

## **Gender Differences in Perceptions of Emotionality: The Case of Close Heterosexual Relationships<sup>1</sup>**

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*Previous research suggests some support for the stereotype that women are the more emotional gender, but very little research has examined whether women are more emotional than men in the context of close relationships. We examined gender differences in reports of emotions experienced and expressed in close heterosexual relationships. A sample of 197 couples (at different stages of relationship involvement), most of whom were white and from middle-class backgrounds, responded to a list of 25 positive and negative emotions three times. Participants indicated how often they experienced the emotions, how often they expressed the emotions, and how often they believed their partner experienced the emotions (all in the past month). Women reported experiencing several emotions to a greater frequency than men, regardless of degree of relationship involvement. Further, women reported being more emotionally expressive than men in dating and more advanced (e.g., engaged) relationships, but not in marital relationships. Finally, women believed that they were generally more emotional than men, whereas men believed that women were more emotional in the experience of negative but not positive emotions. The results were generally consistent with the stereotype that females are the more emotional gender.*

<sup>1</sup>The data were collected with funds provided by NIMH Grant MH/HD 36864-01 BR-S awarded to Elaine Hatfield and Gerald Marwell. The authors wish to thank Elaine Hatfield for her support of the data collection and for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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Popular stereotype has it that women are more emotional than men (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Carlson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Heilbrun, 1976; Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968). The majority of studies provide corroborating evidence for this stereotype (Allen & Hacoun, 1976; Larsen & Diener, 1987; McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1981; Spielberger, Barker, Russell, Silva de Craner, Westberry, Knight, & Marks, 1979; for reviews, see Balswick, 1988, and LaFrance & Banaji, 1992). Surprisingly, though, there is a relative paucity of research on whether women are more emotional than men within close heterosexual relationships. This is certainly an important issue to examine, because most of the emotions people experience arise in the context of a close relationship (Berscheid, 1983; Schwartz & Shaver, 1987) and because most people describe their close relationships in terms of emotions (Fitness & Strongman, 1991). Furthermore, the degree to which men and women differ in emotionality may not be the same in intimate contexts as in nonintimate contexts. For example, men may feel comfortable experiencing and expressing emotions in a trusting and accepting relationship (Rubin, 1983), which, if true, would lead to a reduction or even elimination of gender differences in emotionality within close relationships.

The purpose of this research is to examine gender differences in perceptions of emotionality within close heterosexual relationships. Emotionality is undoubtedly a multidimensional construct. In line with past research (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992), we define emotionality in terms of emotions experienced and expressed. We specifically examine whether "his" beliefs (i.e., verbal reports) about the levels of positive and negative emotions experienced and expressed in the relationship differ from "hers," and whether "his" perception of partner's emotions experienced differ from "hers." We use multiple definitions of emotionality and inquired about multiple emotions in hopes of being able to detect most sensitively the nuances of gender differences in emotions.

The emphasis on self-reports dictates that the study be properly considered as an investigation of what women and men *believe* about emotionality in the context of their relationships rather than an investigation of actual emotional experiences or displays. Self-reports of emotions experienced and expressed for a month's period, as measured in the present study, may be biased due to subjects' own theories about male and female emotionality (Shields, 1986; Shimanoff, 1983, 1985). Stated otherwise, gender differences based on reconstructive self-reports may not be found with other methodologies (e.g., diaries of daily talk, on-line reports, naturalistic observations of conversations). However, even if it is only men's and

women's memories of the emotionality in the relationship that differ (rather than emotionality measured in a more microscopic way), this is an important gender difference to document because the memories are likely to affect men's and women's future actions and thoughts in the relationship. At the very least, our study will be in a position to examine whether the views that people reconstruct of themselves in the context of close relationships are consistent with gender role expectations.

### **Gender Differences in the Experience of Emotions**

One way that women can be more emotional than men is in the frequency or degree of emotions experienced. Only a few recent studies in the close relationships research domain have included measures of a wide variety of emotions experienced in the relationship (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989; Simpson, 1990). Analyses based on gender were reported in one of these studies. Berscheid et al. (1989) asked participants to report on their emotions for their closest (i.e., romantic, friend, and family) relationship. These investigators found no gender differences on "hedonic emotional tone" (degree to which positive emotions are experienced more frequently than negative emotions), but found that women scored higher than men on a total emotions index (degree to which positive and negative emotions are experienced overall).

Gender differences have also been examined on evaluative sentiments, such as love, liking, trust, and jealousy, that are central to the close relationship research domain. The results of this research are mixed; sometimes women score higher on a particular scale, sometimes no gender differences are found, and occasionally (although less frequently) men score higher (for reviews of this research, see Brehm, 1992; Dion & Dion, 1985; Hatfield & Rapson, 1987; Hendrick, 1988; Huston & Ashmore, 1986; Peplau & Gordon, 1985). However, because scales have not been developed to measure all possible emotions and sentiments experienced in the close relationship, and because any one study is constrained in terms of the number of multiple-item scales that it can include, this past research is also limited in what it can tell us about gender differences in the full array of emotional experiences within the context of close relationships. Thus, the first purpose of the present study is to add to our understanding of gender differences in the experience of emotions by examining whether men and women differ in their reports of how frequently they experience

a *relatively large number* of positive and negative emotions within the context of their close heterosexual relationship.

### **Gender Differences in the Expression of Emotions**

A second way that women can be more emotional than men is in the expression of emotions. Balswick and Peek (1977; see also Balswick, 1988) described men as "inexpressive," or as being less emotionally expressive than women. Although this assertion is backed by empirical evidence (Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Balswick & Avertt, 1977; Buck, 1984; Dosser, Balswick, & Halverson, 1986; Notarius & Johnson, 1982; Ross & Mirowsky, 1984; Slevin & Balswick, 1980), most of the research is limited in the conclusions it can draw about gender differences in the expression of emotions within close relationships. First, most of past research has focused on expressiveness in general (i.e., to anyone) rather than expressiveness to one specific close other. Second, much of the research identifying males as less expressive than females did not control for the level of emotions experienced (for an exception, although it is not focused on expression in an intimate context, see Ross & Mirowsky, 1984). Thus, a finding that men are less expressive than women may be a result of men's lower degree of experienced emotions and may not indicate actual gender differences in the expression of emotions. For example, if a man expresses less depression, happiness, or anger than his female partner, he may do so because he experiences these emotions to a lesser degree than his partner.

The second purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine gender differences in the reported frequency of emotional expression within close heterosexual relationships. In one set of analyses conducted, we examine gender differences in the expression of emotions while controlling for the experience of emotions.

### **Gender Differences in Perception of Partner's Experienced Emotions**

Whereas the first and second purposes of this study, as described above, are to determine whether women are more emotional than men in close heterosexual relationships (as indicated by self-reports), the final purpose of the study is to examine whether men and women have different perceptions about which partner is more emotional in the relationship. The cultural stereotype (Shields, 1986) and some anecdotal evidence (Rubin, 1983) suggest that both women and men regard women to be the more emotional gender. However, no empirical evidence exists regarding the va-

lidity of this stereotype, particularly within the context of the close relationship.

## METHOD

### Sample

The sample consisted of both partners of 197 couples, most of whom were students at a midwestern university. The couples were recruited through advertisements placed in the university newspaper, announcements made in classes, and fliers distributed to married students' housing units. The advertisements or announcements specifically targeted couples who were dating, living together, engaged, or married, and stated that each couple would receive \$8 for participating in the survey study on intimate relationships. The respondents' ages ranged from 17 to 42, with a mean age of approximately 22. Most of the sample was Caucasian (93%) and from a middle-class or upper middle-class background (82%).

The couples in the sample represented several stages of relationship involvement. One hundred and three couples were in some stage of dating, primarily exclusive dating. (In one couple, one partner said they were exclusively dating, whereas the other partner said they were living together. In this case, both partners were classified as dating.) Fifty-seven couples were in an advanced stage of courtship (living together, engaged, or both), and 37 couples were married.

### Procedure

Most of the participants completed the questionnaire in a room in a university building, although some of the couples recruited from married students' housing units filled it out under monitored conditions in their own apartment. The members of each couple completed the questionnaire at the same time, but independently of each other.

### Measures

The participants completed a 39-page questionnaire on their relationship, which took approximately one hour. Many different relationship variables were measured, but this article reports only on the emotion variables. Below we describe how these emotions were measured.

### *Specific Emotions*

In one section of the questionnaire, participants were presented with a list of 25 emotions, three different times, each time with different directions. The list of emotions is similar to a list used in a previous investigation of emotions (see Sprecher, 1986). As reported in this earlier article, the list of emotions was created based on a review of previous research on emotions in close relationships and was pretested with a small sample of subjects. Because one major dimension that underlies the experience of emotions is the hedonic sign of the affect (positive or negative), both positive and negative emotions were included. The 11 positive and 14 negative emotions measured in this study can be found in the tables that appear later in this article. Although the emotions are grouped and ordered in the tables on the basis of their similarity, they were presented in a random order in the questionnaire.

The first time the list of emotions was presented in the questionnaire, the participants were asked to indicate how frequently they *experienced* each of the emotions during the past month. Second, participants were asked how frequently they *expressed* these emotions in the relationship during the past month. Finally, participants were asked how frequently they thought their *partner experienced* the emotions in the past month. (We realize that it would have also been interesting to have data on the participants' perceptions of their partner's expressed emotions. These data were not collected, however, primarily because it was believed that subjects would have a difficult time responding to the same list of 25 emotions for the fourth time.) Each of the 25 emotions, each time it was presented, was accompanied by a 9-point response scale, where 1 was defined as *never*, 5 was defined as *sometimes*, and 9 was defined as *extremely often*.

### *Creation of Indices from the Specific Emotions*

Although we will be mainly interested in gender differences on specific emotions, we will also examine gender differences on indices that combine emotions. We created four such indices.

A *positive emotions* index (represented by the mean of the 11 positive emotions) and a *negative emotions* index (represented by the mean of the 14 negative emotions) were created for all three sets of emotions: emotions experienced, emotions expressed, and emotions perceived to be experienced by the partner. With regard to the positive emotions indices, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .88 for experienced emotions, .90 for expressed emotions, and .91 for experienced emotions perceived in partner. The cor-

responding reliability coefficients for the negative emotions indices were .89, .89, and .91.

Following from the recent work of Berscheid et al. (1989), we also created two other emotions indices for each set of responses. A *total emotions* index was the mean of all positive and negative emotions (the corresponding reliability coefficients were .74, .83, and .80). A *hedonic emotional tone* index was the difference between the index of positive emotions and the index of negative emotions. A positive difference score indicates that positive emotions are experienced or expressed or perceived to be experienced more frequently than negative emotions, and a negative difference score indicates that negative emotions are experienced or expressed or perceived to be experienced more frequently than positive emotions.

## RESULTS

### Gender Differences in the Experience of Emotions

We first examined whether there are gender differences in the degree to which positive and negative emotions are reported to be experienced. We compared men and women, with a series of paired *t* tests, for specific emotions as well as for the emotion indices. The results of these analyses are presented in Table I.

Women reported experiencing many emotions, both positive and negative, to a greater frequency than their male partners reported experiencing. The positive emotions that women experienced to a greater degree than men were companionate love, liking, commitment, contentment, and joy. The negative emotions that women experienced to a greater degree than men were depression, sadness, hurt, and loneliness. The only emotion that men reported experiencing to a greater frequency than women was sexual excitement.

In line with the above results, the indices of experienced positive emotions, negative emotions, and total emotions were all significantly higher for women than for men. However, the hedonic emotional tone for emotions experienced was not significantly different for men and women.

### Gender Differences in the Expression of Emotions

We also examined whether there are gender differences in the expression of emotions in the relationship. We addressed this issue first by comparing (via paired *t* tests) women and men's responses to the question

**Table I.** Gender Differences in Reports of Own Emotions Experienced

	Men	Women	<i>t</i>
Emotion indices			
Positive emotions	7.65	7.84	-2.72 <sup>b</sup>
Negative emotions	2.90	3.08	-2.15 <sup>a</sup>
Total emotions	5.13	5.30	-3.42 <sup>c</sup>
Hedonic tone	4.73	4.75	-.11
Specific emotions			
Positive emotions			
Passionate love	7.10	7.18	-.54
Sexual excitement	7.57	7.27	2.41 <sup>a</sup>
Companionate love	8.11	8.52	-4.09 <sup>c</sup>
Trust	7.86	7.94	-.65
Liking	8.12	8.37	-2.70 <sup>b</sup>
Respect	7.65	7.77	-.91
Commitment	7.44	7.83	-3.04 <sup>b</sup>
Confidence	7.56	7.76	-1.77
Satisfaction	7.62	7.74	-1.03
Contentment	7.43	7.86	-3.43 <sup>c</sup>
Joy	7.70	7.93	-2.16 <sup>a</sup>
Negative emotions			
Anger	3.70	3.93	-1.43
Hate	1.47	1.46	.12
Resentment	2.16	2.41	-1.73
Depression	2.92	3.45	-3.42 <sup>c</sup>
Sadness	3.24	3.66	-2.58 <sup>b</sup>
Hurt	2.58	3.04	-3.39 <sup>c</sup>
Frustration	4.07	4.37	-1.73
Jealousy	2.97	2.81	1.01
Insecurity	2.53	2.51	.17
Ambivalence	3.67	3.28	1.92
Anxiety	3.69	3.80	-.57
Fear	2.16	2.29	-.84
Guilt	2.96	2.96	-.03
Loneliness	2.72	3.06	-2.14 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*p* ≤ .05.<sup>b</sup>*p* ≤ .01.<sup>c</sup>*p* ≤ .001.

asking how often they expressed the emotions listed. The results of these analyses are displayed in Table II.

Women reported being expressive to a greater degree than did men on four positive emotions: companionate love, liking, contentment, and joy. The only positive emotion that men reported expressing to a greater degree than did women was sexual excitement. Further, women reported expressing seven negative emotions more frequently than did men. These emotions were anger, resentment, depression, sadness, hurt, frustration, and anxiety.



Table II. Gender Differences in Reports of Own Emotions Expressed

	Men	Women	<i>t</i>
Emotion indices			
Positive emotions	6.99	7.14	-1.37
Negative emotions	2.53	2.82	-3.23 <sup>c</sup>
Total emotions	4.62	4.83	-2.75 <sup>b</sup>
Hedonic tone	4.45	4.32	.98
Specific emotions			
Positive emotions			
Passionate love	6.96	6.83	.78
Sexual excitement	7.39	7.06	2.47 <sup>b</sup>
Companionate love	7.59	7.99	-3.14 <sup>b</sup>
Trust	6.69	6.78	-.43
Liking	7.52	7.90	-2.51 <sup>b</sup>
Respect	6.69	6.49	.99
Commitment	6.68	6.96	-1.59
Confidence	6.64	6.65	-.05
Satisfaction	6.97	7.22	-1.67
Contentment	6.76	7.15	-2.34 <sup>a</sup>
Joy	7.26	7.59	-2.60 <sup>b</sup>
Negative emotions			
Anger	3.16	3.64	-3.16 <sup>b</sup>
Hate	1.43	1.35	.88
Resentment	1.98	2.29	-2.10 <sup>a</sup>
Depression	2.81	3.56	-4.42 <sup>c</sup>
Sadness	3.06	3.52	-2.52 <sup>b</sup>
Hurt	2.42	3.06	-4.08 <sup>c</sup>
Frustration	3.45	3.88	-2.38 <sup>a</sup>
Jealousy	2.39	2.39	.00
Insecurity	2.22	2.52	-1.81
Ambivalence	2.92	2.54	2.06 <sup>a</sup>
Anxiety	3.07	3.47	-2.02 <sup>a</sup>
Fear	2.09	2.34	-1.59
Guilt	2.07	2.13	-.45
Loneliness	2.55	2.81	-1.61

<sup>a</sup>*p* ≤ .05.<sup>b</sup>*p* ≤ .01.<sup>c</sup>*p* ≤ .001.

The only negative emotion men reported expressing to a greater frequency than women was ambivalence.

The index of positive emotions expressed was higher for women than for men, but not to a significant degree. Women, though, scored significantly higher than men on the expression indices for negative emotions and total emotions. No gender difference was obtained for the hedonic tone index.

The results reported above indicate that women are more expressive of a relatively high number of emotions in their intimate relationships than

are men. However, as pointed out in the introduction, this gender difference in emotional expression may be attributable to the higher level of emotions experienced by women. Not surprising, most of the emotions that we found to be expressed to a greater degree by females than by males were also experienced to a greater degree by females. Hence, to examine whether there is a gender difference in the degree to which experienced emotions are expressed, we conducted a multiple regression analysis for each emotion. Each regression analysis included the expressed emotion as the predicted (dependent) variable and the experienced emotion as well as gender as the predictor variables. These analyses allowed us to examine the degree to which gender affects the level of emotional expression directly rather than as mediated by the experience of emotions. Or saying this in another way, we examine the degree to which there are gender differences in emotional expression above and beyond any gender differences in the experience of emotions.

The results, displayed in Table III, indicate that the expression of five negative emotions is directly affected by gender, after controlling for the experience of emotions (which always had a significant and strong effect on the expression of the emotions). These emotions are anger, depression, hurt, insecurity, and anxiety. Females reported that they express these five negative emotions to a greater degree than do men, controlling for gender differences in the experience of emotions. A significant effect for gender on the expression of emotions, controlling for the experience of emotions, was found for only one of the indices: negative emotions expressed.

### **Gender Differences in Perception of Partner's Experienced Emotions**

The results reported above suggest that women are more emotional than men in the context of a close relationship. But are women perceived by their male partners and perceive themselves to be the more emotional gender?

We first address this question by examining gender differences in perception of partner's experienced emotions. These results (which are not tabled, although the means are included as part of Table IV) indicated that males attributed four negative emotions (depression, sadness, fear, and anxiety) to their female partner to a greater degree than females attributed the same emotions to their male partner. Furthermore, females attributed eight positive emotions (sexual excitement, passionate love, confidence, satisfaction, contentment, liking, companionate love, and commitment) to their partner to a greater degree than did males. The index for positive emotions perceived in partner was significantly higher for women than for men [*M*

Table III. Multiple Regression Results Indicating Effects of Gender and Own Emotions Experienced on Own Emotions Expressed

Emotions	Beta for experienced emotions	Beta for gender	R <sup>2</sup>
Emotion indices			
Positive emotions	.77 <sup>c</sup>	-.03	.58 <sup>c</sup>
Negative emotions	.79 <sup>c</sup>	.06 <sup>a</sup>	.64 <sup>c</sup>
Total emotions	.69 <sup>c</sup>	.03	.48 <sup>c</sup>
Hedonic tone	.68 <sup>c</sup>	-.04	.83 <sup>c</sup>
Specific emotions			
Positive emotions			
Passionate love	.80 <sup>c</sup>	-.05	.64 <sup>c</sup>
Sexual excitement	.80 <sup>c</sup>	-.02	.65 <sup>c</sup>
Companionate love	.67 <sup>c</sup>	.00	.46 <sup>c</sup>
Trust	.40 <sup>c</sup>	.00	.16 <sup>c</sup>
Liking	.63 <sup>c</sup>	.04	.41 <sup>c</sup>
Respect	.53 <sup>c</sup>	-.07	.28 <sup>c</sup>
Commitment	.62 <sup>c</sup>	-.02	.38 <sup>c</sup>
Confidence	.48 <sup>c</sup>	-.03	.23 <sup>c</sup>
Satisfaction	.63 <sup>c</sup>	.04	.39 <sup>c</sup>
Contentment	.61 <sup>c</sup>	.01	.38 <sup>c</sup>
Joy	.73 <sup>c</sup>	.04	.54 <sup>c</sup>
Negative emotions			
Anger	.66 <sup>c</sup>	.09 <sup>a</sup>	.46 <sup>c</sup>
Hate	.75 <sup>c</sup>	-.03	.56 <sup>c</sup>
Resentment	.69 <sup>c</sup>	.04	.48 <sup>c</sup>
Depression	.57 <sup>c</sup>	.10 <sup>b</sup>	.36 <sup>c</sup>
Sadness	.67 <sup>c</sup>	.05	.46 <sup>c</sup>
Hurt	.65 <sup>c</sup>	.09 <sup>a</sup>	.44 <sup>c</sup>
Frustration	.63 <sup>c</sup>	.05	.40 <sup>c</sup>
Jealousy	.76 <sup>c</sup>	.03	.58 <sup>c</sup>
Insecurity	.68 <sup>c</sup>	.09 <sup>a</sup>	.46 <sup>c</sup>
Ambivalence	.70 <sup>c</sup>	-.05	.50 <sup>c</sup>
Anxiety	.69 <sup>c</sup>	.07 <sup>a</sup>	.49 <sup>c</sup>
Fear	.58 <sup>c</sup>	.05	.34 <sup>c</sup>
Guilt	.60 <sup>c</sup>	.02	.36 <sup>c</sup>
Loneliness	.66 <sup>c</sup>	.00	.44 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*p* ≤ .05.<sup>b</sup>*p* ≤ .01.<sup>c</sup>*p* ≤ .001.

= 7.54 vs. 7.19;  $t(192) = -4.20, p < .001$ ], and the difference between men and women on the negative emotions index was marginally significant [ $M = 3.23$  for males vs. 3.01 for females;  $t(181) = 1.86, p = .07$ ]. The total emotions index did not reveal significant gender differences, but the hedonic emotional tone index was significantly higher for female subjects than for male subjects [ $M = 4.52$  vs. 3.93;  $t(179) = -4.00, p < .001$ ].

Table IV. Men's and Women's Reports of Own vs. Partner's Experienced Emotions

	Males			Females		
	Own experienced emotions	Perception of partner's emotions	<i>t</i>	Own experienced emotions	Perception of partner's emotions	<i>t</i>
Emotion indices						
Positive emotions	7.63	7.17	8.05 <sup>c</sup>	7.85	7.55	5.91 <sup>c</sup>
Negative emotions	2.89	3.24	-4.97 <sup>c</sup>	3.09	3.02	1.05
Total emotions	5.12	5.09	.76	5.32	5.13	4.27 <sup>c</sup>
Hedonic tone	4.72	3.93	8.20 <sup>c</sup>	4.76	4.53	2.66 <sup>c</sup>
Specific emotions						
Positive emotions						
Passionate love	7.08	7.01	.61	7.18	7.43	-2.17 <sup>a</sup>
Sexual excitement	7.58	6.86	7.29 <sup>c</sup>	7.27	7.96	-6.69 <sup>c</sup>
Companionate love	8.09	7.72	3.86 <sup>c</sup>	8.53	8.05	5.62 <sup>c</sup>
Trust	7.86	7.19	5.89 <sup>c</sup>	7.94	7.38	4.74 <sup>c</sup>
Liking	8.11	7.70	5.35 <sup>c</sup>	8.37	8.01	5.18 <sup>c</sup>
Respect	7.64	7.07	5.42 <sup>c</sup>	7.79	7.07	6.92 <sup>c</sup>
Commitment	7.41	7.14	2.37 <sup>a</sup>	7.83	7.49	3.09 <sup>b</sup>
Confidence	7.55	6.89	5.70 <sup>c</sup>	7.77	7.30	4.34 <sup>c</sup>
Satisfaction	7.61	7.18	4.43 <sup>c</sup>	7.74	7.47	3.06 <sup>b</sup>
Contentment	7.42	6.97	4.81 <sup>c</sup>	7.86	7.44	4.16 <sup>c</sup>
Joy	7.69	7.34	4.04 <sup>c</sup>	7.93	7.43	6.45 <sup>c</sup>
Negative emotions						
Anger	3.70	3.67	.18	3.92	3.59	2.59 <sup>b</sup>
Hate	1.47	1.67	-2.26 <sup>a</sup>	1.45	1.46	-.15
Resentment	2.16	2.58	-3.65 <sup>c</sup>	2.41	2.49	-.76
Depression	2.93	3.97	-7.52 <sup>c</sup>	3.44	3.22	1.57
Sadness	3.26	3.86	-4.91 <sup>c</sup>	3.66	3.24	3.10 <sup>b</sup>
Hurt	2.58	3.16	-5.09 <sup>c</sup>	3.03	3.02	.07
Frustration	4.06	4.22	-1.16	4.37	4.27	.68
Jealousy	2.96	3.30	-1.99 <sup>a</sup>	2.82	3.09	-1.70
Insecurity	2.54	3.37	-5.34 <sup>c</sup>	2.51	3.10	-3.64 <sup>c</sup>
Ambivalence	3.64	3.11	3.99 <sup>c</sup>	3.28	3.06	1.69
Anxiety	3.68	4.04	-2.48 <sup>b</sup>	3.80	3.59	1.50
Fear	2.16	2.91	-5.37 <sup>c</sup>	2.29	2.51	-1.46
Guilt	2.97	2.72	1.68	2.98	2.53	2.83 <sup>b</sup>
Loneliness	2.73	3.19	-3.78 <sup>c</sup>	3.06	3.04	.15

<sup>a</sup>*p* ≤ .05.<sup>b</sup>*p* ≤ .01.<sup>c</sup>*p* ≤ .001.

Next, we conducted paired *t* tests to compare, for each gender separately, the report of their own emotions experienced with their perception of partner's experience of emotions. This allowed us to examine the degree to which men and women perceive that their partner experiences more or less emotions relative to self. The results of these analyses are presented in Table IV.

In general, women perceived themselves as the more emotional partner in the relationship. Women reported that they experienced nine positive emotions to a significantly greater degree than their partner. These emotions were companionate love, trust, liking, respect, commitment, confidence, satisfaction, contentment, and joy. There were only two specific positive emotions that women reported experiencing less than their partner: passionate love and sexual excitement. Women also believed that they experienced anger, sadness, and guilt to a significantly greater degree but insecurity to a significantly lesser degree than their partner. For women, the positive emotions index, the total emotions index, and the hedonic emotional tone index were all significantly higher for own experienced emotions than for the perception of partner's experienced emotions.

If there is agreement between male and female partners on which partner experiences more emotions in the relationship, then men should perceive that their partner experiences more positive emotions than they report for themselves. This was not found, however. Similar to women, men also perceived that they themselves experienced more positive emotions in the relationship than they attributed to their partner. The only specific positive emotion men did not report experiencing to a greater degree than their partner was passionate love, which they perceived was experienced to an equal degree by both partners in the relationship. Men did seem to agree with women, however, about which partner experienced more negative emotions. Men assumed that their partner experienced more of several negative emotions in the relationship than they themselves did (particularly more hate, resentment, depression, sadness, hurt, jealousy, insecurity, anxiety, fear, and loneliness). Ambivalence was the only negative emotion men believed that they experienced to a significantly greater degree than their partner. For men, the index of positive emotions and the hedonic emotional tone index were both significantly higher for own experienced emotions than for perceived emotions in the partner, and the index of negative emotions was significantly higher for perceived emotions in partner than for own experienced emotions.

### **Gender Differences in Emotionality as a Function of Relationship Involvement**

In the analyses above, we compared men and women from the entire sample. However, the couples in the sample differed in the degree of relationship involvement, defined as stage of relationship (dating, more advanced stage of courtship, or marriage) and duration of relationship (1 month to 262 months). Thus, we wanted to explore whether gender dif-

ferences in emotionality depend on the degree of relationship involvement. For example, it is possible that gender differences in the expression of emotions are more pronounced earlier in the relationship than later in the relationship, after which both partners have become comfortable with each other. Due to space constraints, we limited our analyses to the emotion indices.

### *Stage of Relationship*

We conducted a 2 (gender: male vs. female)  $\times$  3 (stage: dating vs. more advanced stage of courtship vs. married) analysis of variance for each of the emotion indices. Although our interest is in the interactions between these two variables, we also report significant main effects involving stage.

*Emotions Experienced.* For none of the indices was the Gender  $\times$  Stage interaction significant. Stated otherwise, the finding reported above that women experience more emotions than men was consistent across relationship stages.

The stage main effect was significant for the positive emotions index [ $F(2, 362) = 3.81, p < .05$ ]. A Scheffé test revealed that individuals at an advanced stage of courtship ( $M = 7.89$ ) experienced more positive emotions than either dating ( $M = 7.75$ ) or married ( $M = 7.48$ ) individuals. The stage main effect was significant for the total emotions index as well [ $F(2, 362) = 4.84, p < .01$ ]. A Scheffé test indicated that married individuals ( $M = 4.88$ ) experienced less emotions than either dating ( $M = 5.13$ ) or advanced stage of courtship ( $M = 5.13$ ) individuals.

*Emotions Expressed.* The Gender  $\times$  Stage interaction was significant for the positive emotions index [ $F(2, 369) = 3.10, p < .05$ ] and for the total emotions index [ $F(2, 369) = 4.85, p < .01$ ]. In dating and advanced stages of courtship relationships, women expressed positive emotions to a greater degree than men ( $M = 7.03$  for men and  $M = 7.30$  for women in dating relationships, and  $M = 7.01$  for men and  $M = 7.40$  for women in advanced stages). In contrast, in married couples, men expressed more positive emotions than women ( $M = 6.86$  for men and  $M = 6.31$  for women). However, these gender differences were not significant when examined separately at each relationship stage.

We obtained a similar pattern of results for the total emotions index. Women scored higher for expressed emotions in dating relationships ( $M = 4.57$  for men and  $M = 4.81$  for women;  $t(192) = -2.09, p < .05$ ) and in advanced stage relationships [ $M = 4.42$  for men and  $M = 4.93$  for women;  $t(95) = -3.43, p < .001$ ]. However, in married couples, men scored

higher than women ( $M = 4.39$  for men and  $M = 4.15$  for women), although this gender difference was not significant.

We also note a significant stage main effect for the positive emotions index [ $F(2, 369) = 5.71, p < .01$ ], and the total emotions index [ $F(2, 369) = 7.83, p < .001$ ]. Married individuals expressed a significantly lower level of positive emotions ( $M = 6.59$ ) than did either dating individuals ( $M = 7.17$ ) or individuals in an advanced relationship stage ( $M = 7.20$ ). Married individuals also had a lower total emotions index ( $M = 4.27$ ) than either dating individuals ( $M = 4.69$ ) or individuals in an advanced relationship stage ( $M = 4.68$ ). However, as noted above, the main effect is qualified by the interaction effect. The differences between married individuals and individuals who were either dating or in a more advanced stage of courtship were greater for women than for men.

*Perception of Partner's Emotions.* No Gender  $\times$  Stage interaction was significant for the indices representing perceptions of partner's emotions. A stage main effect was significant for only one index, total emotions [ $F(2, 369) = 4.77, p < .01$ ]. Individuals in marital relationships ( $M = 4.75$ ) had a significantly lower score than individuals in dating ( $M = 5.07$ ) relationships. Individuals in a more advanced courtship stage ( $M = 5.02$ ) also had a higher score than married individuals, although the difference was not significant.

#### *Duration of the Relationship*

Additionally, we examined the correlation between the total number of months of the couple's relationship and the level of emotionality in the male and female partner. (In cases where the man and women did not give the same relationship length, we took the average of the partners' responses to represent the length of the relationship.) We were particularly interested in examining whether the correlations were dissimilar (in either direction or degree) for males and females. The correlations for both genders were either near zero or in the negative direction (and significant).

The correlations between relationship duration and the indices for emotions experienced were similar for men and women. Duration of relationship was negatively and significantly correlated with positive emotions experienced and with total emotions experienced for both men [ $r(181) = -.13, p < .05$ , and  $r(181) = -.13, p < .05$ , respectively] and women [ $r(183) = -.17, p < .01$ , and  $r(183) = -.22, p < .01$ , respectively]. These results suggest that there is a tendency for the experience of emotions, particularly the experience of positive emotions, to decrease for both men and women the longer they have been in their relationship.

The negative correlations between duration of relationship and emotions expressed, however, were stronger for women than for men. For women, duration of the relationship was negatively and significantly correlated with the indices for positive emotions expressed [ $r(188) = -.25, p < .001$ ], negative emotions expressed [ $r(188) = -.17, p < .01$ ], and total emotions expressed [ $r(188) = -.31, p < .001$ ]. In other words, the longer women were in their close relationship, the less expressive they became. The correlations were also negative for men, but only one was significant. For men, duration of the relationship was negatively correlated with the expression of positive emotions [ $r(183) = -.12, p = .05$ ].

We also correlated duration of the relationship with indices for perception of partner's experienced emotions. None of the correlations were significant for men. For women, two correlations were significant. Duration of the relationship was negatively and significantly correlated with perception of partner's negative emotions [ $r(186) = -.13, p < .05$ ] and with the total emotions index [ $r(186) = -.19, p < .01$ ].

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

### Summary of Findings

The present study focused on gender differences in various facets of emotionality in the context of a close relationship. The first major finding of the study was that women reported experiencing *both* positive and negative emotions within their relationship to a greater frequency than did their male partner. This supports the common stereotype of the female gender as being more emotional than the male gender. This result also suggests a paradox concerning the effect of intimate relationships on affective states for women. Relative to their male partner, women experience desirable emotions (e.g., contentment) to a greater degree but they also experience more undesirable and presumably uncomfortable emotions (e.g., depression). This finding is consistent with recent research suggesting that women experience both greater positive well-being and greater distress than men in marriage (Wood, Rhodes, & Whelan, 1989).

The second major finding of this study was that women reported expressing both positive and negative emotions to a greater degree than men. Although not as many gender differences were found when we examined the extent to which experienced emotions were expressed, a gender effect was found for five negative emotions. In a multiple regression analysis controlling for gender differences in the level of emotions experienced, women reported expressing anger, depression, hurt, insecurity, and anxiety to a



greater degree than men did. These findings provide some support for the common stereotype of the inexpressive male and are consistent with a recent study by Snell, Miller, and Belk (1988), who found that men were significantly less willing than women to disclose several negative emotions to their spouse or lover. These results suggest that men feel less comfortable than women expressing their vulnerable emotions.

Further, differences were found between men and women in their perceptions of partner's emotions. At first glance at these data, it appears that women, to a greater degree than men, perceive their partner as experiencing a high level of positive emotions. However, when we compare each gender's reports of own vs. partner's emotions experienced, we find that women believed that relative to their partner they experienced positive emotions and a few negative emotions with higher frequency, whereas men believed that relative to their partner they experienced positive emotions with higher frequency but negative emotions with lower frequency. Thus, they seem to agree somewhat about who experiences negative emotions (although not necessarily the same negative emotions) but disagree about who experiences more positive emotions. Men and women did, however, agree that the male partner experiences more sexual excitement and that the female partner experiences greater sadness.

Gender differences were also obtained in expression of emotions as a function of relationship involvement. Women in dating and advanced stages of courtship relationships tended to report expressing more emotions and more positive emotions than men, whereas married men expressed more positive emotions than married women. Furthermore, the longer individuals were in their close relationship, the less expressive they became, with this pattern being more pronounced for women than men.

### Further Issues

Although anger has been considered to be the prototypically masculine emotion (e.g., Shields, 1987), women in this investigation reported expressing more anger than their partner. In follow-up analyses, we found that this gender difference was not dependent on stage of the relationship. {We did find that duration of the relationship was positively correlated with expression of anger for men [ $r(194) = .15, p < .05$ ] but unrelated to the expression of anger for women [ $r(194) = -.03; p = ns$ ].} The veridicality of this gender difference in expressivity of anger is reinforced by similar results reported by other researchers (e.g., Snell et al., 1988). This finding underscores the importance of examining gender differences in emotions in different contexts and relationships. Perhaps men may be more likely

than women to experience and express anger in their professional and same-gender relationships (hence, the origin of the stereotype), but not in their relationships with an intimate, opposite-sex partner. We note, however, that a recent study found no gender differences in college students' scores on a scale that measures the degree to which they express anger in a variety of contexts (Kopper & Epperson, 1991).

Interestingly, both genders expressed the belief that the self experiences more positive emotions than the partner. This can be understood in the broader context of self-serving biases. People have been shown to fall prey to several self-serving biases, such as unrealistic optimism, the belief of having many more positive than negative traits, and the belief of being better than the average person on a plethora of evaluative dimensions (for reviews, see Sedikides & Strube, 1993, and Taylor & Brown, 1988). The belief that the self experiences more positive emotions than the partner may be considered another case of a self-serving bias.

In the introduction we mentioned a caveat concerning the data analyzed in this study. The present study must be considered an investigation of what people believe they and their partner are like emotionally in their relationship. The same gender differences may not be found if we measured the emotions people experience and express on a daily basis. A second caveat is in order concerning the findings of this study. The significant gender differences in emotionality found in this study were rather small. In fact, both men and women scored near the same end of the response scales. This is common for most research reporting significant gender differences in feelings and behaviors in close relationships and is in line with Deaux's (1984) observation that gender differences are likely to account for only a small portion of the variance of the effect under consideration.

In conclusion, we believe that gender differences in emotions can best be understood in the context of close relationships. The present investigation, conducted in that spirit, furnished several insights into how women and men report the ways in which they experience and express emotions. We hope that the results of this investigation will motivate future forays in this exciting domain of inquiry.

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