adult attachment styles manifest in men’s use of conflict tactics, which, in turn, influences men and women’s experience of satisfaction within the relationship.

In a sample of 194 married couples, Hanzal and Segrin (2009) examined the mediating influence of conflict resolution on negative affectivity (i.e., the experience of distressing emotions indicative of neuroticism) and marital satisfaction. Preliminary bivariate correlation analysis indicated that husbands’ own conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance strategies were negatively associated with their marital satisfaction, while positive problem solving was positively related to husbands’ satisfaction with the relationship. Husbands’ reports of greater use of conflict engagement and withdrawal tactics were associated with wives’ poorer marital satisfaction; while husbands’ increased use of positive problem solving was linked to wives’ greater levels of marital satisfaction. Mediation analysis demonstrated that positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal partially mediated husbands’ negative affectivity and their marital satisfaction. Husbands’ use of conflict engagement and withdrawal were found to mediate wives’ negative affectivity and wives’ marital satisfaction. Taken together, these findings provide support for how intrapersonal factors can influence interpersonal communication behaviours and subsequent relationship satisfaction.
Woodin (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 64 studies examining how conflict behaviours are related to the quality of men’s and women’s relationships. Results demonstrated that hostility (e.g., attacking, demanding or dominant behaviours) was significantly and negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, yielding a medium effect size. A small but significant and negative relationship was found between withdrawal tactics and relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that although both hostility and withdrawal tactics are related to less relationship satisfaction, the greater effect size yielded for hostility indicated that these behaviours have a more robust link to lower relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, positive problem solving was significantly and positively related to relationship satisfaction. This result also produced a medium effect size, suggesting that problem solving is robustly related to higher relationship satisfaction.

**Summary of communication and relational satisfaction.** The above research indicates that communication patterns contribute to the quality of men’s and women's relational experiences across different relationship types. Revealing one’s non-sexual feelings, thoughts, and desires appears to play an integral role in the experience of satisfying romantic and sexual relationships. Similarly, the ability to resolve conflict in a constructive manner supports satisfaction within the relationship, while the use of destructive tactics can undermine the quality of the relationship. An individual’s perception of their partner’s self-disclosure and conflict resolution styles was further demonstrated to be associated with relationship satisfaction. Overall, communicating openly about sexual preferences is also important to men’s and women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction; however, for women, it
would appear that their partners’ sexual self-disclosure has less relevance to their relational experiences than their own sexual self-disclosure. Lastly, intrapersonal processes, such as attachment and personality, were shown to manifest in particular communication behaviours, which subsequently, contributed to men’s and women’s relational experiences. Given that gender role norms help to guide and inform behavior, it makes sense that masculine ideologies may be meaningfully related to men’s interpersonal behaviours. Indeed, masculinity has been linked to men’s patterns of communication as will be discussed next.

**Communication and Masculinity**

Researchers (Burn & Ward, 2005; Lease et al., 2010) suggest that endorsing traditional masculine norms may hinder the use of effective communication skills necessary for healthy relationship functioning. Men who subscribe to traditional masculine roles, such as emotional control, may experience difficulty with intimacy and self-disclosure, which can have adverse implications for a man’s ability to form intimate relationships (O’Neil, 1981, 2008; Sharpe et al., 1995). Levant (1995) proposed that suppressing emotional expression could lead to alexithymia, a condition defined as “the inability to identify and describe one’s feelings in words” (Levant, 1995, p. 238). Empirical studies (e.g., Jakupcak, Osborne, Michael, Cook, and McFall, 2006; Levant et al., 2003) suggest that the degree to which men internalize masculine gender roles is associated with how they will identify, describe, and express their feelings, which is relevant to one’s ability to communicate effectively and develop intimacy in the context of romantic relationships (Karakis & Levant, 2012).
A small number of studies have examined how traditional masculine norms are associated with men’s patterns of communication. Bruch, Berko, and Haase (1998), found that the masculine norm of restricted emotional expression was negatively related to self-disclosure in a sample of 193 young adult men. Although the authors examined the influence of only the norm of restricted emotional expression, the study provided support for how a particular aspect of masculinity is related to men’s ability to openly communicate. Furthermore, in a sample of 153 young adult males, Mahalik and Rochlen (2006) investigated the association between conformity to masculine norms and men’s likely actions in response to depressive symptoms, which included disclosing their concerns to a romantic partner. Canonical correlation analysis identified three profiles for how masculine norms were related to self-disclosure. The first root demonstrated that conformity to the norm of winning was associated with a greater likelihood of openly communicating with a partner. In the second root, conformity to the norms of violence, power over women, dominance, playboy, heterosexual self-presentation, and pursuit of status were negatively related to self-disclosure to a partner. The third root indicated that men who adhered more to the norm emotional control were less likely to disclose their symptoms to their partner. Although this study focused specifically on discussing depressive symptoms, these findings demonstrate that conformity to a range of individual masculine norms can inhibit men’s ability to share personal information with their partner.

Lease et al. (2010) investigated how adherence to traditional masculine role norms were related to men’s perceived interpersonal
competence in self-disclosure and conflict management with a romantic partner with a sample of 173 Caucasian American and 97 African American men. For Caucasian American men, it was found that conformity to all three masculine norms of toughness, anti-femininity, and status, as measured by the MRNS, was related to difficulty with self-disclosure and managing conflict effectively with relationship partners. In contrast, for African American men the endorsement of anti-femininity and toughness were not related to self-disclosure and conflict management. The masculine norm of status was positively related to self-disclosure and conflict management for African American men, such that higher levels of conformity to status were associated with greater perceived competence in self-disclosure and resolving conflict.

The authors concluded that for Caucasian American men, adherence to norms that involve being successful, powerful, and important (status), concealing emotions and avoiding anything deemed feminine (anti-femininity), and being physically tough and self-reliant (toughness) are more likely to hamper their ability to openly share their feelings or manage conflict effectively. On the other hand, for African American men, adherence to the norm of status may reflect determinism, strength, and respect that manifests in greater competence in emotional expression and constructive conflict management (Lease et al., 2010). These results suggest that, for some, adherence to particular masculine role norms can benefit a man’s ability to share intimate thoughts and feelings, and facilitate competence in conflict management. As such, these findings support masculinity theories (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2003; Pleck, 1981, 1995) that the meaning and expression of masculinity varies among individuals and
groups of men, and that traditional masculine norms may produce psychological benefits for some men.

In a sample of sixty married couples, Breiding (2004) demonstrated that husbands who adhered more to gender role conflict factors of success/power/competition, emotional restriction, and conflict between work and family were more likely to display hostile behaviours toward their wives during a marital interaction task. Similarly, with a sample of 150 married couples, Windle and Smith (2009) demonstrated that husbands’ greater adherence to beliefs related to restricted emotional and affectionate behaviour were more likely to use withdrawal tactics during a marital interaction task. Other studies have also demonstrated that adherence to traditional masculinity is associated with men’s general negative interpersonal behaviour. Specifically, among samples of young adult men, adherence to being successful, powerful, and competitive has been positively associated with dominance (Mahalik, 2000), while emotional restriction and conflict between work and family has been positively related to hostility (Mahalik, 2000; Hayes & Mahalik, 2000). Collectively, these studies suggest that men who report greater levels of adherence to traditional masculine beliefs may be more likely to employ destructive tactics during conflict situations with their partner.

Despite empirical examination into the role of masculinity in men’s communication patterns, no published studies could be located on the relationship between masculinity and sexual self-disclosure. However, in light of the above findings, it would seem that conformity to masculine norms would be logically related to men’s sexual self-disclosure, such that men who
adhere more to traditional masculinity would be less likely to disclose their sexual likes and dislikes. Therefore, sexual self-disclosure as a possible mechanism by which traditional masculine norms are associated with relational outcomes is worthy of investigation and would improve efforts to understand how masculinity operates within the context of romantic and sexual relationships.

Although the above studies demonstrated that the degree to which men adhere to traditional masculine role norms is associated with how they communicate in romantic relationships, future research on the subsequent influence on relationship satisfaction would provide greater insight into how these factors may determine the quality of romantic and sexual relationships.

Communication patterns as a mediator of masculinity and relational outcomes. A dearth of empirical research has investigated the role of communication patterns in the relationship between traditional masculinity and relational satisfaction for men and women. In a sample of sixty married couples, Breiding (2004) found that husbands’ hostile behaviours during conflict mediated the relationship between husband’s gender role conflict and their wives’ marital adjustment. Similarly, in a sample of 72 married couples, Breiding, et al. (2008) examined the role of husbands’ gender role conflict and spousal criticism (husband’s self-report and wives’ perception of their husband’s criticism) in wives’ marital adjustment. Findings indicated that both husband-reported ratings of criticism and wives’ perception of their husband’s criticism mediated the relationship between husband’s gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment. In a further study by Windle and Smith (2009), the authors examined the moderating role of conflict tactics on
traditional masculinity and women’s marital adjustment with a sample of 150 married couples. Results revealed that husbands’ withdrawal tactics moderated the relationship between husbands’ gender role conflict and wives’ marital adjustment. Although these studies provide empirical support for the role of men’s conflict resolution tactics between traditional masculinity and relationship quality, total scores of gender role conflict were used rather than the individual sub-scales that measure specific aspects of the traditional masculine role. Therefore, it is unclear what specific aspects of masculinity are related to men’s conflict resolution tactics, which in turn, influence marital quality.

Furthermore, the above studies focused only on women’s relationship adjustment. Although providing support for the idea that adherence to traditional masculinity has important implications for those close to men, it does not account for men’s experiences. No identified studies to date have investigated the potential effects of men’s conflict resolution styles on masculine gender roles and men’s relationship satisfaction. As an individual’s own conflict resolution strategies have been related to one’s relationship adjustment, it makes theoretical sense that men’s conflict resolution may potentially influence the association between masculinity and men’s relationship satisfaction. Moreover, future research would benefit from examining additional communication patterns, including problem solving and self-disclosure. As indicated previously, these communication behaviours have been associated with both masculine role norms and relational satisfaction, and therefore may serve as possible mediating influences.
Summary of masculinity and communication behaviours. In sum, the literature provides support for the idea that aspects of traditional masculinity may inhibit the use of effective communication skills necessary for the development and maintenance of satisfying relationships. However, few studies have examined men’s communication behaviours as a mediating influence between traditional masculinity and relational satisfaction. Such research is needed in order to provide greater insight into the mechanisms by which masculine norms are related to the quality of men’s and women’s relationships. Furthermore, as perceptions of one’s partner’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours play an important role in the way in which an individual experiences their own relationship, it would be beneficial to examine women’s perceptions of their partners’ masculine role beliefs and communication styles and how these may determine women’s relationship satisfaction. Such research agendas would further advance our understanding of what aspects of masculinity ideology may be adaptive or maladaptive in interpersonal settings for both men and women.
Chapter Six

The Present Study

Chapters One to Five examined theory and evidence relevant to masculine norm conformity, communication behaviours, relationship and sexual quality. Consistent with Pleck’s GRS paradigm, research has demonstrated that greater adherence to restrictive masculine gender roles can lead to undesirable relational outcomes for men and women; however, a number of important issues remain. Since masculinity has been reconceptualised as a complex, multidimensional and, at times, problematic construct, as exemplified by the GRS paradigm, the study of masculinity has largely focused on how traditional masculine roles relate to men’s psychological issues, such as depression, anxiety, and help seeking attitudes. Comparatively, less empirical investigation has been conducted on the effects of masculinity conformity on relationship and sexual satisfaction, which is an important area of inquiry given that quality romantic and sexual relationships are essential to psychological and physical health and well-being. Furthermore, within this small body of research, a paucity of studies have investigated the relevance of masculine norm conformity in women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. In order to empirically examine Pleck’s (1995) thesis that masculine ideologies can have adverse implications for those close to men, such as their female partners, additional research is needed.

While the extant research has demonstrated that greater adherence to traditional masculine norms is associated with poorer levels of relationship satisfaction, a number of studies have utilised global scores of masculinity,
which limits an understanding of the specific masculine dimensions that are relevant to the quality of men and female partners’ relationships. Similarly, traditional masculinity has been negatively associated with men’s and women’s sexual satisfaction; however, this research has been limited by the use of measures that assess a narrow range of norms or conceptualise masculinity as personality traits. As masculinity is considered multifaceted, with men endorsing and internalising masculine norms to varying degrees, individual norms may be differentially associated with relational outcomes (Iwamoto, et al., 2013). Therefore, examining masculinity from a multidimensional perspective, rather than relying on a global score or narrow definition of masculinity, may provide greater specificity into the relationship between men’s conformity to masculine norms and relational satisfaction.

The literature review provided also highlighted that potential processes underlying the association between masculine gender norms and relational satisfaction remain relatively unexplored. Although examining the association between multiple dimensions of masculinity and relational satisfaction would improve our understanding of this relationship, examining potential mediating influences may significantly improve this area of inquiry. Indeed, the quality of men’s and women’s relationship and sexual experiences are susceptible to a range of influences. For example self-disclosure and conflict resolution strategies are well-established determinants of relationship satisfaction, but the extent to which these communication patterns may mediate the relationship between masculinity and relationship satisfaction is considerably less understood. Similarly, general and sexual self-disclosure have been associated with sexual satisfaction but whether these types of disclosure play
a role in influencing the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and sexual satisfaction is yet to be empirically examined.

Specifically in regard to men, men’s own general and sexual self-disclosure as well as their conflict resolution tactics have been associated with men’s relationship satisfaction. The relationship between men’s self-reported general and sexual self-disclosure with men’s sexual satisfaction has also been well evidenced. Furthermore, adherence to traditional masculine roles has been demonstrated to manifest in men’s communication behaviours, which in turn, may influence the quality of men’s romantic and sexual relationships; hence, various communication behaviours may act as potential mediators. Although the interrelationship between these variables may seem conceptually relevant, to date this line of inquiry has not received empirical attention.

In regard to female partners, a few studies have observed that husbands’ conflict resolution tactics, as evaluated by both men themselves and their wives, mediated the association between husbands’ adherence to masculine roles and wives’ relationship satisfaction, but further research is needed to clarify the role of conformity to individual norms. Previous research has also demonstrated that women’s perceptions of their male partners’ general self-disclosure is negatively associated with women’s relationship satisfaction; while men’s self-reports of their greater levels of general self-disclosure has been linked to women’s increased sexual satisfaction. However, no identified studies to date have examined whether male partners’ self-disclosure mediates the relationship between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms and their relationship and sexual satisfaction.
It is worth noting that communication behaviours have been shown to mediate the relationship between other intrapersonal processes, such as attachment styles, and both relationship and sexual satisfaction. Such research demonstrates the importance of considering antecedents of communication behaviours when researching men’s and women’s relational satisfaction. Given that empirical research has demonstrated a relationship between communication styles and both masculinity conformity and relational satisfaction separately, future research examining communication patterns as potential mediators is warranted.

Lastly, a number of studies were comprised of samples that included a mixture of partnered and single individuals. As such, results may have been confounded by retrospective reporting of a previous relationship or, reporting of sexual experiences with a casual sexual partner rather than a relationship partner. Additionally, previous research has demonstrated an association between masculinity and relational outcomes across different age groups and relationship types; however, a number of studies examined these variables with either young adult or middle aged samples. In order to improve the generalisability of findings, further research would benefit from investigating the association between masculine gender norms and relational satisfaction with a sample of participants in current relationships across a broad range of age groups and relationship types.

These above gaps in the extant literature serve to highlight the need for further empirical investigation into how men’s conformity to a broad range of masculine norms are related to men’s and women’s experiences of their relationships. Hence, the current study attempts to make an important
contribution to the area by elucidating the specific aspects of masculinity that are relevant to men’s and female partners’ relationship and sexual satisfaction, and the processes that may underlie these associations.

Specifically, the goal of Study One is to investigate how men’s masculine norm conformity is related to men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction with a sample of heterosexual men in dating, cohabitating, and married relationships. The study is also designed to examine the potential mediating effects of general and sexual self-disclosure, as well as conflict resolution styles on the association between adherence to masculine norms and relationship satisfaction. The indirect effect of general and sexual self-disclosure on masculine norm conformity and sexual satisfaction will also be explored.

Study Two is designed to explore how women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms may contribute to women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. The study will also examine men’s general self-disclosure and conflict resolution tactics, as evaluated by their female partner, as potential mediators between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ masculine norm conformity and women’s relationship satisfaction. The mediating effects of women’s perceptions of their male partners’ general self-disclosure on women’s perceptions of their male partner’s masculinity conformity and women’s sexual satisfaction will also be examined. It is important to note that although sexual self-disclosure was chosen as a mediator between men’s masculinity conformity and relational satisfaction, women’s perceptions of their male partners’ sexual self-disclosure was not included as a mediator in Study Two. Upon review of the
items on the sexual self-disclosure scale, it was felt that women could not comment accurately on their male partners’ disclosure given the highly personal and intimate nature of the items.

This research is expected to shape clinical interventions and facilitate adaptive relationship and sexual satisfaction by helping men and women to understand the effects of masculine gender role socialisation, and how the extent to which particular norms are internalised by men may be disadvantageous or healthy to their relationships. From a theoretical perspective, the studies seek to further empirically examine GRS theory about the effects of masculinity on the lives of men and those intimately connected to them, their female partner. Although investigating the direct effects of masculinity on relational outcomes is important, this thesis seeks to enhance this research agenda by examining mediating influences in order to identify those factors that may explain the different ways in which individual masculine norms are related to men’s and women’s relational satisfaction. Furthermore, the studies are designed to examine masculinity based on the socially constructed nature of gender, rather than adopting a sex differences perspective. This approach serves to improve our understanding of within-group differences in relation to how masculine gender relates to men and female partners’ relational experiences, rather than simply comparing men and women on a range of relational variables.
Chapter Seven

Study One

Study Aims and Hypotheses

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the interrelationships among conformity to a broad range of masculine norms, communication behaviours, and relationship and sexual satisfaction for adult heterosexual men. Specifically, the study seeks to elucidate which individual masculine norms are relevant to the quality of men’s romantic and sexual relationships. A further aim is to investigate communication behaviours, including general and sexual self-disclosure, and conflict resolution styles, as potential mediators by which masculine norms may contribute to men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Specifically, the present study will examine the following hypotheses:

1. Masculine norms will be negatively and directly associated with men’s relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. Given that limited research has examined the effects of individual norms on relationship and sexual satisfaction, no predictions were made regarding the specific norms that may have a significant direct effect on relationship and sexual satisfaction.

2. General self-disclosure, sexual self-disclosure, and conflict resolution strategies will mediate the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and relationship satisfaction.

3. General self-disclosure and sexual self-disclosure will mediate the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and sexual satisfaction.
Method

Participants

A total of 239 men participated in the study. After data cleaning (discussed in the results section) the sample comprised of 223 men aged between 18 years and 71 years (M= 35.74 years; SD = 12.77 years). All men reported being in a current heterosexual relationship, with 42.6% married, 24.2% in a cohabitating relationship, and 33.2% in a dating relationship. The mean relationship length across all relationship types was 8.16 years (SD = 9.46). Specifically, the average relationship length for married men was 14.59 years (SD = 10.83 years), for men in a cohabitating relationship it was 4.88 years (SD = 4.96 years) and men in a dating relationship it was 2.29 years (SD = 2.61 years).

The participants were mostly of Australian nationality (62.8%) with the remainder identifying as Northern American (15.2%), British (5.8%), Asian (5.8%), European (4.0%), Southern American (2.2%), African (2.2%), and New Zealander (1.3%). The majority of participants had completed undergraduate qualifications (46.2%), followed by post-graduate qualifications (30.9%), completion of Year 12 or equivalent (15.7%), apprenticeship or trade (4.9%), and 1.8% indicated that they had not completed secondary school; 0.4% did not specify their education level.

In regard to employment, 59.9% of participants identified as being employed full-time, followed by 21.2% as studying, 9.0% were employed part-time, 5% were employed casually, 4.1% were not in paid employment and 0.9% were retired; 0.4% of participants did not provide information about their employment status. In regard to the type of occupations undertaken,
21.5% reported being employed in a professional role, 13% in executive/management, 6.7% in consultancy, 4.9% in administration, 4.5% in government, 4.5% in a trade, 3.1% in healthcare, 2.6% in teaching or lecturing, 1.8% in retail, and 0.9% in the defence force; 8.5% reported their occupation type as “other” but did not specify the type of occupation. The majority of participants reported an annual income of up to $50,000 (36.8%), followed by earnings of $51,000 - $75,000 (19.3%), $101,000 - $150,000 (15.7%), $76,000 - $100,000 (13.5%), $151,000 - $200,000 (4.5%), and $200,000 plus (5.4%).

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire. Items on the demographic questionnaire included age, nationality, relationship status, education level, employment status and annual income.

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003). The CMNI is a 94 item self-report inventory that measures conformity to an array of traditional masculine role norms. The extent to which participants agree with each statement is indicated using a 4-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree to 3 = strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting a higher degree of conformity. The inventory consists of 11 subscales: Winning (10 items), Emotional Control (11 items), Risk-Taking (10 items), Violence (8 items), Dominance (4 items), Playboy (12 items), Self-Reliance (6 items), Primacy of Work (8 items), Power Over Women (9 items), Heterosexual Self-presentation (10 items) and Pursuit of Status (6 items). Subscale items were averaged to generate scores for each individual norm. The subscales have been found to have moderate to high test-retest reliability (ranging from r =
.76 to $r = .90$) and internal consistency. Please see Table 7.1 for past and present cronbach alphas. It is important to note that the subscale for the norm of Dominance yielded a Cronbach alpha of .65, which is considered low but not uncommon for scales with fewer than 10 items. When a Cronbach alpha is lower than .7, Pallant (2010) recommends reporting the mean inter-item correlation for the items. The inter-item correlations for the four items comprising the Dominance subscale ranged from .2 to .4, which is considered an acceptable range, and therefore was retained in the current study.

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick, 1998). The RAS is a seven item self-report inventory that measures overall relationship satisfaction. Statements regarding how participants feel about aspects of their relationship are measured on a 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating a greater degree of satisfaction. Scores are averaged to generate an overall score of relationship satisfaction. The RAS has been found to have high test-retest reliability ($r = .85$) and internal consistency (see Table 7.1 for past and current Cronbach alphas).

Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire (MSQ; Snell, Fisher & Walters, 1993). The MSQ is a self-report instrument that measures 20 psychological aspects of human sexuality. The 5-item sexual satisfaction subscale was used in the current study to measure men’s sexual satisfaction. Participants indicated how characteristic of them each statement is using a 5-point Likert scale ($1 = \text{not at all characteristic of me} \text{ to } 5 = \text{very characteristic of me}$), with higher scores indicating greater amounts of tendency. The sexual satisfaction subscale has been found to have moderate test-retest reliability ($r$
Self-Disclosure Index (SDI; Miller, Berg and Archer, 1983). The SDI is a ten-item self-report questionnaire that measures an individual’s tendency to disclose personal and intimate information to a specific target person. The target person in the current study was the participant’s relationship partner. Items that are responded to on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not discussed at all to 4 = discussed fully and completely), with higher scores indicating a greater degree of self-disclosure. It is important to note that the current study used only nine items as one item (“Things I wouldn’t do in public”) was erroneously omitted during uploading of the questionnaire onto the website. The SDI has been found to have good internal consistency for men’s self-reports of their self-disclosure (see Table 7.1 for past and present Cronbach alpha coefficients).

Sexual Self-Disclosure (Byers and Demmons, 1999). The Sexual Self-Disclosure scale is a 12-item self-report inventory that measures the extent to which an individual self-discloses their preferences about a range of sexual activities (e.g kissing, touching, intercourse) to a romantic partner. Participants report the extent of their self-disclosure using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not discussed at all to 4 = discussed fully and completely), with higher scores representing greater sexual self-disclosure. The scale has good internal consistency (see Table 7.1 for past and present Cronbach alpha coefficients).

The Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory: Self-Report (CRSI-Self; Kurdek, 1994). The CRSI-Self is a 16 item self-report inventory that measures
an individual’s style of dealing with conflict in a relationship. The CRSI hasour subscales: Conflict Engagement (e.g., launching personal attacks),
Positive Problem Solving (e.g., negotiation and compromise), Withdrawal
(e.g., tuning the partner out) and Compliance (e.g., not defending one’s
position). Respondents rate how frequently they use each style of conflict
resolution on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). The CRSI
subscales have been shown to have moderate to high test-retest reliabilities ($r$
= .63 for positive problem solving; $r$ = .65 for compliance; $r$ = .71 for
compliance; $r$ = .81 for conflict engagement), and moderate to high internal
consistencies across the subscales (see Table 7.1 for past and present
Cronbach alpha co-efficients).
Table 7.1

*Internal Consistencies and Scale Ranges for Current Measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Scale Range</th>
<th>Past α</th>
<th>Current α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMNI Subscales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Over Women</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playboy</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primacy of Work</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of Status</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSI-Self Subscales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Eng</td>
<td>4 – 16</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>4 – 16</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>4 – 16</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>4 – 16</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Disclosure Index</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Self-Disclosure</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAS</td>
<td>7 – 35</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSQ - Sexual Satisfaction</td>
<td>1 – 5</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* CMNI = Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory; HP = Heterosexual Self-Preservation; CRSI = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory; Conflict Eng = Conflict Engagement; Problem Solving = Positive Problem Solving; RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale; MSQ = Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire.

**Procedure**

After approval was granted from the Deakin University Human Ethics Advisory Group – Health (HEAG-H) (Appendix A), the questionnaire was made available online at [www.deakin.edu.au/psychology/research/ftoop](http://www.deakin.edu.au/psychology/research/ftoop) and [www.masculinitystudy.com.au](http://www.masculinitystudy.com.au). The questionnaire was formatted for use on the Deakin University website (Appendix B).

Participants were recruited through the internet via social networking sites (Facebook and Linked In), as well as via the use of paid online advertisements on Facebook that targeted Australian based men who met the
eligibility criteria. Additionally, the study was advertised through Deakin University on-line study sites for various health-related units upon approval from the Unit Chairs. Snowballing techniques were also utilised, which involved inviting participants to forward details of the study to contacts within their social network. Participants were also given the option to enter a prize draw for the chance to win one of three $100 Coles/Myer vouchers.

Participants who were interested in completing the questionnaire were able to access the study’s website via the advertisements, and were provided with a Plain Language Statement (Appendix C) at the beginning of the questionnaire which outlined the purpose of the study. Participants were also advised that the questionnaire would take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. At the conclusion of the Plain Language Statement, interested participants who wished to proceed clicked on the ‘I Agree’ link, and proceeded to the questionnaire. The completion of the questionnaire was seen to constitute consent to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria included participants who were not in a heterosexual relationship of six months or longer.

Results

Data Screening

Data were analysed using SPSS 21.0 (SPSS Inc, 2012) and AMOS 21.0 (SPSS Inc, 2012). Preliminary screening revealed that of the 239 male respondents, four had largely incomplete surveys and were therefore excluded from the analyses. Four participants did not specify the length of their relationship and three indicated they had been in a relationship for less than six months, hence these cases were also deleted. Remaining missing values
comprised fewer than 2% of responses and were distributed randomly across the items and sample. To preserve statistical power, these were substituted with the group mean value for the variable, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007).

All variables were screened for univariate and multivariate outliers. Visual inspection of box plots and histograms revealed the presence of extreme outliers across subscales of the CMNI, MSQ and CRSI, and the RAS and SDI. In accordance with recommendations by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), raw scores on variables for the univariate outliers were recoded to one unit larger or equal to the next most extreme score in the distribution in order to retain the meaning of the raw score, whilst reducing the impact of the outlier. Multivariate outliers were inspected by Mahalanobis distance. Three multivariate outliers were detected as indicated by individual scores exceeding the critical value (p < .001), and were subsequently deleted. As a result of the changes described above, the final sample consisted of 223 participants.

Assumptions of normality were checked by examining skew and kurtosis values, frequency histograms, expected normality probability plots, and detrended expected normal plots. Examination of skewness and kurtosis revealed that no values exceeded the recommended values of 2.0 for skew and 4.0 for kurtosis (Leech, Barrett & Morgan, 2004). Variables were further screened for linearity, multicollinearity, and singularity. Visual inspection of bivariate scatter plots supported the assumptions of linearity. Multicollinearity was assessed through an examination of the correlation matrix, which revealed no correlation above 0.90, and Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values, which were deemed acceptable.
Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 7.2. Zero-order correlations were undertaken to explore the associations between men’s relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, general and sexual self-disclosure, conflict resolution strategies, and conformity to masculine norms. Inspection of bivariate correlations demonstrated significant relationships between conformity to individual masculine norms and relationship and sexual satisfaction. Significant negative relationships were observed between various masculine norms and the positive communication behaviours, namely problem solving, and general and sexual self-disclosure; as well as positive relationships between a number of the masculine norms and the three negative conflict resolution strategy scales, withdrawal, conflict engagement, and compliance. Significant correlations were also found between the various communication behaviours and relationship and sexual satisfaction scales.

Differences in masculine norms based on age. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to investigate whether there were any age differences in conformity to the 11 different masculine norms. Previous research suggests that the meaning of masculinity might differ across different age groups (e.g., Cournoyer & Mahlik, 1995). Participants were divided into three groups based on their age to represent the groups early
Table 7.2

**Correlations for Masculine Norms, Communication Variables, Relationship Satisfaction and Sexual Satisfaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>6</th>
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<td>Winning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td>.18**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.10</td>
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<td>7.03</td>
<td>13.52</td>
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<td>11.08</td>
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<td>0.40</td>
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<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.74</td>
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</table>

POW = Power over Women; Work = Primacy of Work; HP = Heterosexual Self-Preservation; Status = Pursuit of Status; Disclosure = General Self-disclosure; Conflict Eng = Conflict Engagement; Pos Prob Solving = Positive Problem Solving; Sexual Disclosure = Sexual Self-disclosure; RAS = Relationship Satisfaction; SS = Sexual Satisfaction.

*p < .05, **p < .01**
adulthood, middle adulthood, and late-middle to late adulthood (Group 1: 18-29 years, n = 83; Group 2: 30–45 years, n = 85; Group 3: 46-71 years, n = 55). Results did not yield any significant differences between the three different age groups on the masculinity subscales, F (11, 210) = 1.37, p > .05 (see Table 7.3).

Table 7.3

Comparison of Means on Masculinity Norms between Different Age Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>18-29</th>
<th>30-45</th>
<th>46-71</th>
<th>F (2, 220)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
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<td>.56</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>POW</td>
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<td>0.83</td>
<td>.40</td>
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<td>Dominance</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playboy</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
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<td>Self-Reliance</td>
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<td>.51</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>.38</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. HP = Heterosexual Self-Preservation; EC = Emotional Control; POW = Power Over Women; Work = Primacy of Work;

Differences in relationship satisfaction based on age and relationship type. A two-way, between-groups analysis of variance (two-way ANOVA) was performed to explore the individual and joint effect of age and relationship type on relationship satisfaction. Relationship types comprised of three groups: dating (n = 74), cohabitating (n = 54), and married (n = 95). Results did not show a significant interaction effect, F (4, 214) = 1.09, p > .05. Results also did not yield a statistically significant main effect for age group, F (2, 214) = 1.34, p > .05, or relationship type, F (2, 214) = 0.91, p > .05.

Differences in sexual satisfaction based on age and relationship type. A two-way, between-groups analysis of variance (two-way ANOVA)
was then conducted to explore the individual and joint effect of age and relationship type on sexual satisfaction. The interaction effect did not reach statistical significance, \( F(4, 214) = 1.83, p > .05 \). Results did not show a significant main effect for age group, \( F(2, 214) = .63, p > .05 \), or relationship type, \( F(2, 214) = 1.58, p > .05 \).

**Primary Analysis - Path Model**

Path analysis was conducted to test the proposed conceptual model of the relationships between conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on relationship and sexual factors. Path analysis is a form of structural equation modeling that assesses how well a proposed theoretical model explains the interrelationships among a set of observed variables (i.e., whether the model fits the data) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Model fit is generally evaluated using a combination of fit indices categorized into absolute and incremental fit indexes. An absolute fit index measures how well an a priori model fits the observed data, while an incremental fit index compares the fit of the proposed model with a null or baseline model (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The most fundamental and traditionally used fit statistic is the absolute fit index, likelihood ratio chi-square (\( \chi^2 \)) that assesses the extent of the difference between the observed and estimated variance-covariance matrices. A non-significant result indicates that the actual and predicted variance-covariance matrices are not significantly different, suggesting that the proposed model fits the observed data well (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Weston & Gore, 2006). However, the chi-square value can be misleading, as it is sensitive to large sample sizes and, as such, tends to yield a significant probability level. Therefore, a model may
be rejected despite being a close fit to the observed data (Hooper et al., 2008; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Weston & Gore, 2006). Given the limitations of the chi-square statistic, consideration of additional fit indices is necessary to determine model fit.

Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend supplementing the $\chi^2$ statistic using a combination of absolute fit indices, The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardised Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR), and incremental fit indices, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). The RMSEA indicates how well the model would fit the covariance matrix with unknown parameter estimates (Hooper et al., 2008). Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested that values of less than .08 were of adequate fit, with cut off values less than .06 indicating good fit. The SRMR is the square root of the difference between the residuals of the sample covariance matrix and hypothesized covariance model (Hooper et al., 2008). Values of less than .06 are recommended for good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The CFI compares the sample covariance matrix with an uncorrelated null model, and is less affected by sample size. Similarly, the TLI also compares the model to the null model but differs in that the estimation takes into account model parsimony. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested cut-off values between 0.90 and 0.95 as acceptable, but should ideally be greater than 0.95 for both indices.

The present path model was tested in Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS 21.0; Arbuckle, 2012) using the default maximum likelihood estimation method. The model containing all of the observed variables was tested to examine the relationships between conformity to masculine norms,
communication behaviours, and the relationship and sexual outcomes simultaneously. In the model, the conformity to masculine norm variables were allowed to covary. In line with recommendations by Preacher and Hayes (2008), the residuals associated with the conflict resolution mediators were allowed to covary, as were the residuals of general and sexual self-disclosure. Initial testing of the model revealed a poor fit to the data $\chi^2 (12) = 58.40, p < .001; \text{CFI} = .96; \text{TLI} = .36; \text{RMSEA} = .13; \text{SRMR} = .04$. In order to improve the model and yield a better fit, the model was respecified based on theoretical reasoning and empirical grounds. The respecification process involved detecting model misfit by, initially, examining modification indices (MI) and standardised residuals to identify parameters to be freely estimated (i.e., added). Pathways were freely estimated one at a time, and each modification was accompanied by the chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$) in order to evaluate improvement in model fit at a significance level of $p < .05$ (Boomsma, 2000). Next parameter estimates were examined in order to identify non-significant pathways that could be trimmed from the model (i.e., deleted). Pathways were trimmed sequentially, and after each removal a chi-square difference test was conducted to ensure the modification did not result in a significant change to the model (Boomsma, 2000).

Inspection of modification indices and the standardised residual covariances revealed the need to freely estimate three additional parameters. Specifically, the first suggested modification involved freely estimating a covariance between positive problem solving and sexual self-disclosure (MI = 8.38). As this was theoretically acceptable, the covariance was added, which resulted in a significant improvement to the model and overall fit (see Table
Modification indices were examined again, which revealed the need to include a covariance between positive problem solving and general self-disclosure (M = 13.54). This was also considered theoretically plausible and resulted in a significant difference between the models. Further inspection of the modification indices revealed the need to freely estimate a direct path from positive problem solving to sexual satisfaction (MI = 7.99). From a substantive perspective, this modification would appear appropriate, as constructive conflict communication has been positively associated with sexual satisfaction (e.g., Badr & Taylor, 2008). Therefore, being able to positively resolve issues or concerns within the sexual relationship may lead to improvement in sexual satisfaction. The addition of this path yielded a significant difference between models and further improved model fit.

Inspection of the parameter estimates highlighted non-significant pathways that could be trimmed from the model. A total of two pathways were sequentially deleted from the model (see Table 7.3), and each removal yielded a non-significant change to the model, but improved model fit. As model fit was found to be excellent after the removal of two non-significant pathways, no further pathways were constrained. The final respecified model provided an excellent fit to the data, $\chi^2 (11) = 11.96, p > .05$; CFI = 1.00; TLI = .99; RMSEA = .02; SRMR = .02. The respecified model and standardised regression coefficients for all significant direct and indirect relationships between masculine norm conformity and relational satisfaction are presented in Figure 7.1.
Figure 7.1. Significant direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on relationship and sexual satisfaction. HP = Heterosexual self-presentation; Gen self-disclosure = general self-disclosure; Pos prob solving = positive problem solving. For ease of illustration, the error terms and covariances are not included. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
Table 7.4
Respecification of Path Model

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<th>df</th>
<th>$\Delta\chi^2$</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
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<tr>
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<td>8.99*</td>
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<td>.42</td>
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<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20.76*</td>
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<td>.69</td>
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<td>16.79*</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk → Gen. Self-disc.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
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</table>

Note. Pos PS = Positive Problem Solving; Sex Self-disc. = Sexual Self-disclosure; Gen. Self-disc = General Self-disclosure; Sex Satis. = Sexual Satisfaction; HP = Heterosexual Self-presentation; Risk = Risk Taking; Dash indicates $\Delta\chi^2$ cannot be calculated.

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

The model explained 31% of the variance in relationship satisfaction and 32% of the variance in sexual satisfaction.

Direct Effects

In regard to relationship and sexual satisfaction, only the masculine norm of playboy was found to be negatively related to both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. A number of significant pathways were found for the relationship between different masculine norms and communication behaviours. Specifically, the masculine norm of emotional control was negatively related to general self-disclosure and sexual self-disclosure. Playboy was negatively related to general self-disclosure, sexual self-disclosure, conflict engagement, and positive problem solving. Heterosexual self-presentation was negatively related to general self-disclosure and positive problem solving. Winning was positively associated with conflict engagement and withdrawal, and negatively associated with
positive problem solving. Self-reliance was positively related to conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance. Risk-taking and pursuit of status were both positively related to positive problem solving. Interestingly, the relationships between the norms of risk-taking and pursuit of status, and positive problem solving were non-significant in the bivariate correlation analysis but significant in the path model, indicating that a suppressor effect had occurred. This suggests that the inclusion of additional independent variables (i.e., the masculine norms) into the model increased the weight of the predictive utility of risk-taking and pursuit of status (Paulhus, Robins, Trzesniewski, & Tracy, 2004).

Significant relationships were found between some communication behaviours and relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, self-disclosure was negatively related to relationship satisfaction, while sexual self-disclosure was negatively related to both relationship and sexual satisfaction. In terms of the conflict resolution strategies only compliance was found to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, and positive problem solving was positively related to sexual satisfaction.

**Indirect, Meditational Effects**

Bootstrapping based on Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) technique was conducted to assess significance of the individual mediator effects in the path model, as bootstrapping in AMOS does not test for statistical significance of specific indirect effects in a multiple mediator model (Kline, 2005). Bootstrapping has an advantage over other tests of mediation (e.g., Sobel’s) in that it is considered to have higher power and does not require the assumption of multivariate normality of the sampling distribution of the indirect effects.
Bootstrap methods repeatedly sample the data and in each re-sampled data set re-estimates the indirect effect. This process is repeated thousands of times and provides an approximation of the sampling distribution of estimates from which confidence intervals are generated (2.5th and 97.5th percentiles for two-tailed significance with $\alpha = .05$), and used to determine significance (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Furthermore, it is important to note that mediation analysis traditionally required a significant relationship between an independent variable and dependent variable (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1996). However, more recently researchers (e.g., MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000; Shrout & Bolger, 2002; Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011) have argued that a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables is not a necessary condition for testing mediation, as suppression effects or error variance may obscure the total effect. Therefore, the significance of all indirect effects were examined, including those that did not manifest a significant bivariate correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

In the current study, point estimates and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects were generated based on 5000 bootstrap samples. Mediation is deemed significant when the confidence interval for the point estimate does not contain zero. Where there were multiple mediator effects for a particular norm on relationship or sexual satisfaction, the magnitude of each mediator was examined via contrast tests.

Bootstrap analyses revealed various significant mediator effects for both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. In regard to relationship satisfaction, the masculine norms of emotional control (95% CIs
[.274, -.053]), playboy (95% CIs [.249, -.035]), and heterosexual self-presentation (95% CIs [.127, -.007]) had a negative indirect effect on relationship satisfaction through general self-disclosure. Moreover, the masculine norm of self-reliance was indirectly related to relationship satisfaction through compliance (95% CIs [.159, -.017]). The indirect effects for relationship satisfaction are presented in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5

*Indirect Effects of Masculine Norms on Relationship Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Point Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>BC CI Lower 95%</th>
<th>BC CI Upper 95%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General self-disc</td>
<td>-.152</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>-.274</td>
<td>-.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playboy</td>
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<tr>
<td>General self-disc</td>
<td>-.119</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>-.249</td>
<td>-.035</td>
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<td>HP</td>
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<tr>
<td>General self-disc</td>
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<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.127</td>
<td>-.007</td>
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<td>Self-reliance</td>
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<td>Compliance</td>
<td>-.068</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>-.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. BC CI = Bias-corrected confidence intervals; General self-disc = General self-disclosure; HP = Heterosexual Self-presentation.

A number of significant mediated relationships between individual masculine norms and sexual satisfaction were found (see Table 7.6). The playboy norm had negative indirect effects on sexual satisfaction through general self-disclosure (95% CIs [-1.516, -.033]), sexual self-disclosure (95% CIs [-.976, -.026]), and positive problem solving (95% CIs [-.1.901, -.474]). The size of the three different mediated effects were not significantly different.

Multiple mediator effects were also found for the norms of emotional control and heterosexual self-presentation. Emotional control had a negative
indirect relationship with sexual satisfaction through general self-disclosure (95% CIs [-1.809, -.062]) and sexual self-disclosure (95% CIs [-.891, -.02]).

Heterosexual self-presentation had negative indirect effects on sexual satisfaction through general self-disclosure (95% CIs [-.825, -.011]) and positive problem solving (95% CIs [-1.074, -.057]). The size of the multiple indirect effects did not significantly differ for either norm.

Furthermore, the norms of winning (95% CIs [-1.742, -.244]) and pursuit of status (95% CIs [-1.254, -.074]) were found to have a negative indirect effect on sexual satisfaction through positive problem solving, while risk-taking (95% CIs [-.300, 1.653]) was observed to have a positive indirect effect on sexual satisfaction through positive problem solving.

Table 7.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Point Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>BC CI Lower 95%</th>
<th>BC CI Upper 95%</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>General self-disc</td>
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<td>Sexual self-disc</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
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<td>Playboy</td>
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<td>General self-disc</td>
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<td>.228</td>
<td>-.976</td>
<td>-.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos PS</td>
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<td>.346</td>
<td>-1.901</td>
<td>-.474</td>
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<tr>
<td>HP</td>
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<tr>
<td>General self-disc</td>
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<td>-.825</td>
<td>-.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pos PS</td>
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<td>-1.742</td>
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<td>Pursuit of Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pos PS</td>
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<td>Risk Taking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pos PS</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>-.300</td>
<td>1.653</td>
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</table>

Note. BC CI = Bias-corrected confidence intervals. General self-disc = General self-disclosure; Sexual self-disc = Sexual self-disclosure; Pos PS = Positive problem solving; HP = Heterosexual self-presentation
**Conclusion**

The results of Study One identified that men’s greater adherence to the norm of playboy had a negative direct effect on men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. Importantly, the present study highlighted the multiple pathways through which various communication behaviours may explain how distinct masculine norms are related to men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. These findings exemplify the importance of research examining potential mediators; as such the present findings provide greater specificity to the relationship between masculinity and men’s relational outcomes. The overall findings, clinical and theoretical implications, limitations, and future research will be discussed in detail in the discussion.
Chapter Eight

Study Two

Study Aims and Hypotheses

The main goal of Study Two is to examine the interrelationship among women’s perceptions of both their male partners’ conformity to a broad range of masculine norms and communication behaviours, on women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. The study is designed to examine which particular masculine norms are relevant to the quality of women’s romantic and sexual relationships. A further aim is to investigate the indirect effects of women’s perceptions of their partners’ conformity to masculinity and communication behaviours on women’s own relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Specifically, the current study will examine the following hypotheses:

1. Women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms will be negatively and directly associated with women’s relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. Given that limited research has examined the effects of individual norms on relationship and sexual satisfaction, no predictions were made regarding the specific norms that may have a significant direct effect on relationship and sexual satisfaction.

2. Women’s perceptions of their male partners’ general self-disclosure and conflict resolution strategies will mediate the relationship between women’s perceptions of their partners’ conformity to masculine norms and women’s relationship satisfaction.

3. Women’s perceptions of their male partners’ general self-disclosure will mediate the relationship between women’s perceptions of their partners’ conformity to masculine norms and women’s sexual satisfaction.
Method

Participants

A total of 334 women participated in the study. After data cleaning (discussed in the results section) the sample comprised of 300 women aged between 18 years and 65 years (M = 31.96 years; SD = 11.06 years). All women reported being in a current heterosexual relationship, with 42.7% married, 19.7% in a cohabitating relationship, and 37.7% in a dating relationship. The mean relationship length across all relationship types was 7.04 years (SD = 8.11). Specifically, the average relationship length for married women was 12.79 years (SD = 9.37 years), for women in a cohabitating relationship it was 3.71 years (SD = 3.28 years), and women in a dating relationship it was 2.26 years (SD = 1.95 years).

The participants were primarily of Australian nationality (42.7%) with the remainder identifying as Northern American (31.0%), British (7.7%), European (5.3%), Asian (4.0%), New Zealander (3.3%), African (3.3%), Southern American (2.0%) and Middle Eastern (0.7%). The majority of participants had completed undergraduate qualifications (45.3%), followed by post-graduate qualifications (31.3%), completion of Year 12 or equivalent (20.0 %) and apprenticeship or trade (1.0%); 1.0% indicated they did not complete secondary school, while 0.4% did not specify their education level.

In regard to employment, 36.0% of participants identified as being employed full-time, followed by 30.0% as studying, 19.0% were employed part-time and 6.7% were employed casually. 7.7% were not in paid employment and 0.3% were retired. In regard to the type of occupations undertaken, 20.0% reported being employed in a professional role, 8.0% in
executive/management, 7.7% in healthcare, 6.3% in administration, 5.7% in consultancy, 1.8% in retail or hospitality, 3.0 % in teaching or lecturing, 0.7% in government, 0.7% in a trade, and 0.7% in the defence force; 2.7% reported their occupation type as “other” but did not specify the type of occupation.

The majority of participants reported an annual income of up to $50,000 (53.7%), followed by earnings of $51,000 - $75,000 (16.7%), $76,000 - $100,000 (8.7%), $101,000 - $150,000 (5.3%), $151,000 - $200,000 (3.3%), and $200,000 plus (2.3%); 10% of participants did not report their annual income.

**Measures**

- **Demographic Questionnaire.** Items on the demographic questionnaire included age, nationality, relationship status, education level, employment status and annual income.

- **Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003).** A modified version of the CMNI was used in the current study in order to evaluate women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to traditional masculine norms. The wording for each statement was adapted to reflect that the participant was assessing their perception of their male partner’s attitudes and behaviours. For example, the item “I am often absorbed in my work”, became “He is often absorbed in his work”. The CMNI is a 94 item self-report inventory that measures conformity to an array of traditional masculine role norms. The extent to which participants agree with each statement is indicated using a 4-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree to 3 = strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting a higher degree of conformity. The inventory consists of 11 subscales: Winning (10 items), Emotional
Control (11 items), Risk-Taking (10 items), Violence (8 items), Dominance (4 items), Playboy (12 items), Self-Reliance (6 items), Primacy of Work (8 items), Power Over Women (9 items), Heterosexual Self-presentation (10 items) and Pursuit of Status (6 items). Subscale items are averaged to generate scores for each individual norm. The subscales have been found to have moderate to high test-retest reliability (ranging from $r = .76$ to $r = .90$) and internal consistency. Please see Table 8.1 for past and present cronbach alphas.

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick, 1998). The RAS is a seven item self-report inventory that measures overall relationship satisfaction. Statements regarding how participants feel about aspects of their relationship are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = unsatisfied to 5 = extremely satisfied), with higher scores indicating a greater degree of satisfaction. Scores are averaged to generate an overall score of relationship satisfaction. The RAS has been found to have high test-retest reliability ($r = .85$) and internal consistency (see Table 8.1 for past and current Cronbach alphas).

Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire (Snell, Fisher & Walters, 1993). The MSQ is a self-report instrument that measures 20 psychological aspects of human sexuality. The 5-item sexual satisfaction subscale was used in the current study to measure women’s sexual satisfaction. Participants indicated how characteristic of them each statement is using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all characteristic of me to 5 = very characteristic of me), with higher scores indicating greater amounts of tendency. The sexual satisfaction
subscale has been found to have moderate test-retest reliability ($r = .76$) and high internal consistency (see Table 7.1 for past and current Cronbach alphas).

Self-disclosure Index (Miller, Berg and Archer, 1983). A modified version of the SDI was used in the current study in order to evaluate women’s perceptions of their male partners’ self-disclosure. The wording for each statement was adapted to reflect that the participant was assessing their perception of their male partner’s self-disclosure. For example, the statement “What makes me the person I am” was modified to “What makes him the person he is”. The SDI is a ten-item self-report questionnaire that measures an individual’s tendency to disclose personal and intimate information to a specific target person. The target person in the current study was the participant’s relationship partner. Items that are responded to on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not discussed at all to 4 discussed fully and completely), with higher scores indicating a greater degree of self-disclosure. It is important to note that the current study used only nine items as one item (“Things I wouldn’t do in public”) was erroneously omitted during uploading of the questionnaire onto the website. The SDI has been found to have good internal consistency for women’s ratings of their male partner’s self-disclosure (see Table 8.1 for past and present Cronbach alpha co-efficients).

The Conflict Resolution Inventory - Partner (CRSI-Partner; Kurdek, 1994). The CRSI-Partner is a 16 item self-report inventory that measures the frequency with which an individual perceives their partner as using different styles of dealing with conflict in a relationship. The CRSI-Partner has four subscales: Conflict Engagement (e.g., launching personal attacks), Positive Conflict Resolution (e.g., negotiation and compromise), Withdrawl (e.g.,
tuning the partner out) and Compliance (e.g., not defending one’s position).

Respondents rate the frequency with which they believe their partner uses each style of conflict resolution on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). The CRSI subscales have been shown to have moderate to high test-retest reliabilities ($r = .63$ for positive problem solving; $r = .65$ for compliance; $r = .71$ for compliance; $r = .81$ for conflict engagement), and moderate to high internal consistencies across the subscales (see Table 8.1 for past and present Cronbach alpha co-efficients).

Table 8.1

*Internal Consistencies and Scale Ranges for Current Measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Scale Range</th>
<th>Past $\alpha$</th>
<th>Current $\alpha$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CMNI Subscales</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
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<td>.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
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<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Over Women</td>
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<td>.87</td>
<td>.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
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<td>Playboy</td>
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<td>Self-Reliance</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
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<td>.90</td>
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<td>Primacy of Work</td>
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<td>HP</td>
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<td>.90</td>
<td>.91</td>
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<td><strong>CRSI-Partner Subscales</strong></td>
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<td>.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
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<td>.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
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<td>.90</td>
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<td>Compliance</td>
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<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Disclosure Index</td>
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<td>.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAS</td>
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<td>.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSQ - Sexual Satisfaction</td>
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<td>.97</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* CMNI = Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory; HP = Heterosexual Self-Preservation; CRSI = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory; Conflict Eng = Conflict Engagement; Problem Solving = Positive Problem Solving; RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale; MSQ = Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire.
Procedure

After approval was granted from the Deakin University Human Ethics Advisory Group – Health (HEAG-H) (Appendix A), the female’s version of the questionnaire was made available online at www.deakin.edu.au/psychology/research/floop and www.masculinitystudy.com.au. The questionnaire was formatted for use on the Deakin University website (Appendix D).

Participants were recruited through the internet via the social networking sites, Facebook and Linked In, as well as via paid advertising on Facebook that targeted Australian based women who met the eligibility criteria. Snowballing techniques were also utilised, which involved inviting participants to forward details of the study to contacts within their social network. Participants were also given the option to enter a prize draw for the chance to win one of three $100 Coles/Myer vouchers.

Participants who were interested in completing the questionnaire were able to access the study’s website via the advertisements, and were provided with a Plain Language Statement (Appendix E) at the beginning of the questionnaire which outlined the purpose of the study. Participants were also advised that the questionnaire would take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. At the conclusion of the Plain Language Statement, interested participants who wished to proceed clicked on the ‘I Agree’ link, and proceeded to the questionnaire. The completion of the questionnaire was seen to constitute consent to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria included participants who were not in a heterosexual relationship of six months or longer.
Results

Data Screening

Data were analysed using SPSS 21.0 (SPSS Inc, 2012) and AMOS 21.0 (SPSS Inc, 2012). Preliminary screening revealed that of the 334 female respondents, three had significantly incomplete surveys and were therefore, excluded from the analyses. Five participants did not specify the length of their relationship and fourteen indicated they had been in a relationship for less than six months, hence these cases were also deleted. Remaining missing values comprised fewer than 2% of responses and were distributed randomly across the items and sample. To preserve statistical power, these were substituted with the group mean value for the variable, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007).

All variables were screened for univariate and multivariate outliers. Visual inspection of box plots and histograms revealed the presence of extreme outliers across subscales of the CMNI, MSQ and CRSI, and the RAS and SDI. In accordance with recommendations by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), raw scores on variables for the univariate outliers were recoded to one unit larger or equal to the next most extreme score in the distribution in order to retain the meaning of the raw score, whilst reducing the impact of the outlier. Multivariate outliers were inspected by Mahalanobis distance. Seven multivariate outliers were detected as indicated by individual scores exceeding the critical value (p < .001), and were subsequently deleted. As a result of the changes described above, the final sample consisted of 300 participants.

Assumptions of normality were checked by examining skew and kurtosis values, frequency histograms, expected normality probability plots,
and detrended expected normal plots. Examination of skewness and kurtosis revealed that no values exceeded the recommended values of 2.0 for skew and 4.0 for kurtosis (Leech et al., 2004). Variables were further screened for linearity, multicollinearity and singularity. Visual inspection of bivariate scatter plots supported the assumptions of linearity. Multicollinearity was assessed through an examination of the correlation matrix, which revealed no correlation above 0.90, and Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values, which were deemed acceptable.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 8.2. Zero-order correlations were performed to examine the associations between women’s relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and the perceptions of their partners’ conformity to masculine norms, general self-disclosure and conflict resolution strategies. Inspection of bivariate correlations demonstrated significant relationships between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ adherence to different masculinity norms, and women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. A number of significant negative relationships were observed between women’s ratings of their partners’ conformity to various individual masculine norms and ratings of their partners’ general self-disclosure and positive problem solving. Similarly, various positive relationships were found between a number of the masculine norms and conflict resolution tactics of withdrawal, conflict engagement, and compliance, as evaluated by the female partner. Significant correlations were also observed between the different communication behaviours and relationship and sexual satisfaction scales.
Differences in relationship satisfaction based on age and relationship type. A two-way, between-groups analysis of variance (two-way ANOVA) was undertaken to explore the individual and joint effects of age and relationship type on relationship satisfaction. As per Study One, participants were divided into three groups based on their age to represent the groups early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late-middle adulthood (Group 1: 18–29 years, n = 144; Group 2: 30–45 years, n = 120; Group 3: 46–65 years, n = 36). Relationship types comprised of three groups: dating (n = 113), cohabitating (n = 59), and married (n = 128). Levene’s test of equality of error variances was significant \( F = (8, 291) = 2.20, p < .05 \). Therefore, an adjusted significance level was set \( p < .01 \) for the interpretation of the results. There was a statistically significant interaction effect, \( F (4, 291) = 3.99, p < .01 \). As a significant interaction effect was found, a follow-up univariate ANOVA was performed to further explore this relationship. Hence, the effect of relationship type on relationship satisfaction for the different age groups was examined. Results demonstrated that there were no significant differences between the relationship types for either the 18–29 year old, \( F (2, 141) = .313, p > .05 \), or 30–45 year old, \( F (2, 117) = 1.77, p > .05 \), age groups. A significant difference was found between the different relationship types for the 46–65 year old age group, \( F (2, 33) = 8.34, p < .01 \). Post-hoc comparisons, using the Tukey HSD test, indicated that the mean score for the dating group (\( M = 2.29, SD = .00 \)) was significantly different from the cohabitating (\( M = 4.63, SD = .60 \)) and married (\( M = 4.11 \)) groups. However, based on the
Table 8.2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Masculine Norms, Communication Variables, Relationship Satisfaction and Sexual Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>4. Violence</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>-.38**</td>
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<td>5. POW</td>
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<td>.44**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.47**</td>
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<td>6. Dominance</td>
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<td>.26**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.33**</td>
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<td>7. Playboy</td>
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<td>.40**</td>
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<td>.39**</td>
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<td>8. Self-Reliance</td>
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<td>.57**</td>
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<td>.23**</td>
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<td>17. RAS</td>
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<td>-.39**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.47**</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>-.46**</td>
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<td>-.27**</td>
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<td>.49**</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
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<td>18. SS</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
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<td>6.84</td>
<td>12.51</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>4.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POW = Power over Women; Work = Primacy of Work; HP = Heterosexual Self-Preservation; Status = Pursuit of Status; Disclosure = General Self-disclosure; Conflict Eng = Conflict Engagement; Pos Prob Solving = Positive Problem Solving; RAS = Relationship Satisfaction; SS = Sexual Satisfaction.

* p < .05, ** p < .01
extremely small sample size in the dating group (n=2) it was decided not to control for age or relationship type in the primary analysis.

**Differences in sexual satisfaction based on age and relationship type.** A two-way, between-groups analysis of variance (two-way ANOVA) was then conducted to explore the individual and joint effect of age and relationship type on sexual satisfaction. The interaction effect, F (4, 291) = 1.78, p > .05, did not reach statistical significance. There was a statistically significant main effect for relationship type, F (2, 291) = 3.37, p < .05, although the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .02). Post-hoc comparisons, using the Tukey HSD test, indicated that the mean score for the married group (M = 11.66, SD = 6.66) was significantly lower compared to both the dating (M = 14.72, SD = 5.45) and cohabitating (M = 14.22, SD = 4.88) groups. The dating and cohabitating groups did not show a significant difference. The main effect for age, F (2, 297) = 1.42, p > .05, was not statistically significant. Based on the above results relationship type was controlled for in the path analysis.

**Primary Analysis - Path Model**

Path analysis was undertaken in Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS 21.0; Arbuckle, 2012) to test the proposed conceptual model of the interrelationships between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. As described in Study One, path analysis is a form of structural equation modeling that assesses how well a proposed theoretical model explains the interrelationships among a set of observed variables (i.e., whether the model fits the data) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The
The default maximum likelihood estimation method was utilized and model fit was evaluated based on the same principles as described in Study One.

The model containing all of the observed variables was tested to examine the relationships between conformity to masculine norms, communication behaviours, and the relationship and sexual factors simultaneously. In the model, the conformity to masculine norm variables were allowed to covary. In line with recommendations by Preacher and Hayes (2008), the residuals associated with the conflict resolution mediators were allowed to covary. Initial testing of the model revealed a poor fit to the data \( \chi^2 (25) = 120.28, p < .001; \ CFI = .954; \ TLI = .684; \ RMSEA = .113; \ SRMR = .050 \). In order to improve the model and yield a better fit, the model was respecified based on theoretical reasoning and empirical grounds. The respecification process involved detecting model misfit by, initially, examining modification indices (MI) to identify parameters to be freely estimated (i.e., added). Pathways were freely estimated one at a time, and each modification was accompanied by the chi-square difference test \( (\Delta\chi^2) \) in order to evaluate improvement in model fit at a significance level of \( p < .05 \) (Boomsma, 2000). Next parameter estimates were examined in order to identify non-significant pathways that could be trimmed from the model (i.e., deleted). Pathways were trimmed sequentially, and after each removal a chi-square difference test was conducted to ensure the modification did not result in a significant change to the model (Boomsma, 2000). The respecification of the model was based on theoretical reasoning and empirical grounds.

Inspection of modification indices and the standardized residual covariances revealed the need to freely estimate four additional parameters
(see Table 8.3). Specifically, the first suggested modification involved freely estimating a covariance between compliance and general self-disclosure (MI = 14.49). As this was theoretically acceptable, the covariance was added, which resulted in a significant improvement to the model and overall fit (see Table 8.2). Modification indices were examined again, which revealed the need to include a covariance between withdrawal and general self-disclosure (MI = 11.38). This was also considered theoretically plausible and resulted in a significant improvement in the fit of the model. A further suggested modification involved freely estimating a covariance between positive problem solving and general self-disclosure (MI = 13.58). The covariance was added as this was also theoretically acceptable, and yielded a significant improvement to the model. Consistent with Study One, further inspection of the modification indices revealed the need to freely estimate a direct path from positive problem solving to sexual satisfaction (MI = 10.23). As described in Study One, this modification would appear appropriate as constructive conflict communication has been positively associated with sexual satisfaction (e.g., Badr & Taylor, 2009). Therefore, being able to positively resolve issues or concerns within the sexual relationship may lead to improvement in sexual satisfaction. The addition of this path yielded a significant difference between models and further improved model fit.

Inspection of the parameter estimates highlighted a number of non-significant pathways that could be trimmed from the model. The removal of non-significant pathways, based on theoretical reasoning, facilitates a more parsimonious model (Kline, 2005). A total of ten pathways were sequentially deleted from the model (see Table 8.3), and each removal yielded a non-
significant change to the model, but improved model fit. The final respecified
model provided a very good fit to the data, $\chi^2 (31) = 51.56, p < .05; \text{CFI} = .99; \text{TLI} = .95; \text{RMSEA} = .05; \text{SRMR} = .03$. The respecified model and
standardised regression coefficients for all significant direct and indirect
relationships between conformity to masculine norms and relational
satisfaction are presented in Figure 8.1.

Table 8.3

Respecification of Path Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathways</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\Delta\chi^2$</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Model</td>
<td>120.28***</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freely Estimated Pathways</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-disc $\leftrightarrow$ Compliance</td>
<td>103.64***</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.64***</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-disc $\leftrightarrow$ Withdrawal</td>
<td>88.42***</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15.22***</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-disc $\leftrightarrow$ Pos PS</td>
<td>71.25***</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.17***</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos PS $\rightarrow$ Sex Satis.</td>
<td>50.70***</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.55***</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>Constrained Pathways</td>
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<td>Status $\rightarrow$ Compliance</td>
<td>50.71***</td>
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<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>HP $\rightarrow$ Compliance</td>
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<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>HP $\rightarrow$ Withdrawal</td>
<td>50.75**</td>
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<td>-0.03</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.91</td>
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<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk $\rightarrow$ Self-disc</td>
<td>50.75**</td>
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<td>-0.00</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>HP $\rightarrow$ Conflict Eng.</td>
<td>50.79**</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>.99</td>
<td>.92</td>
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<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk $\rightarrow$ Withdrawal</td>
<td>50.88**</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion $\rightarrow$ Compliance</td>
<td>50.98**</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work $\rightarrow$ Self-disc</td>
<td>51.12**</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work $\rightarrow$ Pos PS</td>
<td>51.22**</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Status $\rightarrow$ Conflict Eng.</td>
<td>51.56*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Pos PS = Positive Problem Solving; Self-disc = General Self-disclosure; Sex Satis. = Sexual Satisfaction; Status = Pursuit of Status; HP = Heterosexual Self-presentation; Conflict Eng. = Conflict Engagement; Risk = Risk Taking; Work = Primacy of Work. Dash indicates $\Delta\chi^2$ cannot be calculated.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. 
The model explained 49% of the variance in relationship satisfaction and 31% of the variance in sexual satisfaction.

**Direct effects.** Significant direct pathways were observed between two of the masculine norms and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, winning and power over women were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. No significant direct effects were found between any of the
masculine norms and sexual satisfaction, although a number of indirect effects were observed, as discussed below.

A number of significant pathways were found for the relationship between different masculine norms and communication behaviours. The masculine norm of emotional control was negatively associated with general self-disclosure and positive problem solving, and positively related to withdrawal. The playboy norm was negatively related to general self-disclosure and positively associated with compliance. The norm of self-reliance was negatively related to positive problem solving. The norm of power over women was positively related to conflict engagement. The dominance norm was positively associated with conflict engagement but negatively related to compliance. Risk-taking was negatively related conflict engagement. The norms of risk-taking had a non-significant relationship in the bivariate correlation analysis indicating that a suppressor effect had occurred. This suggests that the inclusion of additional independent variables (i.e., the masculine norms) into the model increased the weight of the predictive utility of risk-taking (Paulhus et al., 2004).

Three significant direct pathways between communication behaviours and relationship satisfaction were observed. Specifically, general self-disclosure and positive problem solving were positively related, whilst conflict engagement was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. Both general self-disclosure and positive problem solving were positively related to sexual satisfaction.
Indirect, mediational effects

As per Study One, bootstrapping based on Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) technique was conducted to assess significance of the individual mediator effects in the path model. In the current study, point estimates and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects were generated based on 5000 bootstrap samples. Mediation is deemed significant when the confidence interval for the point estimate does not contain zero. Where there were multiple mediator effects for a particular norm on relationship or sexual satisfaction, the magnitude of each mediator was examined via contrast tests.

These analyses revealed various significant indirect effects on relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. In regard to relationship satisfaction, the norm of emotional control had a negative indirect effect on relationship satisfaction through general self-disclosure (95% CIs [-.178, -.047]) and positive problem solving (95% CIs [-.108, -.016]). The size of the two different mediated effects were not found to be significantly different. The norm of playboy had a negative indirect effect on relationship satisfaction through general self-disclosure (95% CIs [-.125, -.011]). Self-reliance was found to have a negative indirect effect on relationship satisfaction through positive problem solving (95% CIs [-.105, -.013]). Furthermore, the norms of power over women (95% CIs [-.116, -.009]), and dominance (95% CIs [-.12, -.012]) had negative indirect effects on relationship satisfaction through conflict engagement. The norm of risk-taking had a positive indirect effect through conflict engagement (95% CIs [.004, .083]. The indirect effects for relationship satisfaction are presented in Table 8.4.
Table 8.4

*Indirect Effects of Masculine Norms on Relationship Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Point Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>BC CI Lower 95%</th>
<th>BC CI Upper 95%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>General self-disc</td>
<td>-.102</td>
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<td>-.178</td>
<td>-.047</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pos PS</td>
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<td>.022</td>
<td>-.108</td>
<td>-.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playboy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General self-disc</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>-.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos PS</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>-.105</td>
<td>-.013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Over Women</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Eng</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Eng</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.025</td>
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<td>-.012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk-taking</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict Eng</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* BC CI = Bias-corrected confidence intervals. General self-disc = general self-disclosure; Pos PS = positive problem solving; Conflict Eng = conflict engagement.

Various significant mediated relationships between individual masculine norms and sexual satisfaction were also observed (see Table 8.5). Emotional control had multiple negative indirect effects through general self-disclosure (95% CI [-1.75, -.413]) and self-reliance (95% CI [-.835, -.099]). Results did not show a significant difference between the size of these effects. The norm of playboy was also found to have an indirect effect on sexual satisfaction through general self-disclosure (95% CI [-.1.17, -.127]). Self-reliance was observed to have an indirect effect on sexual satisfaction through positive problem solving (95% CI [-.790, -.085]).
Table 8.5

**Indirect Effects of Masculine Norms on Sexual Satisfaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Point Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>BC CI Lower 95%</th>
<th>BC CI Upper 95%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td>General self-disc</td>
<td>-.976</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>-1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pos PS</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>-.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playboy</td>
<td>General self-disc</td>
<td>-.505</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
<td>-.350</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>-.790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes.** BC CI = Bias-corrected confidence intervals. General self-disc = General self-disclosure; Pos PS = Positive problem solving; HP = Heterosexual self-presentation.

**Conclusion**

The results of Study Two observed that women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to distinct masculine norms directly and indirectly predicted their relationship satisfaction. Women’s perceptions of their male partners’ patterns of self-disclosure, conflict engagement, and positive problem solving were found to underlie the relationship between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to various masculine norms and the quality of women’s relationships. The importance of communication behaviours as mediators was further highlighted by the findings that women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to varied masculine norms had only an indirect effect on women’s sexual satisfaction through women’s perceptions of the male partners’ level of self-disclosure and/or positive problem solving. The overall findings, clinical and theoretical implications, limitations, and future research directions will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Nine

Discussion

The current thesis aimed to understand the interrelationships among conformity to masculine norms and communication behaviours on relationship and sexual satisfaction of men and female partners in dating, cohabitating, and married heterosexual relationships. The studies were designed to clarify which individual masculine norms are directly associated with relationship and sexual satisfaction. Whilst a small body of prior research has investigated the role of traditional masculinity on relationship and sexual satisfaction, few studies have examined the predictive utility of a broad range of specific masculine norms. Furthermore, a paucity of empirical research has examined the processes that may underlie the association between masculine norm conformity and relationship and sexual satisfaction. Men’s communication behaviours were chosen as potential mediating influences given that different communication patterns have been shown to be predictive of relationship and sexual satisfaction. Moreover, men’s adherence to masculine norms has been demonstrated to manifest in their communication behaviours. Therefore, the current study also examined whether men’s communication behaviours mediated the relationship between individual masculine norms and relationship and sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, the majority of research has examined the role of masculine norms in men’s lives. As the socialised masculine role is thought to have implications for women’s lives, it is important to also consider women’s relational experiences of their male partners’ masculinity. Therefore, this study examined the variables of interest in relation to both men and female partners.
This chapter will explore the findings of Study One, which examined men’s experiences, followed by a discussion of the findings for Study Two, which focused on women’s experiences. The results of these studies will be examined and compared in the context of relevant previous empirical findings and theoretical propositions. Next, a discussion of the clinical implications of the integrated major findings across the two studies will be provided. This will be followed by an analysis of the research implications of the studies’ findings. Finally, limitations and recommendations for future research are provided.

**Summary of Findings for Study One**

The goal of Study One was to clarify the role of men’s conformity to masculine norms in their relationship and sexual satisfaction. Additionally, the study sought to understand whether men’s communication patterns mediated the relationship between adherence to individual masculine norms and both relationship and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, the study explored whether individual masculine norms predicted men’s level of general and sexual self-disclosure, and use of conflict resolution styles, which in turn, influenced their relationship and sexual satisfaction. The study further examined whether general or sexual self-disclosure mediated the relationship between adherence to masculine norms and sexual satisfaction.

A path model aimed to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of masculine norm conformity and communication behaviours on relationship and sexual satisfaction was utilised to test our hypotheses. Overall, findings demonstrated that the playboy norm had a direct and indirect effect on men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. The norms of emotional control and
heterosexual self-presentation were indirectly related to both relationship and sexual satisfaction. The norm of self-reliance was indirectly related to relationship satisfaction, while the norms of winning, pursuit of status, and risk-taking were indirectly related to sexual satisfaction. Please see Figure 9.1 for an illustrative representation of the findings for relationship satisfaction, and Figure 9.2 for sexual satisfaction.

Figure 9.1. Direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on men’s relationship satisfaction. HP = Heterosexual self-presentation; Gen self-disclosure = General self-disclosure; Reln Satisfaction = Relationship satisfaction
Figure 9.2. Direct and indirect effects of masculine norms on men’s sexual satisfaction. HP = Heterosexual self-presentation; Gen self-disclosure = General self-disclosure; Sex self-disclosure = Sexual self-disclosure; Pos prob solving = Positive problem solving.

**Direct Effects**

*Masculine norms on relationship satisfaction.* As predicted, masculine norm conformity was directly and inversely related to men’s relationship satisfaction. Specifically, it was observed that conformity to the playboy norm negatively predicted relationship satisfaction. This is consistent with Burn and Ward’s (2005) study, in which the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory was used to measure a broad range of masculine norms, found only the masculine norm of playboy uniquely predicted relationship satisfaction. The direction of this relationship was also consistent with Burn
and Ward’s (2005) study, such that men who are more likely to engage in non-relational sex and desire multiple partners reported being less satisfied with their relationships. This finding suggests that although attempting to conform to socialised ideals about being a playboy may be a sign of “manliness” (Iwamoto et al., 2014), paradoxically, it undermines committed relationships and reduces an individual’s ability to experience the relationship as satisfying. Put another way, men who conformed less to the norm of playboy reported being more satisfied with their romantic relationships.

Previous studies have found that men who tend to restrict their emotions report less satisfaction with their romantic relationships (Burn & Ward, 2005; Campbell & Snow, 1992; Sharpe et al., 1991). This was supported in the current study based on the bivariate correlation analysis; however, based on the path analysis, emotional control did not directly predict relationship satisfaction. There are two possible explanations for this finding. Firstly, in the context of conformity to other masculine norms, emotional control has less relevance to men’s experiences of satisfaction within their relationships. Secondly, an indirect effect was observed, such that men’s communication behaviours mediated the association between emotional control and relationship satisfaction, as will be discussed later. This finding highlights the benefit of evaluating both a wide range of norms simultaneously in order to better understand which norms are most salient to men’s relationship satisfaction, as well as the mechanisms that may underlie these relationships.

Similar to the findings of the present study, previous research has demonstrated that adherence to greater levels of traditional masculinity
ideology is associated with poorer quality relationships (Coughlin & Wade, 2012; McGraw, 2001; Wade & Donis, 2007). However, these studies utilised an overall score of masculinity. Given that masculinity is a multidimensional construct, the present study extends previous research by examining and identifying the individual effects of a broad range of masculine norms on men’s relationship satisfaction, and found that only the playboy norm had a direct effect on relationship satisfaction.

**Direct effects of masculine norms on sexual satisfaction.** As hypothesised, the present study found that masculine norm conformity was negatively related to sexual satisfaction. Specifically, it was observed that men who adhered to the norm of playboy reported less satisfying sexual relationships with their partners. This finding indicates that men who enjoy emotionally connected sexual relations and do not desire promiscuous sexual activity when in a relationship are more likely to experience higher levels of sexual satisfaction with their partner, which is consistent with the findings of Carpenter et al. (2009). An explanation for the current finding may be that men who are less interested in “scoring” multiple partners but prefer an emotionally intimate sexual interaction with their partner experience an enhanced sexual relationship.

Although no previous studies have specifically examined a range of masculine norms in regard to men’s sexual satisfaction, the current findings are in line with Sanchez et al. (2005) who demonstrated that conforming to ideal gendered expectations is associated with decreased sexual satisfaction. However, conformity to ideal gendered expectations was a subjective measure based on two questions. Therefore, the current study extends the empirical
literature by being the first study, to the author’s knowledge, to examine multiple dimensions of masculinity in regard to men’s sexual satisfaction.

Although there has been limited empirical investigation of the role of masculinity in men’s sexual satisfaction, the present findings support contemporary masculinity theorists who have asserted that adherence to traditional masculine ideology may have implications for men’s sexual interactions (Kilmartin, 2010; Levant, 1997b; Levant & Brooks, 1998). Specifically, endorsing beliefs related to non-relational sex and promiscuity are thought to limit a man’s capacity to fully connect with his partner and enjoy a sexually satisfying experience. Other aspects of traditional masculinity, such as emotional restriction and preoccupation with achievement and success, are thought to have conceptual relevance to men’s sexual experiences (Kilmartin, 2010). The current study did not observe a direct relationship between the norms of emotional control and winning on sexual satisfaction, but these norms were found to have an indirect relationship with men’s sexual satisfaction through their use of communication behaviours, as will be discussed in the next section.

**Indirect, Mediation Effects**

The results of this research supported the proposed model that masculine norms are related to men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction indirectly through different communication behaviours. Although potential mediating influences of various communication behaviours on the association between masculine norms and men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction has not previously been empirically examined, studies have demonstrated
relationships between these variables separately. Therefore, results will be discussed in the context of these previous separate findings.

**Relationship satisfaction.** In regard to relationship satisfaction, four significant indirect effects were observed as presented in Figure 8.1.

**Emotional control, playboy, heterosexual self-presentation, and relationship satisfaction.** General self-disclosure was found to mediate the association between conformity to emotional control and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, men who reported greater control over their emotions tended to engage in lower levels of self-disclosure, which in turn, was related to a lower level of satisfaction with their relationship. This result is consistent with findings in the literature that have shown that endorsing norms related to restricting one’s emotional expression is negatively related to general self-disclosure with a partner or friend (Bruch et al., 1998; Lease et al., 2010; Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006; Thompson, Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985). Furthermore, previous research has demonstrated that less general self-disclosure (Lee & Pistole, 2012; Meeks et al. 1998; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004) is associated with decreased relationship satisfaction, which was supported by the current study.

Although previous research has demonstrated that men’s beliefs regarding emotional restriction is negatively related to relationship satisfaction (Burn & Ward, 2005; Campbell & Snow, 1992), these prior studies have not examined potential mediating variables. As mentioned previously, the present study did not find a significant direct effect in the path analysis but rather observed a significant indirect effect. Hence, this finding adds to the literature by demonstrating that men who endorse emotional
control may have less satisfying relationships because they self-disclose less personal information about themselves to their partner. It may be that men who are emotionally stoic, perceive openly sharing personal information as a sign of weakness and vulnerability. Subsequently, sharing less information about their feelings, thoughts, and desires inhibits the development of a close and satisfying connection to their partner.

The masculine norm of playboy was also indirectly related to relationship satisfaction through general self-disclosure. Specifically, men who adhered more to beliefs regarding being a playboy were less likely to share personal information with their partner, which in turn, contributed to lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Although no prior studies have examined how the playboy norm might be associated with general self-disclosure, the present finding supports Mahalik and Rochlen’s (2006) study, which demonstrated that men who reported greater levels of conformity to the playboy norm would be less willing to talk to their wife/partner about experiencing symptoms of depression. Iwamoto et al. (2014) highlighted that the playboy norm is “reflective of a heightened sense of self-presentation” (p.8), and therefore, men who subscribe more to this norm may demonstrate their “manliness” by not opening up and sharing personal information with their romantic partner. It is important to note that the playboy norm was also found to have a direct effect on relationship satisfaction, as discussed previously. This suggests that greater adherence to the playboy norm is associated with decreased relationship satisfaction independent of men’s communication behaviours. As such, men who report greater adherence to the playboy norm experience less relationship satisfaction, in part, because they
are less likely to self-disclose despite the functional purpose it serves in a relationship.

Furthermore, general self-disclosure was found to mediate the relationship between the norm of heterosexual self-presentation and relationship satisfaction. This finding indicated that men who were more concerned about being perceived as heterosexual experienced less relationship satisfaction as a result of self-disclosing less to their partner. No previously identified studies have investigated the relationship between heterosexual self-presentation and general self-disclosure; however, the current finding is consistent with Mahalik and Rochlen’s (2006) research that demonstrated a link between men’s higher levels of conformity to heterosexual self-presentation and lower likelihood of discussing symptoms of depression with their wife/partner.

Moreover, the norm of heterosexual self-presentation has been linked to avoidance of feminine behaviours and attitudes (Mahalik et al. 2003). Men who conform to heterosexual self-presentation are more conscious about appearing heterosexual and fear being thought of as gay; hence, they may avoid behaviours that could be viewed as homosexual or effeminate (Iwamoto et al., 2013), such as sharing intimate or personal information. Indeed, research has demonstrated that beliefs regarding anti-femininity have been negatively correlated with self-disclosure (Thompson et al., 1985). The present results support Lease et al.’s (2010) finding that anti-femininity was negatively related to self-disclosure for Caucasian American men. However, the current findings were in contrast to Lease et al.’s (2010) results for African American men that did not find a significant relationship between
self-disclosure and the norm of anti-femininity. It may be that there is no meaningful predictive association between these variables for African American men as their meanings of anti-femininity differ from other cultural groups. However, as the present study collected information regarding the nationality of participants, as opposed to race, conclusions cannot necessarily be drawn about the reasons for this difference.

In light of the above-mentioned previous findings, it was not unexpected that self-disclosure was found to act as a mechanism by which aspects of the masculine role, namely emotional control, playboy, and heterosexual self-presentation, were related to men’s relationship satisfaction. Hence, the current study extends previous research by examining the interrelationship among these variables in the one study. Furthermore, the present findings provide support for prior research that has demonstrated that intrapersonal processes (such as attachment styles) influences the extent to which individuals disclose to their partner, which subsequently, contributes to their relationship satisfaction (Lee & Pistole, 2012). The current study adds to the literature by demonstrating that alternative individual factors, in this case particular masculine role beliefs, manifest in men’s self-disclosure behaviours, which in turn, are related to their relationship experiences.

**Self-reliance and relationship satisfaction.** The conflict resolution style of compliance was observed to mediate the relationship between self-reliance and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, men who reported greater adherence to self-reliance tended to be more compliant when resolving conflicts, which in turn, was related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction. No previous studies have examined masculine norm conformity
specifically in relation to compliance, and therefore, the current study extends the literature by examining the interrelationships among these variables on relationship satisfaction. Mahalik and Burns (2011) assert that, “men who manage their problems through self-reliance may lack sufficient social and emotional resources to cope with their difficulties” (p. 348). Therefore, it may be that men who prefer to independently manage problems may find it easier to not defend their position and give in to their partner, rather than constructively present their side of the issue and discuss the problem, which in turn reduces their relationship satisfaction.

Prior research that has examined the association between compliance and relationship satisfaction has yielded mixed results. The present findings are consistent Hanzal and Segrin’s (2009) results that demonstrated a negative bivariate correlation between men’s use of compliance and their relationship satisfaction. However, when all four conflict resolution styles, as measured by the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory, were entered simultaneously in the path analysis, the direct effect was non-significant. Furthermore, the results are inconsistent with studies that have reported a non-significant relationship between men’s use of compliance and their relationship satisfaction based on cross-sectional data (Sierau & Herzberg, 2012), and longitudinal data (Kurdek, 1994). An explanation for the present findings might be that the use of compliance tactics among men who adhere to the norm of self-reliance, prefer to handle problems on their own, which ultimately does not resolve their relationship issues, which in turn, increases a feeling of dissatisfaction with the relationship.
**Sexual satisfaction.** As expected, various mediated effects were found for the relationship between different masculine norms and sexual satisfaction as presented in Figure 9.2.

**Playboy and sexual satisfaction.** The playboy norm was found to have negative indirect effects through self-disclosure, sexual self-disclosure, and positive problem solving. Specifically, men who endorsed greater levels of the playboy norm were less likely to self-disclose about non-sexual and sexual matters or use positive problem solving tactics, which subsequently, was associated with lower levels of sexual satisfaction. Prior research has demonstrated a link between the playboy norm and self-disclosure, as discussed previously (Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006). However, to date, the empirical literature has not examined the role of masculine norm conformity in men’s sexual self-disclosure. The traditional masculine code of non-relational sex is thought to downplay the role of intimacy, which involves emotional closeness, connecting, and being vulnerable (Kilmartin, 2010). It may be that the intimate nature of and vulnerability inherent in openly communicating about sexual matters is inconsistent with conformity to aspects of traditional masculinity, and therefore, it is not surprising that adherence to the playboy norm is associated with difficulties in sexual self-disclosure.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated a positive association between both general and sexual self-disclosure, and sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2005, 2009; Mark & Jozkowksi, 2013; Rehman et al., 2012; Timm & Keiley, 2010), which was supported by the current findings. Timm and Keiley (2010) also found that sexual communication acted as a
mediator between differentiation of self and sexual satisfaction. This was consistent with the current study, such that individual processes influence the extent to which one will discuss sexual preferences, which in turn, is related to one’s sexual satisfaction. The current study adds to the literature, however, by examining how communication behaviours mediate the relationship between masculine norm conformity and sexual satisfaction.

Although not originally hypothesised, it was found that positive problem solving acts as a mediator between the masculine norm of playboy and sexual satisfaction. In examining the role of communication behaviours in men’s sexual satisfaction, the extant empirical literature has tended to focus on sexual and non-sexual self-disclosure, with few studies investigating the role of conflict resolution tactics. The present findings support research that has found that ineffective conflict communication is related to men’s poorer sexual satisfaction (Bardr & Taylor, 2009). This finding also supports related research demonstrating a positive relationship between constructive conflict resolution styles and men’s sexual functioning (Metz & Epstein, 2002). The current study adds to the literature by demonstrating that the ability to constructively resolve issues is important to men’s sexual satisfaction, as well as highlighting the benefit of considering antecedents, such as masculine norm conformity, to problem solving tactics when examining sexual satisfaction. It is also important to note that the observed direct effect of the playboy norm on sexual satisfaction, as discussed previously, highlights the robust link between men’s beliefs regarding sexual intimacy and promiscuity with their sexual satisfaction. Alternatively, this finding might suggest that there are additional potential mediating influences worthy of investigation.
**Emotional control and sexual satisfaction.** General and sexual self-disclosure were both found to mediate the relationship between the norm of emotional control and sexual satisfaction. As such, men who were more restricted in their emotional expression reported that they were less likely to share personal information or openly discuss sexual preferences, which subsequently, was associated with lower levels of sexual satisfaction. Previous research has demonstrated a link between masculine beliefs related to emotional control and self-disclosure (Bruch et al., 1998; Lease et al., 2010; Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006; Thompson, et al., 1985). Although the extant empirical literature has not investigated the association between traditional masculinity and sexual self-disclosure, it is not surprising that a relationship was observed between these variables. Discussing sexual preferences with a partner would be expected to require a level of comfort in articulating one’s feelings. As the traditional masculine socialisation process teaches males that emotional expression is a sign of weakness and therefore should be avoided, openly discussing sexual desires may be threatening to men who subscribe to this norm, as it demands behaviours that are in conflict with their traditional masculine identity. The current study adds to the literature by demonstrating that conformity to particular aspects of the masculine role influences the extent to which men will self-disclose regarding both general and sexual matters, which subsequently, has negative implications for their sexual satisfaction.

**Heterosexual self-presentation and sexual satisfaction.** The masculine norm of heterosexual self-presentation was found to have a negative indirect relationship to sexual satisfaction through self-disclosure and
positive problem solving. Specifically, men who endorsed greater levels of heterosexual self-presentation were less likely to self-disclose or use positive problem solving strategies, which subsequently, was associated with lower levels of sexual satisfaction. The current findings support the limited number of studies that have demonstrated a link between masculine beliefs related to the playboy norm and self-disclosure, as discussed previously (Lease et al., 2010; Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006; Thompson et al., 1985). To date, the relationship between heterosexual self-presentation and positive problem solving has not been empirically examined; however, the present results support Lease et al.’s (2010) finding that anti-femininity, which has been related to the playboy norm as previously discussed, was negatively related to effective conflict management for Caucasian American men. As mentioned previously, men who conform to heterosexual self-presentation may avoid behaviours that could be perceived as homosexual or effeminate (Iwamoto et al., 2013). Therefore, it may be that for those men, sharing personal information and openly discussing issues with a partner involves a degree of vulnerability that may be perceived as homosexual or feminine. Therefore, such communication behaviours may be avoided in an effort to prove one’s heterosexuality. As such, the present findings suggest that the male who is preoccupied with appearing heterosexual experiences less sexual satisfaction as a result of being less inclined to openly communicate or resolve conflict in a constructive manner with their partner.

**Winning, pursuit of status, and sexual satisfaction.** Positive problem solving was found to mediate the relationships between the norms of winning and pursuit of status, and sexual satisfaction. The role of winning and status in
men’s sexual experiences has not previously been empirically investigated; however, Kilmartin (2010) suggested that conforming to masculine expectations for success in sexual conquest, competence, and performance place unrealistic demands on men and therefore may detract from the pleasurable aspects of sex. Although a direct relationship was not found in the current study, the observed indirect relationships through positive problem solving suggest that men who are more driven to succeed at all costs or place greater emphasis on being perceived as important are less likely to use constructive strategies to resolve conflict, which in turn, reduces their sense of satisfaction with the sexual relationship.

The current results support Lease et al.’s (2010) finding that adherence to the norm of status was negatively related to effective conflict management for Caucasian American men. However, these results were in contrast to Lease et al.’s (2010) results for African American men, which found that the norm of status was positively related to effective conflict management. Lease et al. (2010) suggested that the differences in results might reflect the way in which these different groups of men assign meaning to the norm of status. For African American, the meaning of status “may reflect a sense of self-confidence, strength, and respect” (Lease et al., 2010, p. 203), that is manifested in greater competence in being able to manage conflict effectively. For Caucasian American men, valuing importance and attaining status may be more reflective of a competitive orientation (Lease et al., 2010)

Although the relationship between winning and constructive conflict resolution strategies has not been empirically validated, in related research, studies have demonstrated associations between husbands’ reports of their
gender role conflict and destructive communication behaviours (Breiding, 2004; Breiding et al., 2008). Specifically, the present findings were consistent with Breiding et al.’s (2008) study that found a positive relationship between greater levels of preoccupation with success, power, and competition, which has been associated with the winning norm, and husband’s criticism toward their wives. This suggests that greater conformity to the norm of winning may manifest in communication behaviours that hamper adaptive conflict resolution.

An explanation for the present findings may be that greater adherence to beliefs regarding winning and status may undermine the skills necessary to engage in constructive and adaptive ways of resolving conflict. Infrequent use of strategies that involve collaboratively resolving issues with one’s partner, may result in conflict being resolved in an unfavourable manner or conflict going unresolved, which generates negative feelings towards one’s partner and therefore inhibits a satisfying sexual interaction (Metz & Epstein, 2002). Further to Kilmartin’s (2010) proposition, if men who conform to the norms of winning and status are concerned about their sexual success, they may feel threatened by openly problem solving sexual issues, and therefore unable to resolve their concerns, which subsequently compromises their enjoyment of sexual interactions.

**Risk-taking and sexual satisfaction.** Positive problem solving was found to have a positive indirect relationship between the norm of risk-taking and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, greater levels of conformity to risk-taking was related to more frequent use of positive problem solving, which in turn, increased sexual satisfaction. Although no prior research has examined
the interrelationship among these variables, the observed relationship between risk-taking and constructive conflict resolution strategies provides support for theory and research that suggest that aspects of the masculine role may be adaptive in some situations (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013; Liu & Iwamoto, 2007; Mahalik et al., 2003). Indeed, adherence to the norm of risk-taking has been associated with courage, endurance, resilience, and self-esteem (Hammer & Good, 2010). One explanation for the present finding may be that there is an element of risk in the use of positive problem solving tactics, such as negotiation and compromise, that requires openly discussing and resolving issues with one’s partner.

Furthermore, the current finding provides support for research that has demonstrated that constructive conflict communication is associated with sexual satisfaction (Badr & Taylor, 2009) and sexual functioning (Metz & Epstein, 2002). Metz & Epstein (2002) assert that constructive conflict resolution may act as an “emotional aphrodisiac” (p. 156), by generating positive feelings toward one’s partner and improving sexual intimacy, thereby enhancing one’s sexual interactions. The current findings suggest that men who are more willing to put themselves in situations perceived as risky may be more willing to openly discuss and constructively resolve issues with their partner, which in turn, improves their experience of a satisfying sexual relationship. These findings add to the literature by demonstrating the positive outcomes associated with aspects of masculinity and the importance of constructive problem solving strategies in sexual satisfaction among men who adhere more to risk-taking.

Summary
In sum, Study One demonstrated that conformity to aspects of the masculine role was associated with men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction both directly and indirectly. Only the norm of playboy was directly related to both relationship and sexual satisfaction, which highlights the value of examining a broad range of specific norms rather than relying on an overall score of masculine norm conformity. Identifying the particular norms that are relevant to men’s relationships can provide critical information when developing intervention strategies when working with relationship problems and also in designing future research studies.

The present study highlighted the importance of communication processes in explaining how adherence to particular norms were associated with men’s relational satisfaction. Men who conform more to the norms of playboy, emotional control, winning, and heterosexual self-presentation were more likely to have less satisfying romantic and sexual relationships, in part, because such men were less likely to utilise constructive tactics when attempting to resolve conflict or share personal information with their partner. Importantly, the present findings also highlighted how traditional norms may benefit men’s sexual satisfaction. Specifically, men who conform more to risk-taking were more likely to use constructive problem solving tactics when resolving conflict with their partner, which in turn, was associated with increased sexual satisfaction. Identifying mediators has important clinical implications when working with men presenting with relationship and sexual satisfaction problems, as will be discussed in the section on clinical implications.
Summary of Findings for Study Two

Study Two was designed to further explore and understand how men’s conformity to masculine norms, as evaluated from their female partners’ perspective, may contribute to women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, the study examined the direct relationship between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ masculine norm conformity and women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. In addition, the study sought to understand possible mechanisms that may underlie the association between masculinity and women’s relational satisfaction. As such, the study examined whether women’s perceptions of their male partners’ general self-disclosure and conflict resolution styles mediated the association between individual masculine norms and relationship satisfaction. The study also examined whether masculine norm conformity was related to sexual satisfaction indirectly through women’s perceptions of their partners’ general self-disclosure.

The present findings were generally consistent with the proposed model of the interrelations between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ masculine norm conformity and women’s perception of their partners’ communication behaviours on relationship and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, women’s perception of their partners’ adherence to masculine norms were directly and indirectly associated with women’s relationship satisfaction. The hypothesis for sexual satisfaction was partly supported by the findings that women’s perceptions of their partners’ conformity to masculine norms were only indirectly related to sexual satisfaction through different communication behaviours. A visual representation of these findings
is presented in Figure 9.3 for relationship satisfaction and Figure 9.4 for sexual satisfaction.

*Figure 9.3* Direct and indirect effects of women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms on women’s relationship satisfaction.
*Figure 9.4* Indirect effects of women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms on women’s sexual satisfaction.

**Direct Effects**

**Masculine norms on relationship satisfaction.** As expected, women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms were directly related to women’s relationship satisfaction. Specifically, women who perceived their partner as adhering more to the masculine norms of winning and power over women experienced less satisfying romantic relationships. It may be that women who experience their male partner as being driven to succeed and win at all costs feel that he is less invested in and less able to nurture the relationship (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Furthermore, women who perceive their male partners’ as adhering more to beliefs that women are subordinate to men may feel undervalued and that they have less decision-making power in the relationship.

These findings are inconsistent with Burn and Ward’s study (2005) that found men’s conformity to the playboy norm, as evaluated by their
female partner, was the only norm that uniquely and negatively predicted women’s relationship satisfaction. It may be that the norms of winning and power over women are particularly salient for the female partners in the current sample, which was comprised of participants from a broad age range across different relationship types, as compared to the participants in Burn and Ward’s (2005) study that consisted of primarily young adult female students in dating relationships. A male partner’s endorsement of these norms may become more apparent, or the female partner may perceive them as more problematic, as the relationship progresses. For example, men who endorse beliefs that women are inferior may expect their female partner to assume primary responsibility for domestic chores and child-care tasks (Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006). Indeed, research has shown that women experience poorer quality relationships when their male partners have not assumed equal responsibility for household and child-care activities (Milkie et al., 2002; Ross & Van Willigen, 1996). Furthermore, it is important to note that although there was not a significant direct path between the playboy norm and relationship satisfaction in the current model, a significant indirect path through self-disclosure was found (as will be discussed in the section on the mediation analysis). As such, the current study extends Burn and Ward’s (2005) research by providing greater specificity in regard to how the playboy norm is associated with women’s relationship satisfaction by identifying a particular process that underlies this relationship.

In related research using the Gender Role Conflict Scale as a measure of masculinity, the current study supported previous findings that women who perceived their partners as more preoccupied with being successful, powerful,
and competitive (which has been associated with the norm of winning) experienced less satisfying relationships (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). This is also consistent with research that has found a negative association between husband’s self-evaluations of their adherence to success, power, and competition and their wives’ relationship satisfaction (Breiding, 2004; Breiding et al., 2008). Previous research has also observed that men’s greater adherence to emotional restriction, as rated by men themselves or their female partner, is negatively associated with women’s relationship satisfaction (Breiding, 2004; Breiding et al., 2008; Rochlen and Mahalik, 2004; Windle & Smith, 2009).

A significant bivariate correlation between emotional control and relationship satisfaction was found in the present study, but not a significant direct effect in the path model. However, negative indirect associations through self-disclosure and positive problem solving were found (as will be discussed in the section on the mediation analysis), which suggests that emotional control operates through other known predictors of relationship satisfaction. These findings highlight the benefit of examining possible underlying mechanisms of masculine norm conformity on women’s relational satisfaction. Furthermore, the current study adds to the literature by examining the individual effects of a broad range of masculine norms on women’s relationship satisfaction.

**Masculine norms on sexual satisfaction.** The hypothesis that women’s perceptions of their partners’ masculine norm conformity would be directly related to women’s sexual satisfaction was not supported. Although significant bivariate correlations were found for the norms of winning,
emotional control, violence, power over women, dominance, playboy, and self-reliance, the direct paths were non-significant in the path model. However, the norms of playboy, emotional control, and self-reliance were indirectly related to sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest that women’s perceptions of their partners’ conformity to the norms of playboy, emotional control, and self-reliance are related to their sexual satisfaction to the extent that these norms are associated with how their partner communicates in the relationship. Through identifying mediating influences, the current study provides greater specificity in regard to the relationship between masculine norms and women’s sexual satisfaction, and hence, reinforces the benefits of examining potential processes through which these variables are related.

A paucity of previous research has examined how men’s masculinity is related to women’s sexual satisfaction. The majority of previous research has examined women’s own endorsement of masculine traits using measures based on the gender role identity paradigm, which pre-dated contemporary theories that highlighted the socially constructed nature of masculinity. Results from this body of literature yielded mixed results, with studies demonstrating that masculine traits were either negatively (Rosenzweig & Dailey, 1989) or positively (Kimlicka et al., 1983) related to sexual satisfaction, while other studies did not find a significant relationship (Peters, 2002; Varga, 1998). Therefore, the present study extends previous research by examining how men’s conformity to masculine norms, as evaluated by their female partner, is related to women’s sexual experiences. The present findings support the Gender Role Strain paradigm and other contemporary masculinity theories (e.g., O’Neil, 1981), which suggest that men’s endorsement of
socialised masculine roles can have implications for those intimately connected to them. Furthermore, the results from the current study are in contrast to Kiefer and Sanchez (2007) who found that greater endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs was not significantly related to women’s sexual satisfaction. However, as the variable gender role beliefs was determined by a total score on items about both female passivity and male dominance, conclusions cannot be drawn about the specific role of masculine beliefs, in this case dominance. Hence, the current study adds to the literature by examining how men’s adherence to a range of different masculine ideologies is related to female partner’s sexual satisfaction.

**Indirect, Meditational Effects**

As predicted, the current results demonstrated a number of indirect effects of women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to masculine norms on women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction as presented in Figures 9.3 and 9.4. A dearth of previous research has examined potential mediating associations between men’s masculine norm conformity and women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction, with only a few studies having evaluated the mediating influence of destructive communication behaviours. As such, where appropriate the results will be discussed in the context of previous research that has examined the relationships between these variables separately. Please note, the indirect findings for relationship and sexual satisfaction will be discussed together where the same masculine norms were found to have an indirect relationship through the same communication behaviours.
Emotional control, relationship satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction. Women’s perceptions of their partners’ conformity to emotional control was found to have a negative indirect association with relationship and sexual satisfaction through their partners’ self-disclosure and positive problem solving, as evaluated by the female. These collective findings suggest that women who perceive their partner as emotionally tough and stoic, also perceive them as being uncomfortable with revealing their intimate thoughts, feelings, and desires, as well as possibly having difficulty attending to her emotional needs. Furthermore, it may be that when resolving conflict, the more emotionally controlled male may be perceived as unable to express his needs, or transforms vulnerable emotions into anger or defensiveness, which compromises effective problem solving. Such behaviours can prevent the development of an emotionally intimate and supportive relationship, which, for the female partner, can engender a sense of dissatisfaction with both the non-sexual and sexual aspects of the relationship. Conversely, as women experience their partners as being more emotionally expressive they may feel their partner is able to share personal information and resolve conflict in a healthy manner by openly discussing and negotiating issues, which helps foster a more satisfying romantic and sexual relationship.

Although no previous research has examined how women’s perceptions of their partners’ masculinity is related to women’s perceptions of their partners’ constructive communication behaviours, the current findings support related research demonstrating that men who report greater control over their emotions are less likely to self-disclose to their partner (Lease et al., 2010; Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006). As such, this study demonstrates that
similar patterns are observed when considered from the female partner’s perspective. The present findings were also consistent with research that has shown that women who perceive their male partners to have lower levels of self-disclosure experience less relationship satisfaction (Meeks et al., 1998; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004); as well as supporting related findings that couples’ and men’s own evaluation of their self-disclosure is negatively associated with female partners’ sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Mark & Jozkowki, 2013).

In regard to positive problem solving, the present findings support Lease et al.’s (2010) study, which demonstrated that men who adhered to the norm of toughness, which involves being emotionally stoic, were less likely to use effective conflict management strategies, such as discussing the problem constructively and respecting the other’s point of view. The current results are also consistent with research that has demonstrated that husbands who report greater adherence to higher levels of emotional restriction are perceived by their wives as being more prone to use wife-directed criticism, a communication behaviour that could compromise effective conflict resolution (Breiding et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the current study confirmed prior findings that infrequent use of positive problem solving strategies is associated with less relationship satisfaction (Hanzal & Segrin, 2009; Kurdek, 1994; Sierau & Herzberg, 2012). An unexpected finding, however, was the relationship between positive problem solving and sexual satisfaction. As per the discussion of the men’s findings, scant empirical attention has been given to the role of conflict resolution tactics in sexual satisfaction. The present findings support research
that has demonstrated that poor conflict management is associated with women’s lower levels of sexual satisfaction (Badr & Taylor, 2009). However, the present findings were based on females’ perspectives of the couples’ conflict communication as opposed to that of their partners’. Therefore, the current study adds to these findings by demonstrating that women’s perceptions of their male partners’ use of positive problem solving is also related to their sexual satisfaction.

Overall, the present study adds to the literature by demonstrating that women’s perceptions of both their male partners’ masculinity and willingness to self-disclose or resolve issues constructively contributes to the quality of their relationships. This highlights the importance of considering the female partner’s perspectives of the man’s beliefs and behaviours when working with couples. Indeed, research has found that actual partner self-disclosure is less important to relationship quality than perceptions of such disclosures (Brunell, Pilkington, & Webster, 2007; Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1996; Sprecher, 1987), as it is thought that, regardless of whether actual disclosure has occurred, the felt sense of one’s partner sharing personal information is in the eye of the beholder (Cohen, Schulz, Weiss, & Waldinger, 2012). This principle can be extended to men’s enactment of masculinity, such that regardless of the extent to which a man conforms to masculine norms, the female partner’s perception of his masculinity adherence may have greater relevance to her experiences of the relationship.

**Playboy, relationship satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction.** Self-disclosure was found to mediate the association between the playboy norm and both relationship and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, women who
viewed their male partner as conforming more to the playboy norm perceived their partner as less likely to self-disclose, which in turn, contributed to female partners’ lower levels of relationship and sexual satisfaction. An explanation for these findings may be that men who are perceived as primarily focusing on the physical aspects of sex are less likely to engage in “pillow talk”, a form of intimate communication and self-disclosure between partners immediately following sexual activity (Denes, 2012). As pillow talk is thought to enhance the development of the relationship and increase relationship satisfaction (Denes, 2012), female partners of men who struggle with emotionally connected sexual interactions may not reap the benefits of pillow talk. Furthermore, female partners may not feel completely satisfied sexually if there is limited opportunity to share intimate exchanges following their sexual interactions.

No prior research has investigated how men’s conformity to the playboy norm is related to men’s self-disclosure as evaluated by the female partner. However, the present findings extend related research that has demonstrated a negative relationship between men’s adherence to the playboy norm and self-disclosure (Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006) by demonstrating the same patterns emerge when considered from the female partner’s perspective. Furthermore, the current findings support Levant and Brooks’ (1998) proposition that men’s adherence to expectations of male sexuality, such as sexual conquest and being focused on the physical aspects of sex, can promote behaviours that are dysfunctional, in this case, an unwillingness to or difficulty with opening up to a female partner. As discussed previously, the subsequent association between men’s perceived low levels of self-disclosure
and women’s experience of poorer relationship and sexual satisfaction is consistent with prior research demonstrating a connection between self-disclosure and the quality of women’s romantic and sexual relationships (MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Mark & Jozkowki, 2013; Meeks et al., 1998; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). The current study adds to the literature by demonstrating the importance of perceived partner self-disclosure in explaining the relationship between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to the playboy norm and their relationship and sexual satisfaction.

**Self-reliance, relationship satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction.**

Men’s greater level of conformity to self-reliance, as evaluated by their female partners, was found to be indirectly related to relationship and sexual satisfaction through positive problem solving. Women who perceived their male partners as having more of an aversion to asking for assistance believed their partners were less likely to resolve problems in a constructive manner, which in turn, was related to lower levels of relationship and sexual satisfaction. It may be that the female partner of a self-reliant male feels that her input into resolving conflicts within the relationship is not taken into consideration, or as a result of the male’s own discomfort with seeking help, he has difficulty attending to her needs. If there are sexual problems in the relationship, the self-reliant male may feel responsible for managing these autonomously and avoid seeking his female partner’s advice in an effort to not feel emasculated. As such, the female partner may feel unsupported and disconnected from her partner, which impairs the quality of the romantic and sexual relationship.
Although the relationship between the specific norm of self-reliance and conflict resolution tactics has not been empirically established, the present finding is consistent with literature that has demonstrated that men who endorse norms involving beliefs regarding being confident and not depending on others are less likely to utilize effective conflict management strategies (Lease et al., 2010). As discussed previously, these findings provide further support for research that has found a link between the use of constructive problem solving strategies and relationship and sexual satisfaction (Badr & Taylor, 2009; Hanzal & Segrin, 2009; Kurdek, 1994; Sierau & Herzberg, 2012).

**Power over women, dominance, and relationship satisfaction.**

Conflict engagement was shown to mediate the relationship between the norms of power over women and dominance, and relationship satisfaction. As such, women who perceived their male partners as adhering more to power over women and dominance experienced them as more attacking and aggressive during conflicts, which in turn, was associated with less relationship satisfaction. To date, only one located published study has investigated the mediating role of men’s destructive conflict tactics on the link between masculinity and women’s relationship satisfaction. Specifically, Breiding (2004) found that husbands’ gender role conflict was indirectly related to wives’ marital adjustment through husbands’ use of hostile behaviours when resolving conflict. The present findings extend this research by elucidating specific masculine norms that women perceived as being related to their male partners’ conflict engagement tactics, which in turn, was associated with their relationship satisfaction.
These current results are consistent with related research that has shown that men who endorse beliefs in relation to power over women and dominance are more likely to perpetrate violence against their female partners (Sugarman & Frankel, 1996) and be generally more aggressive (Mahalik et al., 2003). The present findings also support previous research that has found that higher levels of masculine gender role stress (i.e. the extent to which men appraise situations as stressful or threatening to their masculine identity and ability to fulfill masculine roles) is related to verbal aggression (Moore & Stuart, 2004) and violence in dating relationships (Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002).

Furthermore, the present findings are consistent with Hanzal and Segrin (2009) who found that husbands’ greater use of conflict engagement tactics was associated with wives’ poorer relationship satisfaction. An extensive body of previous research has observed a strong relationship between couples increased use of destructive conflict tactics, including attacking and demanding behaviours, and women’s poorer relationship satisfaction (e.g., Cramer, 2000; Kurdek, 1994; Woodin, 2011). However, the current study adds to these findings by demonstrating that, specifically, women’s perceptions of their partners’ use of conflict engagement tactics is directly associated with their lower levels of relationship satisfaction, and also mediates the effect of women’s perceptions of their male partners’ adherence to masculine norms of power over women and dominance.

**Risk-taking and relationship satisfaction.** The norm of risk-taking was demonstrated to have a positive indirect effect on relationship satisfaction through conflict engagement. Specifically, women who perceived their male
partners’ as adhering more to risk-taking viewed their partners’ as less attacking and aggressive, which in turn, was related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Although prior research has not examined the interrelationship among these specific variables, the present finding is in contrast to related research that has demonstrated that husbands’ gender role conflict had a negative indirect effect on wives’ marital adjustment through husbands’ hostile behaviours (Breiding, 2004) and spousal criticism (Breiding et al., 2008). However, the studies by Breiding and colleagues (2004, 2008) used a global score of masculinity, as measured by the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS), which assesses the negative consequences associated with adherence to masculine beliefs, rather than the level of conformity to masculine norms per se (Mahalik et al., 2003). Therefore, the GRCS does not necessarily measure the possible benefits associated with masculine norm conformity. Indeed, Mahalik et al. (2003) asserted that adherence to masculine norms may be adaptive in some situations, and therefore the CMNI was designed to examine potential benefits and costs of masculine norm conformity as a complement to existing strain related measures (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2009). As such, the present study adds to the literature by demonstrating how men’s greater adherence to the distinct norm of risk-taking may be beneficial to men’s choice of conflict resolution tactics, which in turn, was related to a more a satisfying relationship for their female partners.

The current results are consistent with research that has demonstrated that the norm of risk-taking may be beneficial in some contexts, specifically in relation to men’s greater psychological strengths, such as courage and
resilience (Hammer & Good, 2010). Furthermore, the present finding supports emerging theory and literature that highlights the healthy and adaptive aspects of conforming to some masculine norms (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010).

Moreover, prior research has established a link between lower levels of conflict engagement tactics and greater relationship satisfaction (Hanzal & Segrin, 2009; Kurdek, 1994; Woodin, 2011), which was supported by the current findings. Specifically, the present results were consistent with Hanzal & Segrin’s (2009) findings that husbands’ self-reported lowered use of conflict engagement tactics were associated with wives’ increased marital satisfaction, and that husbands’ use of conflict engagement mediated the relationship between wives’ negative affectivity and marital satisfaction. The current study extends the literature by demonstrating a link between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ use of conflict engagement tactics on their relationship satisfaction, as well as highlighting the importance of male partners’ conflict engagement in explaining the association between women’s perceptions of their male partners’ conformity to risk-taking and women’s relationship satisfaction.

An explanation for the present findings may be that there is an element of risk involved in men refraining from using conflict resolution tactics that are consistent with male socialisation toward being aggressive and tough. Indeed, research has shown that men who deviate from endorsing traditional aspects of the masculine role experience group rejection (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). However, women who experience their partners as not displaying
macho styles of communication feel more satisfied with their romantic relationship.

**Summary**

The findings for Study Two show that men’s masculine norm conformity, as evaluated by their female partners, has implications for women’s relationships and sexual lives. Women’s perceptions of their male partners’ adherence to particular masculine norms were found to have both a direct and indirect association with women’s relationship satisfaction, but only an indirect relationship with sexual satisfaction. Elucidating the specific norms that are most salient to women’s relationships avoids the loss of critical information that can occur when examining masculinity as a total score.

The number of indirect effects observed in the present study demonstrates the importance of men’s communication behaviours in explaining how masculine norms are associated with women’s relational outcomes. For the women in the current sample, their perception of their male partners’ greater conformity to the norms of emotional control, playboy, and self-reliance were perceived to be associated with their male partners’ infrequent use of constructive communication behaviours, which in turn, was related to women’s poorer relationship and sexual satisfaction. On the other hand, women who perceived their partner as adhering more to the norms of power over women and dominance, experienced their partner as engaging in more destructive conflict resolution tactics, which in turn, was associated with less relationship satisfaction. Importantly, the present findings highlighted that women’s perception of their male partners’ risk-taking was positively related to women’s relationship satisfaction through their perception of their male
partners’ decreased use of conflict engagement tactics. Collectively, these results highlight the importance of considering potential mediating variables associated with masculine norm conformity and women’s relational satisfaction for the purposes of clinical interventions and future research directions.

**Clinical Implications**

The present findings have important clinical implications for interventions designed to address heterosexual couples’ relational difficulties. Before proceeding with a discussion of these implications, it is important to note that consideration of gender roles in therapy could arguably include an examination of femininity. However, as the focus of this study was in relation to men’s adherence to masculine norms, the present discussion will be limited to the role of men’s masculine norm conformity, from the perspective of both men themselves and female partners, in romantic relationships.

The present findings suggest that the extent to which men adhere to particular aspects of the socialised masculine role can play a role in men’s and women’s presenting relationship and sexual concerns. Hence, when working with couples or individuals, it would be beneficial to examine men’s personal constructions of masculinity, from both partners’ perspectives, and how these operate in the context of the relationship. To achieve this, clinicians may assess which masculine norms are most relevant to clients’ lives by directly asking clients about the role of masculinity in the male partners’ lives or using an inventory, such as the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory, which may produce a more comprehensive assessment (Mahalik et al., 2005). Once the salient norms have been identified, a discussion about the consequent
influence on the clients’ relationships would help determine if their presenting issues are related to masculinity concerns (Mahalik et al., 2005). Interventions designed to address relationship and sexual satisfaction problems might include targeting those masculine norms that contribute directly to problems in relationship or sexual satisfaction. Treatment could also target modifying those communication behaviours that are associated with poorer quality romantic and sexual relationships in conjunction with addressing those norms that manifest in maladaptive communication behaviours. Indeed, targeting communication patterns may initially prove more effective in improving relationship and sexual satisfaction, as communication behaviours may be more amenable to change than entrenched masculine beliefs, which can be slower to change (Breiding et al., 2008; Vogel et al., 2011).

A number of researchers have advocated for a gender-sensitive approach to therapy in order to facilitate greater self-awareness and understanding of the costs and benefits associated with conforming or not conforming to societal messages about gender (Mahlik et al., 2005; Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013; Faulkner et al., 2005; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2006; Wade & Coughlin, 2011). The Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory has been suggested as a useful tool in aiding the assessment and identification of potentially salient gender role norms in men’s lives (Burn & Ward, 2005; Mahlik et al., 2005; Parent & Moradi, 2009). The current study provides further support for the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory’s utility as a tool in understanding the extent to which men enact a range of different norms and their subsequent impact on not just men themselves but also their female partners. Although the relevance of masculine norms will vary among
individual couples, the present findings highlighted particular norms that may be particularly salient within dating, cohabitating, or married heterosexual relationships. Specifically, the norms of emotional control, playboy, winning, heterosexual self-presentation, self-reliance, power over women, and dominance were found to be most important with this sample. However, professionals need to identify the individual norms most pertinent to their clients, while avoiding discussing masculinity as a global concept or automatically assigning men to stereotypes (e.g., that men are emotionally inferior to women) (Burns & Mahalik, 2011).

Once the relevant norms have been identified, a useful starting point is to discuss masculine strengths by exploring situations in which particular norms may be adaptive in order to help build the therapeutic alliance and avoid pathologising or alienating men (Burn & Ward, 2005; Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013). Indeed, as was found in this study not all masculine norms were associated with problematic outcomes, hence, reinforcing the importance of exploring both the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of the masculine role. A discussion of strengths also serves as a segue into exploring and gaining insight into the difficulties associated with adherence to particular masculine norms. It may also be useful to identify and acknowledge how particular norms may conflict with men’s different roles. For example, conforming to beliefs about emotional control may serve a useful purpose at work among colleagues but the adherence to this norm in the romantic relationship may lead to his female partner feeling that he is emotionally disconnected from her and the relationship (Mahalik et al., 2005). If particular norms are identified as problematic to the relationship or either partner, then helping clients to buffer
the effects of masculine conformity, or reconstruct or develop more flexible ways of enacting masculinity, should ideally be incorporated into treatment (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Faulkner et al., 2005).

Psychoeducation on the role of socialised masculine norms in interpersonal behaviours and relationship experiences also forms an important part of therapy. The goal is not to pathologise masculinity, which can create defensive reactions and subsequently inhibit the therapeutic alliance, but rather normalise the impact of the masculine socialisation process.

Understanding the way in which gender roles are socially constructed can help clients see that gender is not innate and invariant but rather fluid and changeable (Burn & Ward, 2004). Furthermore, as Englar-Carlson & Kiselica (2013) assert, “masculine norms become problematic when rigidly enacted at the expense of other important needs” (p.402). Therefore, it is important to help men become more flexible in their enactment of masculine roles and develop an understanding of when they are adaptive, while steering them away from norms that can do them and their partners harm (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2010; Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013; Mahalik et al., 2005).

Adopting a gender-informed approach to therapy and examining men’s gender role conformity, from both partners’ perspectives, therefore, has the potential to improve the quality of heterosexual relationships. For example, the man who describes himself, or is perceived by his partner, as being uncomfortable with emotional expression or is overly self-reliant may have difficulty openly sharing his thoughts and feelings or discussing problems in a constructive manner, as was observed in the current study. These communication behaviours are necessary for the development and
maintenance of a connected and satisfying romantic and sexual relationship. Hence, an exploration of men’s gender role conformity with clients who present to therapy with communication issues may reveal how his particular socialisation experiences and masculine beliefs are influencing his communication style. Such a process can facilitate both an understanding of the source of his difficulties as well as cultivate empathy within his female partner for the pressures, and often contradictory messages, men face in developing their sense of masculinity (Burn & Ward, 2005; Mahalik et al., 2005). Psychoeducation on masculine socialisation and interpersonal skills can be used to help with developing an understanding of the presenting issues (Burn & Ward, 2004). This could be particularly useful for women who may hold stereotypical beliefs that all men are innately deficient in emotional skills by highlighting that such behaviours are learned and therefore can be modified. Reconstructing these particular masculine beliefs may involve reducing shame and identifying the benefits associated with emotional expression and reaching out to others for help, acts that reflect courage rather than weakness (Burns & Mahalik, 2011; Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013). In addition to teaching communication skills, it is also important to explore ways in which men are expressive or attempt to seek support. Men may express themselves through other forms of communication, such as physiologically through facial expression or body movement, that could be promoted as methods to facilitate self-disclosure or positive problem solving (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013; Wong & Rochlen, 2005). Additionally, in facilitating the development of constructive communication behaviours, these could be framed as behaviours that require personal courage and strength,
which are consistent with traditional masculine scripts (Smith, Tran, & Thompson, 2008). Indeed, the present study found that greater levels of conformity to risk-taking was related to more frequent use of positive problem solving, which subsequently contributed to men’s increased sexual satisfaction. As such, building on male strengths, as well as encouraging more flexible gender scripts, may influence the use of healthier communication behaviours, which in turn, would promote greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for the couple.

The clinical benefit of extending masculine gender role analysis to include the perceptions of the female partner is further supported by the results of the current study in regard to the norms of power over women and dominance. These particular norms were found to have relevance for female partner’s relationship satisfaction but not for the men’s. Possibly, men’s overall low endorsement of this norm contributed to this finding. However, from a clinical perspective, although conforming more to this norm may not have any bearing on the man’s experience of the relationship, he may not realise the impact it can have on his female partner and the subsequent implications on the relationship. Both norms were found to be associated with the female partner’s relationship satisfaction through conflict engagement. The use of attacking and aggressive conflict tactics may serve as a way for the male to exert his power and dominance in the relationship, which can hamper the co-operative spirit between men and women that is often necessary for healthy relationship functioning. Furthermore, female partners may feel fearful or angry toward their partner when they experience his attacking behaviours, which inhibits her ability to feel connected and safe in the
relationship. In addition, power over women was found to also have a direct effect on women’s relationship satisfaction. Hence, a woman who perceives her male partner as conforming more to this norm may experience him as displaying attitudes and behaviours that are disrespectful toward women and/or self, which affects her experience of the relationship. For example, the male may expect an egalitarian partner to be more subservient or may have expectations of her role in the home or workforce that are inconsistent with her views (Mahalik & Rochlen, 2006).

In light of these findings, if couples present with issues in relation to conflict engagement considering gender role related antecedents to these issues could form an important part of therapy. Additionally, masculine role beliefs associated with a power imbalance in the relationship could also be addressed. For example, providing psychoeducation on the harmful consequences of adhering to beliefs regarding power and dominance may help the male partner realise the impact his behaviours and attitudes related to these norms may have on his partner and the relationship (Addis & Cohane, 2005). The goal is not to pathologise masculinity but help male clients to distinguish adaptive aspects of masculinity from maladaptive ones that have negative interpersonal consequences (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2010). As such, the use of constructive conflict resolution tactics, rather than attacking or aggressive tactics, can be framed as behaviours that are consistent with healthier forms of masculinity. Indeed, the present study observed that risk-taking was negatively associated with conflict engagement, and therefore building upon this type of masculine strength may be useful in promoting adaptive communication behaviours.
As communication factors may be more amenable to change, interventions that focus on developing communication strategies may provide immediate relief to the couple as well as facilitate engaging men who are apprehensive about psychotherapy (Breiding et al., 2008; Wester, Christianson, Fowell, & Vogel, 2007). Focusing efforts on men improving their skills in communication and conflict resolution strategies without directly challenging their gender beliefs may facilitate the therapeutic relationship and underpin any future work that does address issues pertaining to their traditional ideologies (Wester et al., 2007). As mentioned previously the use of constructive communication behaviours may be positioned as being consistent with masculine strengths, such as courage and risk taking. Moreover, assisting men in developing more effective communication strategies could protect the couple’s romantic and sexual relationship from the negative effects of men’s adherence to particular traditional masculine norms (Breiding et al., 2008).

**Theoretical Implications**

The present study has a number of important theoretical implications. In regard to the broader male gender role literature, these findings provide further support for the gender role strain paradigm, in particular dysfunction strain, that proposes adherence to traditional masculine gender role norms can lead to negative outcomes for men themselves and those close to them. A large proportion of prior research has tended to focus on how masculine norms relate to men’s psychological outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, alcohol and substance use, and help-seeking behaviours, as opposed to relational factors. Therefore, the current study enhances this expansive body
of literature by examining men’s conformity to masculine norms in the context of men’s relationship and sexual satisfaction. In addition, the present findings provide empirical support for the second component of Pleck’s argument that men’s restrictive gender roles can contribute negatively to the well-being of those close to men, in this case the female partner. Specifically, women reported greater dissatisfaction with their romantic and sexual relationships, depending on the extent that they perceived their male partner conforming to certain masculine norms.

Importantly, the present study identified that the norm of risk-taking had an indirect positive effect on men’s sexual satisfaction and female partners’ relationship satisfaction. Conformity to the norm of risk-taking was found to decrease the likelihood of using conflict engagement tactics but increase the likelihood of using positive problem solving when resolving issues with one’s partner. Indeed, masculinity theorists (e.g., Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013) have argued that facets of the masculine gender role may produce positive outcomes. These findings provide support for the emerging body of literature that have demonstrated strengths associated with traditional masculine norms and highlights the benefit of exploring the effect of individual norms. Had the global score of conformity to masculine norms been used in the mediation analyses, these relationships may not have been observed. Furthermore, the current study supports the utility of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory as a measure to explore both the potential adaptive and maladaptive correlates of men’s conformity to masculine norms.

Given that masculinity is a multidimensional construct, the present study is a critical step forward in gender role research that has treated masculinity as
a unidimensional construct, by elucidating the specific masculine norms that are related to men’s and female partners’ relationship and sexual satisfaction. This highlights the necessity of a comprehensive assessment of men’s masculine role conformity in future research studies. In addition, the current study provides further support for the utility of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory as a research tool in examining how a broad range of masculine norms are related to psychological outcomes.

Furthermore, the current results provide support for the need to explore how masculine norm conformity is related to men’s and women’s sexual satisfaction. This area has been largely unexplored and the studies that have been conducted have relied upon limited or outdated conceptualisations of masculinity. Therefore, the present study was novel in that it examined the effect of a broad range of masculine norms on both relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Moreover, although identifying the specific aspects of masculine norm conformity that are most salient to men’s and female partners’ relational satisfaction is important to an improved understanding of this research area, it is considerably enhanced by considering potential mediating influences between these variables. A dearth of previous research has examined the underlying mechanisms that may explain the relationship between men’s masculine norm conformity and relational outcomes for men and their female partners. By identifying a number of significant indirect effects, the current study illustrates the complex relations between masculine norm conformity and relational satisfaction.
The present study also extended prior research by including participants from a broad age range and from different relationship types, including dating, cohabitating, and married relationships, hence allowing for greater generalisability of the results. Finally, the current study adds to the literature by examining gender from a gender role socialisation framework rather than a sex differences perspective. Hence, this study has facilitated an understanding of specific masculine gender role factors that contribute to differences among men and women in the quality of their relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several important limitations of the present study must be considered in interpreting the findings. The generalisability of the present results is limited by the sample’s demographic characteristics. The sample comprised of heterosexual men and women who mostly identified as being of Australian nationality and were tertiary educated. Future research should include more diverse populations in terms of nationality, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated that homosexual men endorse masculine gender roles differently to heterosexual men (Wade & Donis, 2007) therefore the results of this study should be replicated with samples of gay couples. Furthermore, the current study did not collect data regarding race/ethnicity. Prior research has indicated that masculinity may vary as a function of racial or ethnic background (Levant, 2011) therefore future research would benefit from coding for race/ethnicity and including participants from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

As the data were obtained from men and women in different relationships, the present results only accounted for the perception of one
partner. Therefore, for a more balanced perspective of the relationship, future research could benefit from using couple data to examine and compare these variables from the viewpoint of both partners. Furthermore, although examining men’s conformity to masculine norms is an important area of inquiry in understanding how the socialised masculine role is associated with the quality of men and female partners’ relationships, the present study was limited by only investigating masculinity rather than both masculinity and femininity. Therefore, an examination of how women’s conformity to feminine norms may be related to men’s and women’s relational satisfaction would provide greater insight into the relationship dynamics of couples. Moreover, as women may endorse aspects of masculinity and men may endorse aspects of femininity, future research could examine the role of men’s and women’s adherence to both masculinity and femininity and how this may relate to the quality of heterosexual couples’ relationships.

A further limitation is the cross-sectional design of the study, which means we are unable to draw conclusions about causal relationships between the variables. Furthermore, as path analysis assesses the fit of correlations in the data set, it is plausible that the temporal relations among the variables in the path model may be reorganized and that alternate configurations may yield comparable fit (Kline, 2005). Although the present path model appeared best aligned with the existing literature, future research that employs longitudinal designs are needed to assess and clarify the temporal ordering of the relations among the variables in the model.

The study was further limited by the use of a convenience sample that can lead to a reduction of variance in the variables under consideration.
(Breiding, 2004). Men who chose to participate in a gender role and relationship study may demonstrate less conformity to masculinity than those males who would not partake. Furthermore, the present study utilised a non-clinical sample, and therefore men and women who participated in such a study may be more likely to be satisfied with their romantic and sexual relationships. Indeed, preliminary results indicated that the present sample was generally satisfied with their romantic and sexual relationship. Therefore, future research could seek to replicate the findings of the current study with distressed clinical samples, which in turn, would facilitate a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between the studied variables within couples that might potentially utilise clinical services.
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Available from EBSCOhost psyh database.


Appendix A

Ethics Approval Letter

Memorandum

To Prof. Marita McCabe
School of Psychology

From Secretary – HEAG-H
Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing, and Behavioral Sciences

HEAG-H 138/10: The impact of masculinity on relationships and sexual adjustment

Approval has been given for Prof. Marita McCabe, School of Psychology to undertake this project for a period of 3 years from 4 February, 2011.

Please note that the test inventory contains grammatical errors. Please ensure that these errors are corrected.

The approval given by the Deakin University HEAG-H is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Secretary immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion
- Modifications that have been requested by other Human Research Ethics Committees

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

HEAG-H may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). An Annual Project Report Form can be found at http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/admin/ethics/human/forms/ which you will be required to complete in relation to this research. This should be completed and returned to the Administrative Officer to the HEAG-H, Dean’s office, Health, Medicine, Nursing & Behavioural Sciences, Burwood campus by Tuesday 22nd November, 2011 and when the project is completed.

Good luck with the project!

Steven Sawyer
Secretary
HEAG-H

Cc Ms Felicity Toop
Appendix B

Online Questionnaire for Study One

CONFORMITY TO MASCULINITY SCALE

The following pages contain a series of statements about how men might think, feel or behave. The statements are designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with both traditional and non-traditional masculine gender roles.

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement by selecting SD for "Strongly Disagree", D for "Disagree", A for "Agree", or SA for "Strongly agree" to the left of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your personal actions, feelings and beliefs. It is best if you respond with your first impression when answering.

1. It is best to keep your emotions hidden
2. In general, I will do anything to win
3. If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners
4. If there is going to be violence, I find a way to avoid it
5. It is important to me that people think I am heterosexual
6. In general, I must get my way
7. Trying to be important is the greatest waste of time
8. I am often absorbed in my work
9. I will only be satisfied when women are equal to men
10. I hate asking for help
11. Taking dangerous risks helps me to prove myself
12. In general, I do not expend a lot of energy trying to win at things
13. An emotional bond with a partner is the best part of sex
14. I should take every opportunity to show my feelings
15. I believe that violence is never justified
16. Being thought of as gay is not a bad thing
17. In general, I do not like risky situations
18. I should be in charge
19. Feelings are important to show
20. I feel miserable when work occupies all my attention
21. I feel best about my relationships with women when we are equals
22. Winning is not my first priority
23. I make sure that people think I am heterosexual
24. I enjoy taking risks
25. I am disgusted by any kind of violence
26. I would hate to be important
27. I love to explore my feelings with others
28. If I could, I would date a lot of different people
29. I ask for help when I need it
30. My work is the most important part of my life
31. Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing
32. I never take chances
33. I would only have sex if I was in a committed relationship
34. I like fighting
35. I treat women as equals
36. I bring up my feelings when talking to others
37. I would be furious if someone thought I was gay
38. I only get romantically involved with one person
39. I don’t mind losing
40. I take risks
41. I never do things to be an important person
42. It would not bother me at all if someone thought I was gay
43. I never share my feelings
44. Sometimes violent action is necessary
45. Asking for help is a sign of failure
46. In general, I control the women in my life
47. I would feel good if I had many sexual partners
48. It is important for me to win
49. I don't like giving all my attention to work
50. I feel uncomfortable when others see me as important
51. It would be awful if people thought I was gay
52. I like to talk about my feelings
53. I never ask for help
54. More often than not, losing does not bother me
55. It is foolish to take risks
56. Work is not the most important thing in my life
57. Men and women should respect each other as equals
58. Long term relationships are better than casual sexual encounters
59. Having status is not very important to me
60. I frequently put myself in risky situations
61. Women should be subservient to men
62. I am willing to get into a physical fight if necessary
63. I like having gay friends
64. I feel good when work is my first priority
65. I tend to keep my feelings to myself
66. Emotional involvement should be avoided when having sex
67. Winning is not important to me
68. Violence is almost never justified
69. I am comfortable trying to get my way
70. I am happiest when I'm risking danger
| 71. | Men should not have power over women | SD D A SA |
| 72. | It would be enjoyable to date more than one person at a time | SD D A SA |
| 73. | I would feel uncomfortable if someone thought I was gay | SD D A SA |
| 74. | I am not ashamed to ask for help | SD D A SA |
| 75. | The best feeling in the world comes from winning | SD D A SA |
| 76. | Work comes first | SD D A SA |
| 77. | I tend to share my feelings | SD D A SA |
| 78. | I like emotional involvement in a romantic relationship | SD D A SA |
| 79. | No matter what the situation I would never act violently | SD D A SA |
| 80. | If someone thought I was gay, I would not argue with them about it | SD D A SA |
| 81. | Things tend to be better when men are in charge | SD D A SA |
| 82. | I prefer to be safe and careful | SD D A SA |
| 83. | A person shouldn't get tied down to dating just one person | SD D A SA |
| 84. | I tend to invest my energy in things other than work | SD D A SA |
| 85. | It bothers me when I have to ask for help | SD D A SA |
| 86. | I love it when men are in charge of women | SD D A SA |
| 87. | It feels good to be important | SD D A SA |
| 88. | I hate it when people ask me to talk about my feelings | SD D A SA |
| 89. | I work hard to win | SD D A SA |
| 90. | I would only be satisfied with sex if there was an emotional bond | SD D A SA |
| 91. | I try to avoid being perceived as gay | SD D A SA |
| 92. | I hate any kind of risk | SD D A SA |
| 93. | I prefer to stay unemotional | SD D A SA |
| 94. | I make sure people do as I say | SD D A SA |

**Relationship Assessment Scale**
Listed below are statements regarding how you feel about your relationship. For each statement please select the response that best answers that item for you.

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?
   - A  B  C  D  E
     - Poorly    Average    Extremely well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
   - A  B  C  D  E
     - Unsatisfied    Average    Extremely satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?
   - A  B  C  D  E
     - Poor        Average    Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten in this relationship?
   - A  B  C  D  E
     - Never    Average    Very often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations:
   - A  B  C  D  E
     - Hardly at all    Average    Completely

6. How much do you love your partner?
   - A  B  C  D  E
     - Not much    Average    Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?
   - A  B  C  D  E
     - Very few    Average    Very many

Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire
Listed below are several statements that concern the topic of sexual relationships. Please read each item carefully and decide to what extent it is characteristic of you. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your current partner in mind. Then, for each statement select the response that indicates how much it applies to you by using the following scale:

A = Not at all characteristic of me  
B = Slightly characteristic of me  
C = Somewhat characteristic of me  
D = Moderately characteristic of me  
E = Very characteristic of me

1. I am confident about myself as a sexual partner
   A  B  C  D  E

2. I am very satisfied with the way my sexual needs are currently being met
   A  B  C  D  E

3. I am pretty good sexual partner
   A  B  C  D  E

4. I am very satisfied with my sexual relationship
   A  B  C  D  E

5. I am better at sex than most other people
   A  B  C  D  E

6. My sexual relationship meets my original expectations
   A  B  C  D  E

7. I would rate myself pretty favourably as a sexual partner
   A  B  C  D  E

8. My sexual relationship is very good compared to most
   A  B  C  D  E

9. I would be very confident in a sexual encounter
   A  B  C  D  E

10. I am very satisfied with the sexual aspects of my life
    A  B  C  D  E

Self-Disclosure Index
Listed below are a number of statements that concern your tendency to disclose to your partner. For each statement please indicate how much you have discussed the following topics with your relationship partner using the following scale:

1 = I have not discussed this at all with my partner
2 = I have only discussed this in general terms
3 = I have discussed this in some detail, but have not fully revealed my own personal attitudes/feelings
4 = I have fully and completely discussed this with my partner; they know exactly how I feel about this

1. My personal habits
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

2. Things I have done which I feel guilty about
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

3. My deepest feelings
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

4. What I like and dislike about myself
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

5. What is important to me in life
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

6. What makes me the person I am
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

7. My worst fears
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

8. Things I have done which I am proud of
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed

9. My close relationships with other people
   
   1  2  3  4
   Not discussed  Fully discussed
**Sexual Self-Disclosure**

Listed below are a number of statements that concern your tendency to disclose your sexual preferences to your partner. For each statement please indicate the extent to which you have disclosed on these topics to your **relationship partner** using the following scale:

Give each item a rating of how much it applies to you by using the following scale:

1 = I have not disclosed this  
2 = I have only disclosed this in general terms  
3 = I have disclosed this in some detail, but have not fully revealed my own personal attitudes/feelings  
4 = I have fully disclosed this; my partner knows exactly how I feel about this

1. I have told my partner how I like to be kissed

1   2   3   4
Not disclosed        Fully disclosed

2. I have told my partner how I like to be sexually touched

1   2   3   4
Not disclosed        Fully disclosed

3. I have told my partner how I like to have intercourse

1   2   3   4
Not disclosed        Fully disclosed

4. I have told my partner how I like to receive oral sex

1   2   3   4
Not disclosed        Fully disclosed

5. I have told my partner the type of sexual variety I like

1   2   3   4
Not disclosed        Fully disclosed

6. I have told my partner how I like to give oral sex

1   2   3   4
Not disclosed        Fully disclosed

7. I have told my partner how I don’t like to be kissed

1   2   3   4
8. I have told my partner how I don’t like to be sexually touched
   1 2 3 4
   Not indicated  Fully indicated

9. I have told my partner how I don’t like have intercourse
   1 2 3 4
   Not disclosed  Fully disclosed

10. I have told my partner how I don’t like to receive oral sex
    1 2 3 4
    Not disclosed  Fully disclosed

11. I have told my partner the type of sexual variety I don’t like
    1 2 3 4
    Not disclosed  Fully disclosed

12. I have told my partner how I don’t like give oral sex
    1 2 3 4
    Not disclosed  Fully disclosed

The Conflict Resolution Inventory
Below are descriptions of styles used to deal with arguments and disagreements. Please indicate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments and disagreements with your relationship partner, using the scale:

1 = Never
2 = Sometimes
3 = Frequently
4 = Almost always
5 = Always

1. Launching personal attacks
   1 2 3 4 5
   Never  Always

2. Focusing on the problem at hand
   1 2 3 4 5
   Never  Always

3. Remaining silent for long periods of time
   1 2 3 4 5
   Never  Always

4. Not being willing to stick up for myself
   1 2 3 4 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Exploding and getting out of control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sitting down and discussing differences constructively</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reaching a ‘limit’, ‘shutting down’, and refusing to talk any further</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Being too compliant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Getting carried away and saying things that aren’t meant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tuning the other person out</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Not defending my position</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Throwing insults and digs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Negotiating and compromising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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Appendix C

Plain Language Statement for Study One

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participant

Plain Language Statement

Date: 10/01/2011

Full Project Title: The impact of masculinity on relationship and sexual adjustment

Principal/Student Researcher: Felicity Toop

Associate Researcher: Marita McCabe

You are invited to take part in this research project.

This Plain Language Statement contains information about the research project. Once you have read this information and agree to participate, please tick the "I Consent" box.

The purpose of this study is to explore how different male roles and norms vary for men across different life stages, and explore how male gender role norms are related to men's relationships, communication styles and sexual well-being. The intended outcome is to provide a better understanding and conceptualisation of men's relational adjustment. It is important to understand factors that can lead to relationship and sexual satisfaction or distress in order to provide appropriate treatment in the clinical field.

A total of 400 men will participate in this project. This project aims to recruit men who are currently in a relationship of 6 months or longer, and are from a range of age groups and cultural backgrounds.

The project is being conducted by a postgraduate student as part of the Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) degree at Deakin University.

You are invited to participate in this research project because more research is needed to understand factors that lead to men's relationship and sexual satisfaction or distress.

Participation in this project will involve completing an on-line demographic form and questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 - 30 minutes to complete and will ask you about your attitudes toward various gender norms, your relationship,
communication and sexual aspects of your life. This can be carried out in your own time and in your own environment.

Some examples of the types of questions that may be asked include:

1. Do you tend to invest energy in things other than work?
2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
3. How does your sexual relationship meet your original expectations?
4. How often do you discuss with your partner what is important to you in life?
5. When having an argument or disagreement with your partner, how often do you “shut down” and refuse to talk any further?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** Deciding not to participate or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you may withdraw from the study at any time before the questionnaires have been submitted by closing your browser window.

Although we do not expect any discomfort to arise as a result of participating in this study, if completing these questionnaires raises any issues of concern please contact your GP or a professional counselling service such as Men’s Line, a 24 hour telephone counselling service ph 1300 789 978, Relationships Australia ph 1300 364 277, Beyond Blue ph 1300 224 636 or Lifeline 13 11 14.

All your responses will be completely unidentifiable. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research project. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but in any publication of the results, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, as only aggregated data will be reported. Any data you supply will be stored on a secure password protected computer and locked cabinet at Deakin University for a minimum of six years from the date of research publication, after which it will be destroyed.

The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University.

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact Felicity Toop on felicity@deakin.edu.au

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the research, the way it is being conducted
or any questions about your rights as a participant then you may contact Secretary HEAG-
H, Dean's Office, Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences, 221
Burwood Hwy, Burwood, VIC 3125, Telephone: (03) 9251 7174, Email hmüns-
research@deakin.edu.au.

Please quote project number HEAG-H 132/10
If you require further information or if you have any problems concerning this project you can contact the researchers responsible for the project. This includes Felicity Toop at (felicity@deakin.edu.au 03 9244 6858) and Marita McCabe at (marita.mccabe@deakin.edu.au; 03 9244 6856).

**Consent Form**

I have read and I understood the Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.
Appendix D

Questionnaires for Study Two

Relationship Assessment Scale

Please mark on the answer sheet the letter for each item that best answers that item for you.

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?
   A  B  C  D  E
   Poorly  Average  Extremely well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
   A  B  C  D  E
   Unsatisfied  Average  Extremely satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?
   A  B  C  D  E
   Poor  Average  Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten in this relationship?
   A  B  C  D  E
   Never  Average  Very often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations:
   A  B  C  D  E
   Hardly at all  Average  Completely

6. How much do you love your partner?
   A  B  C  D  E
   Not much  Average  Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?
   A  B  C  D  E
   Very few  Average  Very many
CONFORMITY TO MASCULINITY SCALE

The following pages contain a series of statements about your perception of how men might think, feel or behave. The statements are designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours associated with both traditional and non-traditional masculine gender roles.

Thinking about your partner’s actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement by circling SD for "Strongly Disagree", D for "Disagree", A for "Agree", or SA for "Strongly agree" to the left of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your perception of your partner’s personal actions, feelings and beliefs. It is best if you respond with your first impression when answering.

95. He believes it is best to keep emotions hidden  
   SD  D  A  SA

96. In general, he will do anything to win  
   SD  D  A  SA

97. If he could, he would frequently change sexual partners  
   SD  D  A  SA

98. If there is going to be violence, he finds a way to avoid it  
   SD  D  A  SA

99. It is important to him that people think he is heterosexual  
   SD  D  A  SA

100. In general, he must get his way  
    SD  D  A  SA

101. He thinks trying to be important is the greatest waste of time  
    SD  D  A  SA

102. He is often absorbed in his work  
    SD  D  A  SA

103. He will only be satisfied when women are equal to men  
    SD  D  A  SA

104. He hates asking for help  
    SD  D  A  SA

105. Taking dangerous risks helps him to prove himself  
    SD  D  A  SA

106. In general, he does not expend a lot of energy trying to win at things  
    SD  D  A  SA

107. He believes an emotional bond with a partner is the best part of sex  
    SD  D  A  SA

108. He takes every opportunity to show his feelings  
    SD  D  A  SA

109. He believes that violence is never justified  
    SD  D  A  SA

110. He believes that being thought of as gay is not a bad thing  
    SD  D  A  SA

111. In general, he does not like risky situations  
    SD  D  A  SA
112. He feels he should be in charge
113. He believes feelings are important to show
114. He feels miserable when work occupies all his attention
115. He feels best about his relationships with women when they are equals
116. Winning is not his first priority
117. He makes sure that people think he is heterosexual
118. He enjoys taking risks
119. He is disgusted by any kind of violence
120. He would hate to be important
121. He loves to explore his feelings with others
122. If he could, he would date a lot of different people
123. He asks for help when he needs it
124. His work is the most important part of his life
125. He believes winning isn't everything, it's the only thing
126. He never take chances
127. He would only have sex if he was in a committed relationship
128. He likes fighting
129. He treats women as equals
130. He brings up his feelings when talking to others
131. He would be furious if someone thought he was gay
132. He only gets romantically involved with one person
133. He doesn't mind losing
134. He takes risks
135. He would never do things to be an important person
136. It would not bother him at all if someone thought he was gay
137. He never shares his feelings
138. He believes sometimes violent action is necessary
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>139.</td>
<td>He believes asking for help is a sign of failure</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140.</td>
<td>In general, he controls the women in his life</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141.</td>
<td>He would feel good if he had many sexual partners</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142.</td>
<td>It is important for him to win</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143.</td>
<td>He doesn't like giving all his attention to work</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>144.</td>
<td>He feels uncomfortable when others see him as important</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>145.</td>
<td>He would feel awful if people thought he was gay</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>146.</td>
<td>He likes to talk about his feelings</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>147.</td>
<td>He never asks for help</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148.</td>
<td>More often than not, losing does not bother him</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>149.</td>
<td>He believes it is foolish to take risks</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>150.</td>
<td>Work is not the most important thing in his life</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>151.</td>
<td>He believes men and women should respect each other as equals</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>152.</td>
<td>He believes long term relationships are better than casual sexual encounters</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>153.</td>
<td>Having status is not very important to him</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>154.</td>
<td>He frequently puts himself in risky situations</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>155.</td>
<td>He believes women should be subservient to men</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>156.</td>
<td>He is willing to get into a physical fight if necessary</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157.</td>
<td>He likes having gay friends</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>158.</td>
<td>He feels good when work is his first priority</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>159.</td>
<td>He tends to keep his feelings to himself</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160.</td>
<td>He avoids emotional involvement when having sex</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161.</td>
<td>Winning is not important to him</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>162.</td>
<td>He believes violence is almost never justified</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>163.</td>
<td>He is comfortable trying to get his way</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164.</td>
<td>He is happiest when he is risking danger</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165.</td>
<td>He believes men should not have power over women</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
166. He would find it enjoyable to date more than one person at a time  
167. He would feel uncomfortable if someone thought he was gay  
168. He is not ashamed to ask for help  
169. He believes the best feeling in the world comes from winning  
170. His work comes first  
171. He tends to share his feelings  
172. He likes emotional involvement in a romantic relationship  
173. No matter what the situation he would never act violently  
174. If someone thought he was gay, he would not argue with them about it  
175. He finds things tend to be better when men are in charge  
176. He prefers to be safe and careful  
177. He believes a person shouldn't get tied down to dating just one person  
178. He tends to invest his energy in things other than work  
179. He is bothered when he has to ask for help  
180. He loves it when men are in charge of women  
181. He feels good to be important  
182. He hates it when people ask him to talk about my feelings  
183. He works hard to win  
184. He would only be satisfied with sex if there was an emotional bond  
185. He tries to avoid being perceived as gay  
186. He hates any kind of risk  
187. He prefers to stay unemotional  
188. He makes sure people do as he says
Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire

Listed below are several statements that concern the topic of sexual relationships. Please read each item carefully and decide to what extent it is characteristic of you. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your current partner in mind. Then, for each statement fill in the response on the answer sheet that indicates how much it applies to you by using the following scale:

A = Not at all characteristic of me
B = Slightly characteristic of me
C = Somewhat characteristic of me
D = Moderately characteristic of me
E = Very characteristic of me

1. I am very satisfied with the way my sexual needs are currently being met
   A  B  C  D  E

2. I am very satisfied with my sexual relationship
   A  B  C  D  E

3. My sexual relationship meets my original expectations
   A  B  C  D  E

4. My sexual relationship is very good compared to most
   A  B  C  D  E

5. I am very satisfied with the sexual aspects of my life
   A  B  C  D  E

The Conflict Resolution Inventory - Partner

Below are descriptions of styles used to deal with arguments and disagreements.

Please indicate how frequently your partner uses each of the following styles to deal with arguments and disagreements with you, using the scale:

1 = Never
2 = Sometimes
3 = Frequently
4 = Almost always
5 = Always

1. Launching personal attacks
   1  2  3  4  5
   Never        Always

2. Focusing on the problem at hand
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Remaining silent for long periods of time</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Not being willing to stick up for himself</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Exploding and getting out of control</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Sitting down and discussing differences constructively</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Reaching a ‘limit’, “shutting down’, and refusing to talk any further</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Being too compliant</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Always</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Getting carried away and saying things that aren’t meant</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tuning me out</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Not defending his position</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Throwing insults and digs</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Negotiating and compromising</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
15. Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested
1 2 3 4 5
Never Always

16. Giving in with little attempt to present his side of the issue
1 2 3 4 5
Never Always

Self-Disclosure Index – Partner

Listed below are a number of statements that concern your partner’s tendency to disclose to you. For each statement please indicate how much you think your partner has discussed the following topics with you, using the following scale:

1 = He has not discussed this at all with my partner
2 = He has only discussed this in general terms
3 = He has discussed this in some detail, but has not fully revealed his personal attitudes/feelings
4 = He has fully and completely discussed this with my partner; they know exactly how I feel about this

1. His personal habits
1 2 3 4
Not discussed Fully discussed

2. Things he has done which he feels guilty about
1 2 3 4
Not discussed Fully discussed

3. His deepest feelings
1 2 3 4
Not discussed Fully discussed

4. What he likes and dislikes about himself
1 2 3 4
Not discussed Fully discussed

5. What is important to him in his life
1 2 3 4
Not discussed Fully discussed

6. What makes him the person he is
1 2 3 4
7. His worst fears

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>discussed</td>
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<td>Fully</td>
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8. Things he has done which he is proud of

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>discussed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fully</td>
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9. His close relationships with other people

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>discussed</td>
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<td>Fully</td>
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Appendix E
Plain Language Statement for Study Two
TO: Participant

Plain Language Statement

Date: 25/06/2012

Full Project Title: The impact of masculinity on relationship and sexual adjustment

Principal/Student Researcher: Felicity Toop

Associate Researcher: Marita McCabe

You are invited to take part in this research project.

This Plain Language Statement contains information about the research project. Once you have read this information and agree to participate, please tick the “I Consent” box.

The purpose of this study is to explore how masculine gender role norms and communication patterns are related to women’s and men’s relationships and sexual well-being. Although feminine gender roles and norms are also believed to influence relationship satisfaction, this study is specifically exploring masculine norms. The intended outcome is to provide a better understanding and conceptualisation of women’s and men’s relational adjustment. It is important to understand factors that can lead to relationship and sexual satisfaction or distress in order to provide appropriate treatment in the clinical field.

Approximately 200 women and 200 men will participate in this project. This project aims to recruit women and men who are currently in a relationship of 6 months or longer, and are from a range of age groups and cultural backgrounds.

The project is being conducted by a postgraduate student as part of the Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) degree at Deakin University.

You are invited to participate in this research project because more research is needed to understand factors that lead to men’s and women’s relationship and sexual satisfaction or distress.

Participation in this project will involve completing an on-line demographic form and questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and will ask you about aspects of your relationship and sexual functioning, your beliefs about your partner’s attitudes toward various male gender role norms, and your beliefs about your own and your partner’s communication. This can be carried out in your own time and in your own environment.

Some examples of the types of questions that may be asked include:

1. My partner tends to invest energy in things other than work?
2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
3. How does your sexual relationship meet your original expectations?

4. When having an argument or disagreement with you, how often does your partner "shut down" and refuse to talk any further?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** Deciding not to participate or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you may withdraw from the study at any time before the questionnaires have been submitted by closing your browser window.

Although we do not expect any discomfort to arise as a result of participating in this study, if completing these questionnaires raises any issues of concern please contact your GP or a professional counselling service such as Relationships Australia ph 1300 364 277, Beyond Blue ph 1300 224 636 or Lifeline 13 11 14.

All your responses will be completely unidentifiable. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research project. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but in any publication of the results, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, as only aggregated data will be reported. Any data you supply will be stored on a secure password protected computer and locked cabinet at Deakin University for a minimum of six years from the date of research publication, after which it will be destroyed.

The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University.

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact Felicity Toop on felicity@deakin.edu.au

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the research, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a participant then you may contact Secretary HEAG-

H, Dean's Office, Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences, 221

Burwood Hwy, Burwood, VIC 3125, Telephone: (03) 9251 7174, Email hmnbs-

research@deakin.edu.au.

Please quote project number HEAG-H 132/10

If you require further information or if you have any problems concerning this project you can contact the researchers responsible for the project. This includes Felicity Toop at (felicity@deakin.edu.au 03 9244 6858) and Marita McCabe at (marita.mccabe@deakin.edu.au; 03 9244 6856).
Consent Form

I have read and I understood the Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.