

Male Gender Role Conflict and Patterns of Help Seeking in Costa Rica and the United States

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This study examined the relationship between male gender role conflict (J. M. O'Neil, 1981) and willingness to seek help for depression and substance abuse from a variety of potential helpers in a sample of U.S. and Costa Rican men. Results revealed variability in men's willingness to seek help across both culture and type of helper. Restrictive emotionality and restrictive affectionate behavior between men were related to decreased willingness to seek help from several helpers, whereas success, power, and competition were positively related to help-seeking ratings for some targets (Internet, mothers) and negatively related to ratings for male friends. These results suggest that the relationship between masculine gender socialization and help-seeking behaviors may depend on a variety of factors surrounding different problems and help-seeking opportunities.

Keywords: help seeking, masculinity, gender roles

The discrepancy between men and women's rates of help-seeking behavior is a growing concern for psychologists and other health providers. Research has indicated that men are less likely than women to seek professional help for a variety of problems, including depression and anxiety (Kessler, Brown, & Broman, 1981; Tudiver & Talbot, 1999). Men are not only less likely to seek help for psychological difficulties, but they are also less likely to seek medical attention when ill and are less likely to get regular checkups (Commonwealth Fund, 1998; Tudiver & Talbot, 1999). Despite their lower rates of help seeking, men are at greater risk for developing substance problems (Kessler et al., 1994), committing suicide, and engaging in violent behavior.

Sex differences research tends to explain men's decreased willingness to seek help for

problems in terms of gender role bifurcation (Horwitz, 1977; Kessler et al., 1994). However, the sex differences approach fails to explain the fact that not all men are equally unwilling to seek help (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). For example, African American men have been found to be less receptive toward help seeking than European American men (Neighbors, Musick, & Williams, 1998), lower income and working class men are less likely to seek help than are middle-class and upper-class men (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2002), and Asian Americans and Asian immigrants have increased resistance to help seeking compared with Western men (Shin, 2002; Solberg, Ritsma, Davis, & Tata, 1994).

In a move away from sex differences research, adherence to the male gender role and its resulting consequences have been a major focus of researchers interested in examining variations within populations of men (O'Neil, 1981, 1990; Pleck, 1995). The "traditional" male gender role emphasizes a variety of characteristics, including success and achievement, emotional stoicism, avoidance of the feminine, independence, and self-reliance (David & Brannon, 1976; Fischer & Good, 1998; O'Neil, 1981). Individual men vary in the degree to which they strive to live up to societal expectations for their gender role (Pleck, 1995).

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Rigid adherence to the male gender role has been thought to result in the restriction, devaluation, or violation of men and their loved ones (O'Neil, 1981, 1990; O'Neil & Egan, 1992; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986; Pleck, 1995). The negative consequences of gender role restriction have been termed *gender role conflict* and have been linked to several problems. Male gender role conflict, as measured by the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O'Neil et al., 1986), has been linked to an increase in various psychological problems (Good & Mintz, 1990) and, most relevant to the current study, to a decreased willingness to seek help for those problems (Good, Dell, & Mintz, 1989; Good & Mintz, 1990; Wisch, Mahalik, Hayes, & Nutt, 1995).

Unfortunately, many previous studies linking gender role conflict and help seeking have focused primarily on attitudes toward seeking help from mental health professionals, and no studies have examined this relationship cross-culturally. Such a perspective is problematic considering that the link between adherence to restrictive masculine roles and seeking help for problems in living may depend on cultural differences, as well as on characteristics of particular problems and particular individuals from which help might be sought (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Addis and Mahalik recognized the need for greater depth in thinking about the contexts of masculinity and help seeking. They suggested that the link between male socialization and help seeking may be a function of interactions between masculinity norms and basic social psychological processes surrounding the help-seeking process. These include perceptions of normativeness, perceived ego centrality of problems, characteristics of potential helpers, characteristics of the social groups to which individual men belong, and perceived losses of control (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). This proposed framework for examining help-seeking behavior captures some of the complexity of the mechanisms behind men's help seeking. The current study examined the relation between male gender role conflict and patterns of help seeking with a focus on three important questions: (a) Does culture matter? (b) Does type of potential helper matter? and (c) Does type of problem matter?

The Importance of Culture

If traditional male gender roles are products of masculine socialization, then men from different cultural backgrounds may have different conceptualizations of what it means to be a man (Gilmore, 1990; Kimmel & Messner, 1998). According to some studies within the United States, American men from different racial/ethnic backgrounds have expressed different perspectives on the male gender role. For example, as a reaction to White racism, African American men often enact a type of masculinity referred to as "cool pose" masculinity (Lazur & Majors, 1995), whereas Latino men enact a type of masculinity referred to as "machismo" (Abreu, Goodyear, Campos, & Newcomb, 2000). Cool pose masculinity and machismo both refer to aspects of masculinity, but they emphasize different qualities: the former emphasizing qualities of pride and social competence, and the latter emphasizing qualities such as virility and power.

Unfortunately, the construct of gender role conflict has been developed from theoretical notions of traditional or hegemonic masculinity, and scales measuring this construct have been typically used in predominantly White middle-class samples (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Good et al., 1989; Good & Mintz, 1990; Wisch et al., 1995). It is unclear, therefore, whether the implications of gender role conflict, with regard to help seeking, are the same for men of color or for men from different countries. In other words, does the relation between gender role conflict and help seeking still exist when measured in different populations of men? Or, is gender role conflict less relevant for understanding the relation between masculinity and help seeking in cultures other than that found in White middle-class or upper-class men in the United States?

The Importance of Potential Helpers

Characteristics of potential helpers could affect how likely individuals may be to seek help (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Molina & Franco, 1986). These include potential threat to masculinity (i.e., disclosing a problem to people such as male friends or psychologists could threaten a man's self-perceived masculinity), relationship status (Hatch & Leighton, 1986; Leaper,

Carson, Baker, Holliday & Myers, 1995), extent of the existing support system, (Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1986; Lepore, 1992), and level of intimacy (Grisby & Weatherley, 1983; Plasky & Lorion, 1984; Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-Schetter, 1980). Despite variations in potential helpers, most studies finding relations between gender role conflict and help-seeking behavior have been based solely on reports of attitudes toward help seeking from professional sources (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Good et al., 1989; Kessler et al., 1981; Thom, 1986, 1987; Wisch et al., 1995). Mental health professionals, however, might be the last step in the help-seeking chain because individuals are more likely to disclose information to known confidants than to strangers (Plasky & Lorion, 1984).

The Importance of Type of Problem

Finally, help seeking has been found to vary as a function of the type of problem under consideration (Angermeyer, Matschinger, & Riedel-Heller, 1999). It has been suggested that men are less likely to seek help for problems such as anxiety and depression because the experience of such problems is incompatible with the male gender role (Warren, 1983). In fact, both men and women have been found to rate depressed individuals as more feminine than masculine (Hammen & Peters, 1978). Furthermore, men have been found to perceive substance use as a highly masculine activity (Lemle & Mishkind, 1989), and rates of substance abuse and dependence among men are significantly higher than rates among women (Kessler et al., 1994).

Perceptions of different problems as masculine or feminine could interact with adherence to restrictive masculine norms to produce different degrees of openness to help seeking. For example, when men who demonstrate high degrees of gender role conflict experience problems that they perceive to be inconsistent with the male role (i.e., depression), they might be less likely to seek help than men who perceive the problems similarly but who have lower levels of gender role conflict.

The Current Study

In the current study, the relations between culture (United States vs. Costa Rica), gender

role conflict, and likelihood of help seeking for two different problems from a variety of potential help providers were evaluated. We assumed that culture influences the construction and maintenance of standards and expectations for male gender roles. In addition, we evaluated the possibility that the relationship between traditional restrictive masculinity norms (e.g., gender role conflict) and attitudes toward help seeking may vary cross-culturally. We hypothesized that the relation between male gender role conflict and men's willingness to seek help would differ according to culture, type of helper, and type of problem. More specifically, we proposed that (a) the relation between gender role conflict and help seeking in the United States would be consistent with past research conducted on predominantly White American men (higher levels of gender role conflict would be associated with lower levels of help seeking); (b) the relation between subtypes of gender role conflict and help-seeking patterns would be different for Costa Rican men than for American men; (c) high gender role conflict would be related to decreased rates of help seeking from potential helpers to whom disclosure potentially poses a "threat to masculinity" (i.e., other men and professional sources); and (d) high gender role conflict levels would be more strongly related to lower rates of help seeking for depression than for substance abuse.

Method

Participants

One hundred and five male college students participated in this study. Sixty participants were recruited from a small private university in Massachusetts, and 45 participants were recruited from a large public university in Costa Rica. The mean age for the Costa Rican sample was 20.16 years old ($SD = 1.72$), and ages ranged from 17 to 25 years old. The mean age for the U.S. sample was 20.26 years old ($SD = 2.07$), and ages ranged from 17 to 31 years old. In the U.S. sample, 88% of participants reported their race as White, 2% as African American, 2% as Hispanic, and 6% classified themselves as Asian. In the Costa Rican sample, 97% of respondents classified themselves as Latino, 2% as Asian, and 1% as other. Participants in the United States were recruited

by flyers in the campus center, and participants in Costa Rica were recruited by classroom visits. All participants were told that their participation was voluntary and that all their responses were confidential. In addition, all participants were given \$5 for completing the questionnaire packet.

Design and Procedure

All participants provided written informed consent and filled out two self-report questionnaires. Students recruited through classroom visits completed the questionnaires at their desks after class period, and students recruited through flyers completed the questionnaires at designated areas in the student center. All paperwork was translated into Spanish for use with Costa Rican participants. Translations of both questionnaires were made by Jennifer M. Lane (a fluent Spanish speaker) and were reviewed by a professional translator, two graduate students from the University of Costa Rica, and the director of the psychological research institute at the University of Costa Rica. All reviewers completed their own translation of the questionnaire, and any discrepancies between copies were discussed prior to inclusion on the final translation. Back translations were conducted by two undergraduate students from the University of Costa Rica. While Spanish versions of the GRCS (O'Neil et al., 1986) existed before this study, prominent linguistic differences exist across various Spanish-speaking countries. For this reason, it was necessary to use a new translation in order to ensure greater validity of the measure for use in Costa Rican populations. The presentation of the scales was counterbalanced.

Measures

The GRCS. The GRCS is a 37-item questionnaire designed to examine the degree to which men agree with statements about themselves that are assumed to reflect the consequences of traditional masculine gender socialization. Participants report the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a 6-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

The overall scale comprises four subscales: Success, Power, and Competition (SPC); Re-

strictive Emotionality (RE); Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (RABBM); and Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations (CBWF). Participants receive both an overall gender role conflict score and a score for each of the four subscales. O'Neil, Good, and Holmes (1995) reported 4-week test reliabilities for the GRCS that ranged from .72 to .86 and internal consistency reliabilities that ranged from .75 to .85 for the four subscales. The validity of the GRCS has been supported by several studies (O'Neil et al., 1995; Thompson & Pleck, 1995).

Patterns of Help Seeking Scale (PHSS). The PHSS is a 21-item questionnaire designed for the current study and is intended to evaluate both a participant's comfort level talking about various types of problems and his willingness to seek help for those problems from various sources. Participants are presented with a short scenario describing a certain type of problem (i.e., depression or drug abuse) and are asked to imagine themselves experiencing that problem. Depression and substance abuse were selected for this study based on past research indicating that men are more likely to perceive depression as a feminine problem (Warren, 1983) and substance abuse as a masculine problem (Lemle & Mishkind, 1989). Problem descriptions were adapted using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) criteria and were reviewed by several colleagues.

The first 18 items on the scale evaluate patterns of help seeking from nine potential helpers: (a) mother, (b) father, (c) partner, (d) male friend, (e) female friend, (f) psychologist, (g) doctor, (h) religious leader, and (i) anonymous Internet group. This list of potential helpers was selected from past literature identifying these people as either potential sources for providing help or potential listeners (Angermeyer et al., 1999; Loewenthal, Cinnirella, Evdoka, & Murphy, 2001; Plasky & Lorion, 1984).

For each potential helper, the participant is asked to rate both the likelihood that he would seek help from that helper and how comfortable he would feel discussing a given problem with that helper. Participants record their scores using a 6-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*highly unlikely/very uncomfortable*) to 6 (*highly likely/very comfortable*).

The last three items on the scale consist of a ranking system and two open-ended questions.

Participants are asked to rank, from *most likely* to *least likely*, all nine helpers according to how likely they would be to turn to that source for help. Participants are then asked to provide two reasons why they would be most likely to seek help from the source they listed as number one and two reasons for why they would be least likely to seek help from the source they listed as number nine. For the present study, the only items used for analysis were the nine items that asked participants to rate how willing they would be to seek help from each of the potential helpers and the open-ended answers. Because of high correlations between comfort and likelihood ratings (ranging from $r = .61$ to $r = .95$), the comfort ratings were not examined in this study.

The PHSS is a researcher-designed questionnaire that was constructed specifically for this study. It should be noted that the purpose of the measure is to capture the likelihood of help seeking from different sources, rather than a person's overall willingness to seek help. For these reasons, we did not expect a high degree of internal consistency among the individual PHSS items. Nonetheless, we calculated internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) of help-seeking ratings for each scenario in each culture. These analyses yielded alphas of .62 for

the depression scenario in the U.S. sample, .51 for the depression scenario in the Costa Rican sample, .63 for the substance abuse scenario in the U.S. sample, and .42 for the substance abuse scenario in the Costa Rican sample. For the majority of analyses conducted, we focused on ratings of specific help-seeking targets.

Results

Does Culture Matter?

To examine differences between men from Costa Rica and the United States, we coded culture categorically. A score of one represented the Costa Rican sample, and a score of two represented the U.S. sample. This was the only measurement used to indicate culture that was used throughout the analyses.

To determine whether there were significant differences in gender role conflict scores between cultures, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with culture (Costa Rica vs. United States) as the independent variable and scores on each of the four gender role conflict factors as the dependent variables. (See Table 1 for means and standard deviations of the dependent variable for each culture.) Results revealed a significant main effect for culture Wilks's $\lambda =$

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Gender Role Conflict Factor and Help-Seeking Scores by Culture

Factor	U.S. men		Costa Rican men	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender role conflict				
Success, Power, and Competition	3.66	0.81	3.88	0.93
Restrictive Emotionality	2.94	0.95	2.92	0.71
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men	2.64**	0.99	3.26	1.00
Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations	3.62**	1.10	3.02	1.20
Potential helper				
Mother	3.61	1.50	4.14	1.10
Father	3.13	1.50	3.61	1.40
Partner	4.84	0.98	4.66	1.00
Male friend	4.48*	1.00	5.03	0.82
Female friend	4.67	0.87	4.87	0.97
Psychologist	3.39	1.50	3.94	1.40
Doctor	3.33	1.30	3.50	1.20
Minister	2.03	1.40	2.37	1.30
Internet	2.03	1.30	1.68	1.20

Note. $n = 58$ for the U.S. sample and $n = 41$ for the Costa Rican sample for Gender Role Conflict Scale factor scores. $n = 60$ for the U.S. sample and $n = 44$ for the Costa Rican sample for help-seeking ratings. Higher means for the potential helper indicate greater willingness to seek help from that source.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

.813, $F(4, 94) = 5.41, p < .001$. Using an alpha criterion of .013 (.05/4 univariate comparisons), follow-up analyses of variance indicated that the culture effect was related to scores on the RABBM subscale, $F(1, 97) = 9.05, p < .01$, and on the CBWF subscale, $F(1, 97) = 8.43, p < .01$. Examination of the means (see Table 1) indicated that Costa Rican men reported higher restrictive affectionate behavior between men and lower levels of conflict between work and family than did men from the United States.

To determine whether there were any significant differences in help-seeking ratings from different targets between U.S. and Costa Rican men, nine independent sample *t* tests were conducted with culture as the independent variable (Costa Rica vs. United States) and ratings for each of the nine potential helpers as dependent variables. Ratings for each target were collapsed across type of problem to obtain an average help-seeking rating for each of the nine targets. Using an alpha criterion of .006 (.05/9 independent sample *t* tests), results indicated that the only significant difference between Costa Rican and U.S. men was for help-seeking

ratings for the male friend, $t(102) = 2.89, p < .006$. Examination of the means revealed that Costa Rican men reported a greater willingness to seek help for problems from their male friends (see Table 1).

Does Type of Helper Matter?

To examine whether there was a relationship between gender role conflict scores and help-seeking ratings from different types of potential helpers, we conducted Pearson correlations separately for each sample and for each scenario (see Table 2 for correlation matrices).

Depression scenario. As Table 2 illustrates, different gender role conflict factors were related to likelihood of help seeking from different helpers in the depression scenario for U.S. men. Not all gender role conflict factors were related to help-seeking ratings, and there were interesting differences between the targets. For U.S. men, higher scores on SPC were related to decreased willingness to seek help from male friends and increased willingness to seek help from anonymous Internet groups. Consistent

Table 2
Correlations Between Gender Role Conflict Factors and Help-Seeking Ratings From Potential Helpers

Sample	SPC		RE		RABBM		CBWF	
	Dep.	Sub. abuse	Dep.	Sub. abuse	Dep.	Sub. abuse	Dep.	Sub. abuse
U.S. men								
Mother	.03	.10	-.17	-.24*	-.09	-.25*	-.01	.10
Father	-.05	-.12	-.21	-.35**	-.09	-.22*	-.15	-.13
Partner	.03	.10	-.33**	-.01	-.26*	-.08	-.01	.06
Male friend	-.25*	.03	-.30*	-.16	-.47**	-.37**	-.19	-.01
Female friend	.21	.17	-.17	-.07	-.07	-.02	.05	.10
Psychologist	.17	.21	-.19	-.13	-.05	.00	.02	-.08
Doctor	.09	-.03	-.27*	-.20	-.08	.00	.02	-.16
Minister	-.00	.08	.00	.08	-.06	.10	-.12	-.10
Internet	.32**	.31**	-.12	.04	.01	.27*	.24*	.28
Costa Rican men								
Mother	.35**	.20	-.13	-.01	.02	-.02	.03	-.01
Father	.23	.11	.13	-.13	.10	-.19	.21	.09
Partner	.13	-.13	-.07	-.18	-.05	-.13	.12	.08
Male friend	-.30*	.11	-.15	-.10	-.36**	-.19	-.13	-.15
Female friend	-.16	-.04	-.10	-.07	-.19	-.19	-.12	-.02
Psychologist	.20	.29*	.03	.06	-.07	-.02	.18	-.00
Doctor	.22	.29*	.28*	-.02	.19	.24	.35**	.14
Minister	.19	.33*	.14	.16	.25*	.44*	.17	.25
Internet	.16	-.08	.00	-.11	-.02	-.16	.18	.00

Note. SPC = Success, Power, and Competition; RE = Restrictive Emotionality; RABBM = Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; CBWF = Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations; Dep. = depression; Sub. abuse = substance abuse.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

with past literature, scores on RE were significantly related to willingness to seek help from a number of potential helpers, including partner, male friend, and doctor. For all three helpers, men scoring higher on RE rated themselves as less likely to seek help from these helpers for depression. Of particular interest, there were no significant relations between RE and the remaining six helpers. RABBM scores were negatively related to help-seeking ratings from partners and male friends, and CBWF scores were positively related to help-seeking ratings from anonymous Internet groups.

For Costa Rican men, the relation between GRCS scores and help-seeking ratings for different helpers revealed a different pattern with fewer significant relations between the two variables. SPC scores were positively related to help-seeking ratings from mothers and negatively related to help-seeking ratings from male friends. RE scores were positively related to help-seeking ratings for doctors. RABBM scores were negatively related to ratings for male friends, and CBWF scores were positively related to help-seeking ratings for doctors.

Drug scenario. For U.S. men in the substance abuse scenario, SPC was positively related to help-seeking ratings for Internet groups. RE was negatively related to help-seeking ratings for mothers and fathers. RABBM was also negatively related to several targets including mothers, fathers, and male friends, and it was positively related to ratings for Internet groups. Finally, CBWF was positively related to help-seeking ratings for Internet groups.

For Costa Rican men, SPC was positively related to all of the professional helpers such as psychologists, doctors, and ministers. RABBM scores were positively related to help-seeking ratings only for ministers. Finally, neither RE scores nor CBWF scores were significantly related to any of the help-seeking ratings for this problem.

Depression Versus Substance Abuse: Does Problem Matter?

We conducted matched sample *t* tests to test differences within each culture between men's overall willingness to seek help for depression versus substance abuse. To collapse help-seeking ratings across targets, ratings from all nine helpers were averaged. Results revealed that

Costa Rican men rated themselves as more willing to seek help for substance abuse ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .60$) than for depression ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .62$), $t(43) = -2.14$, $p < .05$ (two-tailed). There was no significant difference between U.S. men's willingness to seek help for depression ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .72$) versus substance abuse ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .72$).

Open-Ended Questions

For the open-ended questions, we examined participants' responses from each culture and each type of problem separately. For each group, we first calculated the percentage of times that each target was ranked either first ("I would be most likely to seek help from ____ for this problem") or last ("I would be least likely to seek help from ____ for this problem"). We then looked at the most commonly listed reasons or themes that emerged from these responses.

Depression scenario. In the U.S. sample, mothers and partners were the two helpers ranked most frequently in first place for depression. Thirty-one percent of U.S. men listed their mothers as their preferred helper, and 23% listed their partners as their preferred helper (see Table 3 for list of percentages). For U.S. men, there was no single reason for their rankings of preferred helpers that stood out as most common. Participants mentioned a range of reasons, including closeness and intimacy (e.g., "Because they would be the person who I am physically and emotionally closest to" or "They know me better than anyone"), higher degree of comfort with helper (e.g., "I've always been comfortable talking to my girlfriends"), non-judgmental nature of helper (e.g., "My female friends are the least judgmental of all these people"), helper's past experience with the problem (e.g., "My mother has been through a lot and I think she's got quite a bit of insight into depression" or "Because I have lots of female friends and they've had experiences like these"), and level of support from that helper (e.g., "They've always been really supportive of my problems"). Only 2 participants mentioned professionalism and training as potential reasons for ranking their preferred helper, and these were the only participants to rank psychologist as number one.

The helper listed most frequently in last place

Table 3
Percentage of Participants Who Ranked Each Helper First

Potential helper	Most likely (%)				Least likely (%)			
	United States		Costa Rica		United States		Costa Rica	
	Dep.	Sub. abuse	Dep.	Sub. abuse	Dep.	Sub. abuse	Dep.	Sub. abuse
Mother	23	5	33	13	3	8	0	0
Father	8	12	7	9	8	12	0	0
Partner	31	30	29	11	2	2	2	0
Male friend	17	37	7	20	0	2	0	0
Female friend	15	8	20	11	2	2	0	0
Psychologist	3	5	5	24	2	3	0	2
Doctor	2	2	2	4	0	0	2	2
Minister	0	5	0	2	25	25	31	29
Internet	2	2	0	2	58	48	64	67

Note. Participants ranked their number one helper according to the following question: "I would be most likely to seek help from _____ for this problem" or "I would be least likely to seek help from _____." Dep. = depression; Sub. abuse = substance abuse.

was the Internet group. Fifty-eight percent of U.S. men reported they would be least likely to seek help from this potential source. The most common reasons that emerged for this choice were lack of personal attention (e.g., "Internet relations are not face to face and therefore cannot serve as a means through which to effectively seek emotional healing from others," "It is too impersonal," and "It is not personal enough") and discomfort/lack of connection with strangers (e.g., "Sounds sketchy to talk to people you do not know" and "I have no connection with these people").

Costa Rican men were also most likely to rank their mothers and partners as their preferred helper, although their reasons were somewhat different. Thirty-three percent of Costa Rican men ranked their mothers as their preferred helper, and 29% ranked their partners in the top position. The most common reason these men listed as why they would most likely seek help from a given helper was trust. Sixty percent of men reported that trust in that specific helper was one of the main reasons why they would turn to that person for help with depression. Other reasons provided by participants included confidentiality (e.g., "Confidentiality" and "It would be confidential"), nonjudgmental nature of potential helper and lack of shame (e.g., "I would not be ashamed in front of her"), closeness/intimacy of their relationship with helper (e.g., "We have a really close relationship"), and degree of professionalism and training of helper (e.g., "They have a more objective

and professional opinion about these matters" or "They have the training for this").

The two targets listed most frequently in last position ("I would be least likely to seek help from ___ for this problem") were religious leaders (31%) and Internet groups (64%). The most common reasons were the same as for the U.S. sample (lack of personal attention and discomfort with the Internet).

Drug scenario. In the U.S. sample, the helper listed most frequently in first place for this scenario was the male friend. Thirty-seven percent of U.S. men reported being most likely to seek help from their male friend for substance abuse problems. Several themes emerged from participants' explanations, but the most common theme was the similarity of experience (e.g., "He would understand where I'm coming from cause he'd be most likely to experience similar things," "I think my friends would help the most without judging and might actually be going through something similar," or "I have male friends who could help me because they drink with me and some of them have had problems like this as well"). Other themes that emerged were general comfort level and professionalism/training.

Once again, participants listed the Internet group most frequently in last place. Forty-eight percent of men reported being least likely to turn to the Internet for help with substance abuse problems. Reasons given for this choice were similar to those given for the depression scenario: impersonal and lack of comfort talk-

ing with strangers. Of particular interest, a larger percentage of participants reported being unlikely to turn to their parents for this problem. The most common reason listed for this was fear of disappointing their parents or experiencing their anger (e.g., "I would hate to disappoint my father," "He'd be pissed," "I'd be seen as a failure and I do not want to be reprimanded," or "She'd kill me").

In the Costa Rican sample, the helper listed most frequently in first place for the substance abuse scenario was psychologist (24%). The two most common reasons listed for their top choice were professional training and past experience with the problem. Thirty-one percent of Costa Rican men listed the helper's professionalism and training as the primary reason for turning to a specific source for help with substance abuse problems. Twenty percent listed the potential helper's similar life experience and past experience with the problem as a major reason for turning to this person (e.g., "He's going through similar experiences" or "He's been through that in the past and would know how to help"). Unlike the depression scenario, only 8% of participants listed trust in the helper as a primary reason for seeking help from a specific helper.

The helpers listed most frequently in last place were the Internet group and ministers. Sixty-seven percent of Costa Rican men reported that they would be least likely to seek help from an Internet group. The reasons for this were the same as the depression scenario (lack of personal attention, etc.).

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine whether the relation between different facets of gender role conflict and men's willingness to seek help varies between cultures, types of helper, and type of problem. Previous research examining the relation between gender role conflict and help-seeking attitudes focused primarily on general help seeking from professionals, and no studies examined this relation both cross-culturally and across types of potential helpers. Our results support the premise that the relation between masculine gender socialization (e.g., gender role conflict) and help-seeking behavior is more complex than had previously been assumed. Cultural differences, differences

in problem type, and differences in potential help providers may all play a role in men's likelihood of seeking help for problems in living. We consider the specific findings in more detail next.

The Importance of Culture

Our findings provided moderate support for our second hypothesis that there would be significant differences between U.S. and Costa Rican men with regards to both their levels of gender role conflict and the relation between the subtypes of gender role conflict and help-seeking patterns. While there were no significant differences between the sample on either success, power, and competition or restrictive emotionality, Costa Rican men were more likely to report higher levels of restrictive affectionate behavior between men and lower levels of conflict between work and family than were U.S. men. This is particularly important because the two variables that have been most frequently associated with help-seeking attitudes in U.S. sample are success, power, and competition and restrictive emotionality (Good & Wood, 1995). In addition, despite comparability in SPC and RE scores across the two samples, the two variables were often related to the likelihood of seeking help from different types of helpers in the two cultures. For example, in the depression scenario, SPC scores were positively related to help seeking from doctors for the Costa Rican men but were negatively related to help seeking from doctors for the U.S. men. Similar differences were visible for several other helpers. These differences could have several potential explanations. First, it is possible that characteristics of potential helpers could be perceived differently by Costa Rican and U.S. men, and, therefore, the meaning of seeking help from these sources could vary significantly. For example, Costa Rican men might be more likely to perceive doctors as personally accessible, whereas U.S. men might perceive doctors as distant authoritarian figures. Second, it is possible that although U.S. and Costa Rican men might experience similar levels of success, power, and competition and restrictive emotionality, both the meaning and importance of these constructs in men's conceptualizations of masculinity could vary between the two cultures. Finally, one plausible interpretation of the over-

all pattern of findings regarding culture is that, although socialization according to restrictive masculinity norms common in the United States may play a role in help-seeking behavior in both U.S. and Costa Rican men, there are additional factors that may influence help seeking among men in both cultures. For example, closer examination of Costa Rican masculinity could provide insight into other variables that facilitate men's help-seeking behavior.

The Importance of Potential Helper

A second goal of this study was to examine whether the relation between gender role conflict and help-seeking attitudes differed across potential help providers. Past studies indicate a negative relation between overall gender role conflict and help seeking, although the focus of many of these studies was on professional help seeking (Blazina & Marks, 2001; Good & Wood, 1995; Wisch et al., 1995). Self-disclosure literature, however, suggests that individuals are most likely to disclose personal information to those with whom they share an intimate bond (Plasky & Lorion, 1984). Results from this study illustrate great variability in the extent to which gender role conflict factors are related to help seeking across different potential help providers. The gender role conflict factors were significantly related to variability in scores for some helpers; however, the same pattern did not hold true for all helpers. This suggests that other factors are likely to play a role in influencing whether help will be sought from friends, family members, community leaders, and other possible helpers. Consistent with past research (Good et al., 1989; Good & Mintz, 1990), restrictive emotionality was found to be negatively related to U.S. men's willingness to seek help from several potential sources for both the depression and the substance abuse scenarios. This relation did not hold true, however, for the majority of potential helpers, nor did it exist for any of the helpers in the Costa Rican sample. Considering that the majority of past studies have focused primarily on help seeking from mental health professionals in the United States, it is likely that they have failed to capture the full picture when it comes to men's help-seeking behavior. Unfortunately, the current study did not examine men's perceptions of the different types of helpers. It therefore remains un-

clear whether differences in the gender role conflict–help-seeking relation across helpers were due to threat to masculinity, intimacy, or other factors.

The results pertaining to the role of a male friend in the help-seeking process were particularly interesting. Following Kimmel (1994), we had hypothesized that men reporting higher levels of gender role conflict would be particularly unlikely to seek help for problems from their male friends. Kimmel postulated that men are constantly forced to enact their masculinity for other men and, therefore, appearing weak in front of other men could lead to feelings of shame and inadequacy. In this sense, disclosing information about personal problems to a male friend may pose a threat to a man's sense of masculinity (i.e., an admission of weakness to the one person who will not tolerate that admission). The current results support a strong relation between some masculinity-related constructs and men's willingness to seek help from their male friends for problems. Although this was true for both Costa Rican and U.S. men, it was especially true for U.S. men in the depression scenario. Men scoring higher on SPC, RE, and RABBM subscales were more likely to report less willingness to turn to their male friends for help with depression. This could suggest that certain men perceive talking about problems with male friends as a feminine and, therefore, less acceptable behavior.

A second helping source of particular interest that emerged from this study was the anonymous Internet group. For U.S. men, higher levels of gender role conflict were associated with greater willingness to seek help from anonymous Internet groups for both depression and substance abuse scenarios. Of particular interest, rankings and open-ended questions revealed that the Internet was often ranked last for all men, although it is possible that the Internet could be a valuable resource for men adhering to restrictive masculinity norms. This has important implications for future research in facilitation of help seeking by highly resistant men. The Internet could provide men with a private and anonymous resource that could reduce the stigma of the help-seeking process and could increase perceptions of the normativeness of problems in a less threatening way (Addis & Mahalik, 2003).

The relation between success, power, and competition and willingness to seek help for both depression and alcohol abuse was unexpected. Past research indicates a negative relation between overall gender role conflict and help-seeking attitudes (Blazina & Marks, 2001; Good et al., 1989; Wisch et al., 1995). However, results from this study revealed that success, power, and competition did not fit this pattern for all targets. In the Costa Rican sample, there was a positive relation between success, power, and competition and help-seeking ratings for mothers in the depression scenario and for psychologists, doctors, and ministers in the substance abuse scenario. It is possible that participants in this study perceived help seeking somewhat differently than those from previous studies. For example, some individuals might perceive the act of help seeking as admitting a weakness, whereas others might perceive it as taking control over their own situation. Increased recognition of men's physical and mental health in the media could also be changing the way men perceive the process of seeking help.

Finally, it is important to note that the relation between success, power, and competition and help seeking varied across type of helper and across cultures. Given the inconsistent pattern and the incongruity with past research, these results should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the relation between competitive aspects of masculinity and the help-seeking process warrants further investigation, particularly given the possible role of status and perceived indebtedness in men's help-seeking behavior (Addis & Mahalik, 2003).

The Importance of Type of Problem

Our final hypothesis was that higher gender role conflict would be related to lower levels of help seeking for depression. We found no differences between the drug and depression problems, however, when it came to the relation between gender role conflict and help seeking. These two particular problems were selected because they are often thought to represent different ends of the masculinity-femininity spectrum (Warren, 1983). It was thought that the relation between gender role conflict and willingness to seek help would be stronger for problems stereotypically considered feminine (War-

ren, 1983) than for more masculine problems such as drug abuse, but this was not supported by the results.

One explanation for the lack of differences between the depression and drug scenario could be attributed to the particular samples that were examined. Both the Costa Rican and U.S. samples used in this study were college samples. Addis and Mahalik (2003) suggested that basic social psychological processes such as stigma and normativeness play a role in men's help seeking. It is possible that disclosing or admitting to an alcohol problem in an environment in which social drinking is very common could be perceived as more stigmatizing and less normative than admitting to a problem such as depression. It also is possible that college students may experience less shame about depression than would men in more traditionally masculine environments.

Reasons for Help-Seeking Choices

Several interesting themes emerged from participants' responses to the open-ended questions. These themes highlight some potentially interesting differences between help-seeking behaviors across types of problems. When Costa Rican men were asked to list the primary reason for seeking help from their preferred helper, different themes emerged for each of the scenarios. In the depression scenario, the most frequently listed reason was trust in the helper, whereas for the substance abuse scenario, the most frequently listed reason was the helper's level of professional knowledge and training. This difference could suggest that Costa Rican men might view substance abuse as more of a health problem that requires professional attention. In contrast, depression may be more likely to be perceived as a problem that is risky to share with others unless there is a good deal of trust present.

For the U.S. men, the picture was slightly more complex, with men listing a wider range of reasons for seeking help from their preferred helper for depression. However, for the substance abuse scenario, U.S. men were much more likely to seek help from their male friends, and the most common reason for this choice was similarity of experience. It therefore seems that, for U.S. men, perceptions of the normativeness of a problem might play some role in

determining willingness to seek help from their male peers. Of particular interest, U.S. men were more likely to assume that their male friends were going through the same experiences with substance abuse problems compared with depression problems.

This study had several limitations that are important to consider. First, all of the collected data were generated by self-report questionnaires. As with all self-report measures, the scales used in this study are susceptible to sources of error such as social desirability, lying, and fatigue. College students are particularly familiar with filling out surveys and questionnaires and might feel under increased pressure to answer questions in a socially desirable manner.

A second limitation to this study is that participants were asked how willing they would be to seek help from a particular helper, but there was no measurement of the degree to which they actually do seek help from these people when faced with a problem. In other words, participants were asked to anticipate how they would respond to a particular problem regardless of whether they had actually faced that type of problem. It is possible that, if faced with the actual problem described in the questionnaire, participants might respond in very different ways. Thus, there is a strong need for research that examines men's actual help-seeking behaviors from a range of help sources.

Third, results were based on a relatively small sample. While corrections were made to reduce potential Type I errors, the small sample size contributed to a lower degree of power. A larger sample size would have allowed for more powerful and detailed analyses. Finally, results from this study were based in part on a researcher-constructed instrument. The PHSS was developed for the purpose of this study, and, therefore, the reliability and validity of the scale have not been fully determined. Additional research is required to examine the potential usefulness and accuracy of this measure.

In summary, the current findings support the need for greater complexity and contextual sensitivity in the conceptualization and measurement of men's help seeking. Results suggest that men's willingness to seek help for problems depends, in part, on characteristics such as culture and type of helper being considered. While culture did not affect the relationship between

gender role conflict and help seeking, it did play a role in overall ratings of help-seeking willingness from several helpers. Perhaps most important, however, this study indicated that the type of helper is an important component of help-seeking patterns. Studies that generalize about men's help-seeking behavior by using measurements from only one type of potential helper are unlikely to capture the full complexity of the help-seeking process.

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