Emotional Expressiveness and Neuroticism: Do They Predict Marital Quality?

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This study examines how neuroticism and emotional expressiveness relate to perceptions of marital quality. Data were gathered from a sample of 197 Israeli couples. Wives scored higher than husbands on neuroticism and emotional expressiveness, but no significant gender differences were found in perceived marital quality. Structural equation models were estimated to examine the effect of both spouses’ neuroticism and expressiveness on their own and on their spouse’s evaluation of marital quality. Neuroticism was a strong predictor of both spouses’ perceived marital quality. Wives’ perceived marital quality was positively associated with both their own and their husbands’ emotional expressiveness. In contrast, husbands’ perceived marital quality was associated neither with their own nor with their wives’ expressiveness.

**keywords:** emotional expressiveness, LISREL, marital relations, neuroticism

The current study seeks to assess the combined effect of emotional expressiveness and neuroticism on both husbands’ and wives’ evaluations of marital quality. More specifically, we explore the extent to which the levels of one’s neuroticism and emotional expressiveness predict one’s own and one’s spouse’s perceived marital quality and the extent to which there are gender differences in the associations among emotional expressiveness, neuroticism, and marital quality.

How people express their emotions and what these expressions mean are important and essential aspects of social interaction. Although emotions can be experienced and not expressed, the expression of emotions provides others with access to them and enables people to influence relationships (Collier, 1985; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999).

Initially, the term *emotional expressiveness* was broadly defined as individual differences in the extent to which individuals monitor their expressive behavior both verbally and nonverbally (Snyder, 1974). A more recent conception of emotional expressiveness emphasized “individual differences in the extent to which people outwardly display their emotions” (Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994, p. 934). Thus, the term is used in two different ways. First, it is used to represent those aspects of behavior that people intentionally use to convey their feelings to others. Such aspects of behavior seem to be highly flexible, easily changed, conscious, and deliberate. Second, the term is used to describe those aspects of behavior not intentionally controlled (e.g., facial expressions, trembling), from which people can infer another’s emotions (Collier, 1985). Therefore, spouses can either use words to tell each other how they feel or convey their emotions nonverbally through their tone of voice, touch, facial expressions, body movements, and posture (Guerrero, Andersen, & Trost, 1998).

In examining the concept and measures of emotional expressivity, Gross and John (1998) examined whether emotional expressivity is best conceptualized as unidimensional or multifaceted. Mapping the domains of emotional expressivity, as measured by common expressivity questionnaires, these researchers found that the core aspects of emotional expressivity are best defined by three facets: positive expressivity, or the expression of emotions such as happiness, joy, amusement, enthusiasm, and energy; negative expressivity, or the expression of emotions such as anger, disappointment, fear, and upset; and impulse intensity, defined as “the experience of strong emotions that push for expression and are difficult for the individual to suppress” (Gross & John, 1998, p. 175).

Emotional Expressiveness, Well-Being, and Marital Quality

Extensive scholarly attention has been directed to the effect of emotional expressiveness on people’s physical health and psychological well-being. The notion that the expression of emotions leads to better health is rooted in findings that emotional expression predicts better physical and psychological adjustment in the face of stress and illness (Antoni, 1999; Berry & Pennebaker, 1998; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999; Stanton et al., 2000) and that...
“bottled-up” emotions result in psychological and physical symptomatology (King & Emmons, 1990).

Available research suggests that emotional expressiveness also plays an important role in interpersonal interaction (Carstensen, Graff, Levenson, & Gottman, 1996; Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Gottman & Levenson, 1992; King, 1993; Long & Andrews, 1990; Sullins, 1991). Within interpersonal relationships, the tendency to be emotionally expressive may impinge on the extent of both spouses’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the relationship. On the one hand, the sharing of emotions such as affection, tenderness, and vulnerability serves to generate a sense of intimacy and trust in the relationship. On the other hand, the expression of emotions such as anger, bitterness, and frustration may lead to a perception of the relationship as troubled and unsatisfying. Empirical evidence suggests that the communication of emotions enhances the awareness of one’s own emotional state as well as that of one’s spouse, thereby forming the basis for intimacy and satisfaction with the relationship (Gottman, 1999; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997; King, 1993).

In examining the predictive power of emotional expressiveness for marital quality, one cannot ignore the significance of the marital partners’ personality traits. It may be that any association between emotional expressiveness and perception of marital quality is shaped by the relations between expressiveness and certain personality characteristics as well as the influence of those characteristics on perceived marital quality (Shackelford & Buss, 2000). Although a number of personality characteristics may be thought to predict marital quality along with emotional expressiveness, marital outcomes have been most consistently associated with levels of neuroticism (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Because neuroticism is also related to emotional expressiveness, the current study examines the role of emotional expressiveness together with the levels of neuroticism of both spouses in their perceived marital quality.

Neuroticism, Emotional Expressiveness, and Marital Quality

Neuroticism and emotional expressiveness are conceptually related. Both observational and self-report studies have documented that neuroticism is positively related to the experience of negative emotions (Wilson & Gullone, 1999) and to the expression of negative emotions (Keltner, 1996; Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991; Watson & Clark, 1992). It is also negatively related to the experience and expression of positive emotions (Kardum, 1999).

Neuroticism is a personality trait defined by a general negative emotionality and a reduced positive emotionality in positive contexts (Keltner, 1996). It is characterized by negative affectivity and emotional instability (Bouchard, Lussier, & Sabourin, 1999) and is considered a predisposition for negative feelings, such as distress, frustration, anxiety, and guilt (Costa & McCrae, 1980). Neuroticism was found to be negatively associated with various measures of marital adjustment (Buss, 1991; Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Kelly & Conley, 1987; Kurdek, 1997). Furthermore, there is ample evidence regarding the effect of both spouses’ levels of neuroticism on each other’s perceptions of marital quality (Bouchard et al., 1999; Karney & Bradbury, 1995, 1997; Kurdek, 1991). In this regard, Shackelford and Buss (2000) found that men married to women who were low in emotional stability were less satisfied across various domains of marital satisfaction. Likewise, the extent of dissatisfaction among the wives was found to be related to their husbands’ emotional instability.

Indeed, previous research has shown that level of neuroticism is the most consistent and powerful personality predictor of relationship outcomes (Bouchard et al., 1999; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). However, the literature is not consistent in regard to the question of whether neuroticism primarily affects one’s own or one’s spouse’s perceived marital quality. Furthermore, the extent to which each spouse’s neuroticism impacts on the other’s perception of marital quality may differ for husbands and for wives. Whereas husbands’ neuroticism was consistently found to predict wives’ marital adjustment (Buss, 1991; King, 1993; Richmond, Craig, & Ruzicka, 1991), the results are less consistent for wives. Although most studies have found significant relations between wives’ neuroticism and husbands’ marital adjustment (Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Long & Andrews, 1990; Russell & Wells, 1994), other studies have found no effect of wives’ personality traits, including neuroticism, on their husbands’ marital adjustment (King, 1993; Richmond et al., 1991).

Although neuroticism has received extensive scholarly attention, documenting its strong association with marital quality, the predictive power of emotional expressiveness for the quality of marital relationships has received less attention. Given that emotional expressiveness and neuroticism are conceptually related, the current study examines the extent to which emotional expressiveness contributes to the prediction of marital quality beyond neuroticism.

Method

Participants

The sample for the current study is part of a larger project on emotional transmission in couples. In the first stage of the project, a representative sample of 1,000 individuals (303 Arab and 697 Jewish Israeli respondents) was drawn by means of a computerized random telephone dialing, and respondents were interviewed by telephone. From the original sample, a subsample of 200 Jewish and 100 Arab respondents were contacted and invited to participate in subsequent stages of the project. Participants were informed that the study dealt with everyday experiences of married couples. They were included in the second stage on the condition that both spouses were willing to take part in the research. In a preliminary analysis (Zreik-Halloun, 2003), significant differences were found between Arab and Jewish respondents in both neuroticism and emotional expression. Considering that the analysis and interpretation of such cultural differences would be beyond the scope of the current article, we decided to focus here on a sample from Israel’s majority population only. Hence, the current study is based on data from 197 Jewish couples whose data were complete.

Partners had been living together for an average of 17.3 years.
The number of children per couple ranged from 1 to 6 ($M = 2.4, SD = 1.2$). The age of women ranged from 20 to 64 years ($M = 40.6, SD = 10.1$). The age of men ranged from 22 to 73 years ($M = 43.4, SD = 10.8$). The average educational level was 14.6 years ($SD = 2.9$) for women and 14.4 years ($SD = 3.0$) for men.

### Procedure and Instruments

Trained interviewers visited the couples in their homes and administered the questionnaires to each partner. Interviewers remained in the home while the questionnaires were being completed to ensure that the spouses answered the questions independently.

Neuroticism was measured by the Neuroticism subscale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire–Revised (EPQ-R; Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985). The Neuroticism subscale includes 12 items with a yes–no option. Scoring was obtained by totaling the affirmative answers; scores ranged between 0 and 12. The Hebrew version of the instrument has been widely used in studies in Israel and has demonstrated adequate validity and reliability estimates (Katz & Francis, 2000). In the current study, the Cronbach alpha reliability was .84 for males and .80 for females.

Emotional expressiveness was measured by the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (Gross & John, 1995). This is a self-report questionnaire with 16 items rated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Items measure positive expressivity (e.g., “When I am happy, my feelings show”), negative expressivity (e.g., “When I feel bad, people can easily tell how I feel”), and level of impulse intensity (e.g., “I have strong emotions”). The instrument was translated into Hebrew and then back-translated to verify that it maintained its original intent. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha reliabilities ranged from .73 to .76 for the subscales and .81 for the total scale.

Marital quality was measured by a modified version of the short ENRICH scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993). The original instrument is a 10-item Likert-type scale that assesses the respondent’s perceived quality of his or her marriage across 10 dimensions of the relationship. Fowers and Olson (1993) reported good reliability estimates of the short ENRICH scale as well as high concurrent and predictive validity. In the modified Hebrew version (Lavee, 1995), items and response categories were adapted to decrease the response set. Instead of the original Likert scale, in which items are ranked between “fully agree” and “fully disagree,” each item is given two extreme response categories and the respondent is asked to check a number on a scale ranging between these responses (e.g., “When we have conflicts or disagreements: [1] We always come to an agreement. [7] We seldom are able to bridge our differences”). A scale of this type (see, e.g., Antonovsky, 1987) was found to be less affected by social desirability than the typical Likert scale. Indeed, the modified version was found to correlate only modestly ($r = .16$) with a social desirability scale (Lavee, 1995). In the current study, the Cronbach alpha reliabilities were .82 and .83 for husbands and wives, respectively.

Marital satisfaction was measured by a single item that asked respondents to rate their overall satisfaction with the marital relationship on a 6-point scale. This scale positively correlates with the marital quality scale ($r = .63$ for husbands, $r = .64$ for wives, $p < .01$).

### Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of the study variables as well as paired-sample t tests for differences between husbands and wives. A multivariate comparison of means across gender (multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures) indicated significant gender differences, $F(1, 195) = 128.88, p < .01$. Table 2 presents the correlations among the study variables. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, wives scored significantly higher on neuroticism and on all three dimensions of emotional expressiveness, with low and insignificant correlations between spouses. In contrast, husbands’ and wives’ perceptions of marital quality were significantly correlated ($r = .50$), with no significant difference found between their evaluations. These findings support the notion that both neuroticism and emotional expressiveness are individual attributes, whereas the perception of marital quality tends to be shared by the spouses.

Table 2 further shows significant intercorrelations between the three dimensions of emotional expressiveness for both husbands and wives as well as between each spouse’s neuroticism and his or her emotional expressiveness and marital quality. Additionally, significant negative correlations were found between husbands’ neuroticism and wives’ perceptions of marital quality, and positive correlations were found between wives’ positive expressiveness and both spouses’ perceptions of marital quality.

To examine the joint effect of husbands’ and wives’ neuroticism and emotional expressiveness on their evaluations of marital quality, we specified and estimated a structural equations model (Figure 1). In this model, expressiveness was specified by the three core aspects of emotional expressiveness (Gross & John, 1998) included in the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire: positive expressiveness, negative expressiveness, and impulse intensity. Neuroticism was specified by two randomly split halves of the EPQ-R’s

### Table 1

**Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Husbands ($n = 197$)</th>
<th>Wives ($n = 197$)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressiveness</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse strength</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital quality</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01.**
N-scale. This was done to obtain more than one indicator for a latent variable. Given that the scale is randomly split, both subindexes are assumed to be expressions of the same basic latent construct (see, e.g., Lavee & Katz, 2002; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). The correlations between these indicators were .68 and .69 (<i>p</i>/H11021.01) for husbands and wives, respectively. Marital quality was specified by two indicators: the Marital Quality Scale and the item measuring marital satisfaction (see prior Measures section).

A free covariance was specified between the spouses’ marital quality latent variables to account for the association between the spouses’ evaluations of their marriage. Additionally, a covariance was specified between the error terms of negative expressivity and an indicator of neuroticism for

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** Standardized coefficients for a model of husbands’ and wives’ neuroticism and emotional expressiveness as predictors of marital quality. All coefficients are significant at <i>p</i> < .05, except those shown in dashed arrows. Model fit statistics: <i>χ</i>²(60, <i>N</i> = 197) = 74.22, <i>p</i> = .10, root-mean-square-error of approximation = 0.035, nonnormed fit index = .98, comparative fit index = .99, adjusted goodness-of-fit index = .91. Variables with the prefix H and W refer to husband and wife, respectively; neurot1 and neurot2 are random split halves of the Neuroticism scale; negative = negative emotions expressivity; positive = positive emotions expressivity; intensity = impulse intensity; marqual = scores on the marital quality scale; satisfact = satisfaction with the relationship. NEUROT = Neuroticism; EXPRESS = Emotional Expressiveness; MQ = Marital Quality.

### Table 2
**Correlations Matrix of Neuroticism, Emotional Expressiveness, and Marital Quality for Husbands and Wives (N = 197)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husbands</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive expressiveness</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative expressiveness</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse strength</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital quality</td>
<td>−.27**</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive expressiveness</td>
<td>−.14*</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative expressiveness</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse strength</td>
<td>−.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital quality</td>
<td>−.20**</td>
<td>−.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation coefficients larger than <i>r</i> = .19 are statistically significant (<i>p</i> < .05) by Bonferroni correction.

*<i>p</i> < .05. **<i>p</i> < .01.
each spouse. This was based on both theory and findings (Gross & John, 1998) linking negative expressivity and various measures of neuroticism.

To examine how the neuroticism and emotional expressiveness of each spouse predict their perceptions of marital quality, we estimated three alternative models. For all models, a variance-covariance matrix was analyzed using LISREL 8.5. Table 3 presents the LISREL estimates of the structural models.

For Model A, each spouse’s neuroticism and expressiveness predict their own evaluations of marital quality. Analysis indicated that the model does not adequately fit the data, \( \chi^2(64, N = 197) = 84.46, p = .04 \), root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .04. In this model, the wives’ perceived marital quality was negatively related to their neuroticism and positively related to their emotional expressiveness. For the husbands, perceived marital quality was negatively related to their neuroticism but was not significantly related to their emotional expressiveness.

For Model B, each spouse’s neuroticism and expressiveness predict the other spouse’s evaluation of marital quality. Compared with Model A, the fit statistics of this model, \( \chi^2(64, N = 197) = 118.15, p < .01 \), RMSEA = .066, indicated that it fit the data less adequately. Estimates of Model B showed that the husbands’ neuroticism had a negative effect on their wives’ perceived marital quality, whereas their expressiveness had a positive effect. However, no significant effects were found for the wives’ neuroticism and expressiveness on their husbands’ perceived marital quality.

For Model C, each spouse’s neuroticism and expressiveness predict their own as well as their spouse’s perceived marital quality. Analysis of the model indicated a good fit to the data, minimum fit function \( \chi^2(60, N = 197) = 74.22, p = .10 \), RMSEA = .035, 90% confidence interval = 0.0–0.059. All other fit statistics also indicated a good fit to the data (nonnormed fit index = .98, comparative fit index = .99, adjusted goodness-of-fit index = .91). That Model C is superior to both Models A and B suggests that both spouses’ neuroticism and emotional expressiveness should be considered in evaluating their perceived marital quality.

The findings (see Figure 1 and Table 3) indicate that, for both husbands and wives, perceived marital quality is negatively associated with their own neuroticism. Additionally, wives’ perceived marital quality is negatively related to their husbands’ neuroticism and positively related to their own and to their husbands’ emotional expressiveness. In contrast, husbands’ perceived marital quality is related neither to their wives’ neuroticism nor to their own or their wives’ emotional expressiveness. The findings also indicate a significant association between the spouses’ evaluations of their marriage, suggesting that husbands’ evaluations of the marital quality may be indirectly related to their wives’ emotional expressiveness and neuroticism, through their wives’ perceived marital quality.

Discussion

The current study examines the effects of neuroticism and emotional expressiveness on spouses’ perceptions of marital quality. Before we discuss the findings, a caveat should be noted. Considering the cross-sectional nature of the study, findings regarding the influence of neuroticism and emotional expressiveness on marital outcomes should be treated with caution. We followed previous research in assessing the predictive power of personality characteristics on psychological well-being and marital relationships. However, it should be noted that, although being emotionally expressive may lead to a better marital relationship, it may also be the case that being in a well-adjusted relationship allows individuals to be more expressive (King, 1993).

As expected, we found a significant association between neuroticism and emotional expressiveness for both spouses. More specifically, individuals high in neuroticism tend to express their negative emotions more than those who are lower in neuroticism. They also tend to express their emotions more intensely. However, the modest associations between neuroticism and emotional expressiveness suggest that these constructs are distinct. It may well be that some people are high on neuroticism but low on expressiveness and vice versa. Given this compound relation between neuroticism and emotional expressiveness, how do they con-

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B</th>
<th>Model C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hneurot → Hmarqual</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexpress → Hmarqual</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wneurot → Hmarqual</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexpress → Hmarqual</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wneurot → Wmarqual</td>
<td>-0.32**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexpress → Wmarqual</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hneurot → Wmarqual</td>
<td>-0.19*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexpress → Wmarqual</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Variables with the prefixes H and W refer to husband and wife, respectively. Neurot = Neuroticism scale; express = emotional expressivity; marqual = marital quality.

*p < .05. **p < .01.
tribute to the prediction of marital quality on the part of both spouses?

The current findings corroborate previous research in regard to neuroticism as a significant predictor of marital quality. Like other researchers, we found that one’s level of neuroticism predicts one’s own perception of marital quality. Several explanations may account for this finding. First, neurotic individuals are chronically subjected to negative emotions, which, in turn, influence their marital adjustment (Bouchard et al., 1999). Second, men and women tend to be happier in their relationships when they idealize their partners’ personal attributes and when their partners idealize theirs. Given that neuroticism is characterized by negative affectivity, it is plausible that individuals high in neuroticism are less likely to see their partners in idealized ways, which, in turn, predicts a low level of marital adjustment (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Third, individuals with high negative affectivity have a greater tendency to make unfavorably negative attributions to their partners and to their relationship problems, leading to a more negative evaluation of the relationship.

In regard to the cross-effect of each spouse’s neuroticism on the other’s perceived marital quality, we found that wives’ perceptions of marital quality are related to their husbands’ level of neuroticism but not vice versa. These findings support those of previous research, which have consistently shown that husbands’ neuroticism affects their wives’ marital adjustment (Buss, 1991; King 1993; Long & Andrews, 1990). The insignificant effect of wives’ neuroticism on their husbands’ marital adjustment was demonstrated in some studies (e.g., Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Long & Andrews, 1990; Russell & Wells, 1994) but not in others (King, 1993; Richmond et al., 1991). These findings may be explained by gender differences in the experience of negative emotions, such as distress, frustration, anxiety, and guilt. Given that women score higher than men on neuroticism (Bouchard et al., 1999), it seems reasonable that they would also be more negatively affected by its consequences.

Gender differences were also demonstrated in the relation between emotional expressiveness and marital quality. Whereas husbands’ evaluations of their marital relationships were associated with neither their own nor their wives’ expressiveness, wives’ perceptions of marital quality were positively associated with both their own and their husbands’ expressiveness. That is, women and men differ in the importance they attribute to emotional expressiveness in marriage. There is evidence suggesting that women place a higher value on emotional expression in the marital relationship and tend to express their emotions more strongly than men (Gottman et al., 1996; King & Emmons, 1990; Shields, 1987). Indeed, our findings show that husbands’ perceptions of marital quality cannot be directly predicted by emotional expressiveness, neither their own nor that of their wives. If expressiveness is less important for men, then their evaluations of the marital relationship are probably based on attributes of their wives other than their emotional expressiveness. It is important to note, however, that wives’ expressiveness may indirectly contribute to their husbands’ perceptions of marital quality through their own marital adjustment. These findings suggest that women not only value the expression of emotions in marital relationships more than men, but their sense of relationship quality is enhanced by emotional expressivity on the part of both themselves and their husbands.

A worthwhile direction for further research on the links between emotional expressiveness and both spouses’ perceptions of relationship quality would be an examination of whether the diverse associations found in this study are due solely to gender or whether they are also moderated by gender role characteristics. Previous observational studies (e.g., Baucom, Notarius, Bennet, & Haefner, 1990; Burger & Jacobson, 1979; Sayers & Baucom, 1991) have indicated that sequences of negative and positive behaviors in couple interactions, as well as marital satisfaction, are shaped both by gender and by sex role identity (i.e., levels of femininity and masculinity). It may well be that the predictive power of husbands’ and wives’ emotional expressiveness for the marriage quality will be enhanced by taking sex role characteristics into account.

Considering the joint effect of neuroticism and emotional expressiveness on perceived marital quality, it appears that expressiveness contributes relatively less than neuroticism to the prediction of the quality of relationship. Given that emotional expressivity plays a significant role in physical and psychological well-being (Antoni, 1999; Berry & Pennebaker, 1998; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999) as well as in social interactions (King, 1993), how can these findings be explained?

We suggest that, in considering the role of emotional expressiveness in marriage, one should also contemplate the significance of ambivalence over emotional expression (King, 1993; King & Emmons, 1991). Ambivalence over emotional expression distinguishes between individuals who are tense and inhibited and those who are comfortable with their inexpressive style. It may well be that ambivalence over emotional expressiveness, and not only the tendency to express emotions, can account for perceptions of marital quality. In this regard, it may also be important to consider how people choose to express their positive and negative emotions, or what Gottman referred to as “meta-emotions” (Gottman, 2001; Gottman et al., 1996). How individuals feel about their own and about their spouse’s style of emotional expressiveness, as well as their attitudes toward emotional expression and its meaning for the relationship, may be important avenues to pursue in future research.

References


Received July 22, 2003
Revision received December 29, 2003
Accepted March 23, 2004

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**Call for Nominations**

The Publications and Communications (P&C) Board has opened nominations for the editorships of Clinician’s Research Digest, Emotion, JEP: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, and Psychology, Public Policy, and Law for the years 2007–2012. Elizabeth M. Altmaier, PhD; Richard J. Davidson, PhD, and Klaus R. Scherer, PhD; Thomas O. Nelson, PhD; Mary Beth Kenkel, PhD; and Jane Goodman-Delahunty, PhD, respectively, are the incumbent editors.

Candidates should be members of APA and should be available to start receiving manuscripts in early 2006 to prepare for issues published in 2007. Please note that the P&C Board encourages participation by members of underrepresented groups in the publication process and would particularly welcome such nominees. Self-nominations also are encouraged.

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