Balance of power, adjustment, and violence within marital relationships

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BALANCE OF POWER, ADJUSTMENT, AND VIOLENCE
WITHIN MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

by

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ABSTRACT

Balance of Power, Adjustment, and Violence Within Marital Relationships

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Seventy-two married couples were categorized into husband-dominant, wife-dominant, and egalitarian groups based on each spouse's report of perceived level of influence relative to their partner. The mean levels of marital adjustment and marital violence were compared among the three groups. The hypotheses proposed that the power balance groups would differ in their reports of marital adjustment, marital violence, and marital stability. Questionnaires measured marital adjustment, levels of marital violence, and demographics. A follow-up was conducted in order to assess their marital stability. No hypotheses were confirmed. However results indicated that when wives reported themselves as dominant, they reported higher levels of marital violence than when they reported their husbands as dominant.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Violence within the context of a marriage is a serious and prevalent problem within society today. Homung, McCullough, and Sugimoto (1981) described violence as a national concern and a problem that affects every part of society. Straus and Gelles (1986) found that approximately 16% of Americans have at least one violent incident in a one-year period, one-third of which were serious assaults (including punching, biting, kicking, hitting with an object, beating, or assaults with a knife or a gun). From 1987-1991 the National Crime Victimization Survey reported an annual average of 621,015 rapes, robberies, or assaults committed within intimate relationships (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994). Generally the Department of Justice Survey found that most (over 90%) of the victims of this violence were female with an annual average rate of violent victimization between intimates of 5 per 1,000 for females and 0.5 per 1,000 for males. The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee maintained that in 1991 there were 1.1 million assaults, aggravated assaults, murders, and rapes against women in their own homes by their partners that were reported to police. They further estimated that only one-third of all spousal abuse incidents were actually reported. For a typical American woman, risk of assault is greatest in her own home (Straus & Gelles, 1986). Berry (1995) found that over 30% of American women who are killed are killed by intimates, and that 30% of domestic violence incidents involve weapons, which illustrates the lethality of this issue.
The prevalence of this problem is evident, and the seriousness as depicted below is alarming.

The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee reported that in 1992, the leading cause of injury to women aged 15-44 was domestic violence, accounting for more injuries than muggings, auto accidents, and cancer deaths combined. Gelles (1987) related that at least 21,000 hospitalizations and 99,800 hospital days yearly were attributed to domestic violence. Berry (1995) reported alarming statistics concerning family violence that indicated many areas were affected by this serious problem. She found that the cost of treating victims of domestic violence was staggering. Medical costs have totaled approximately $5 billion annually. She further revealed the monetary loss that many businesses encountered due to domestic violence through lost wages, sick leave, or absenteeism totaled $100 million annually. In 1980, 175,500 paid work days were lost due to domestic violence (Gelles, 1987). The American Medical Association reported that one of three women treated in emergency rooms was a victim of domestic violence (Gelles, 1987). Additionally 28,700 emergency room visits each year were related to domestic violence (Gelles, 1987). Police answered more calls involving family conflicts than all other incidents combined and when answered, these calls resulted in the largest number of police officer deaths (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). It is apparent that domestic violence is prevalent, costly, and critically serious. Berry (1995) indicated that violence is not restricted to a specific group, occurring in all races, religions, classes, ethnic groups, socioeconomic levels, occupations, and backgrounds.

By studying the factors that seem to contribute to violence, we may be better equipped to confront this problem. Many researchers have studied the causes of violence and it is evident that many factors, including psychopathology of one or both parties, previous exposure to violence (e.g., childhood abuse), alcohol use, and power balance are intricately tied to violence (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Berry, 1995; Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Gelles, 1987; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Miller, 1996; Owen &
Understanding the causes of violence can be difficult for a number of reasons. Perhaps foremost is the innate problem of measurement. Research participants may not accurately report violence intentionally for a number of reasons such as fear, social desirability, and shame. For instance, Mason and Blankenship (1987) found that only 28% of surveyed couples who experienced violence in their marriages were forthright in reporting it. Furthermore, couples may not agree when reporting violence. Also, as is true with any self report measurement, accuracy of incidents might be limited due to imprecise recollections.

The wife is not often discussed as the perpetrator in the violence literature. Usually the focus is on male-to-female violence (e.g., Babcock, et al., 1993; Bograd, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1977; Dutton, 1988; Hotalling & Sugarman, 1986). This might be because there seems to be a stereotype of male-to-female battering. Mason and Blankenship (1987) believed that sex role socialization prohibits women from using violence. It is worthwhile to consider female-to-male violence regardless of stereotyped roles. Some research seemed to indicate that it is appropriate to study female-to-male violence. Straus and Gelles in 1975 and 1985 studies (1986) found that women were about as violent as men within the family; they also cited ten different sources that supported this premise. This might be often overlooked because women are not as physically powerful as men; hence men use more severe forms of aggression, and violence by women may be largely retaliation or self-defense (Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus et al., 1980). However, these same authors, through community surveys, later found that women initiate violence as often as men (Straus & Gelles, 1989; Stets & Straus, 1989; Straus & Gelles, 1988). Finally, nearly half of all homicides in families were committed by women (Stets & Straus, 1989). Thus as the research is discovering, women may also be using violence against their husbands, so, female to male violence
should not be overlooked and will be addressed in the present study.

**Correlates of Marital Violence**

Miller (1996) emphasized the importance of psychopathological, physiological, and neurological factors in trying to understand relationship aggression. The psychopathology of the victim of violence has also been studied. Much research has attempted to determine whether the victim demonstrated psychopathology because of abuse or whether the psychopathology initially contributed to the occurrence of the abuse. In discussing the research concerning this issue, Renzetti and Hamberger (1996) indicated that psychopathology of a victim is typically due to the abuse rather than being the cause of the abuse. Saunders (1994) also found that many battered women have symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder.

The psychopathology of the perpetrator is often scrutinized when determining factors associated with violence. Often men who have battered women exhibited symptoms of personality disorders, the most common being borderline, antisocial, and compulsive (Hamberger & Hastings, 1991).

The research also indicates that there are higher levels of violence in couples when one or both of the partners has experienced violence in childhood. This experience can come in different forms. For example, the perpetrator could have witnessed abuse between his or her parents, or the perpetrator could have been abused as a child by his or her parents. Straus et al. (1980) found that men who had witnessed violence between their parents were nearly three times more likely to use violence than men who had not. They also found that the more punishment people experienced as children, the more violent they were in their subsequent marriages. Owens and Straus (1975) found that exposure to violence in childhood correlated with the use of violence in adulthood. Gelles (1987) found that women who witnessed violence between their parents had higher rates of being in abusive relationships than did women who never witnessed violence between their parents. He also found that the more a woman was physically
struck by her parents the more likely she was to be struck by her husband. Berry (1995) pointed out that not all children who witnessed or received abuse grew up to use abuse themselves, and that many factors need to be taken into account when determining who will use violence.

Many studies have indicated that the use of alcohol is another factor associated with violence between spouses. For example, Gelles and Straus (1988) found that almost half of all couples who experienced violence reported that abuse was associated with drinking by either the one who was violent, the victim, or both parties. Dobash and Dobash (1984) listed the husband's drinking behavior as one of a number of sources of conflict that led to violent episodes. Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) reviewed a number of studies of violent couples and found that alcohol was one of the risk factors correlated with wife abuse. Kantor and Straus (1990) found that binge drinkers committed more violence and that the more problematic the drinking level, the more the rates of violence increased. However, they did emphasize that the amount of violence used by abstainers and moderate drinkers should not be overlooked.

The balance of power within a marital relationship seems to be related to the use of violence by one or both parties. Blood and Wolfe (1960) measured power by considering decision making: whoever made the most decisions had the most power. Measuring power in this same fashion, Straus, et al. (1980) found that violence occurs at higher levels when the couple's balance of power is either extremely husband dominant (i.e., the husband makes the most decisions in the relationship) or when the relationship is extremely wife dominant (i.e., the wife makes the most decisions in the relationship). They found that wife beating was more common when the husband made the most decisions and that wives were more likely to beat their husbands when decisions within the relationship were made most often by only one spouse. Additionally, they found that when decisions were made equally by both spouses, the least amount of violence occurred. They concluded that spouses who made the most decisions often used violence

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to maintain a dominant position, and spouses who made few decisions often used violence in an attempt to attain power. Similarly, Babcock et al. (1993) found that in distressed couples, husbands with less power were more physically abusive to their wives. These findings indicate that when the balance of power is skewed in either direction, violence is more likely to occur.

Frieze and McHugh (1992) found that violence was used as a power strategy in marriage. They defined six different categories derived from asking subjects open-ended questions about how they would influence their spouses. Six basic categories were formed by factor analyzing the answers to the open-ended questions. They found patterned use of certain categories for subjects who were involved in violent relationships. For example they found that women in violent marriages used more indirect-negative strategies which included pretending there was no disagreement, ignoring, emotional withdrawal, stopping sex, and threatening to leave. They also found that women in violent marriages used less indirect-positive strategies which included being affectionate, being nice, and praising their spouse. Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) found a relationship between spouse-specific assertion and the occurrence of violence in marital relationships so that when one spouse was more assertive the amount of violence increased.

This research indicates that there are many factors that might be related to the occurrence of violence within marital relationships. The balance of power is one such factor. Past research indicates that when the levels of power are skewed in either direction more violence occurs. Thus understanding the nature of the association between the balance of power and relationship violence may provide additional insights into the causes of relationship violence.

**Conceptualizing Power in Relationships**

Because power has been defined in many different ways, it is not an easy term to operationalize. There are almost as many models of power as there are people who
discuss it (Babcock, et al., 1993). Many different operational definitions of power have been supplied in the literature with little agreement between researchers.

Cromwell and Olson (1975) were the first to conceptualize power in three different domains: power bases, power processes, and power outcomes. Power bases refer to the possession of resources that one might use to attain a goal. This can consist of a number of things such as education, income, and occupation. Raven, Centers, and Rodrigues (1975) defined six specific power bases in addition to education, income, or occupation. Power processes are the methods used to attain desired results. Olson and Cromwell (1975) described these processes as the interactions between family members, and identified assertiveness and control as two such power processes. Power outcomes refer to the possession of final control. Olson and Cromwell (1975) defined this as decision making ability or who "wins." Godwin and Scanzoni (1989) described such outcomes as the "perceived degree of consensus" (p. 93), in other words, how much each partner feels they have gained.

The Outcome Domain.

Although the above conceptualization, which incorporates the three different domains of power, seems to be a comprehensive means of studying power, most research is focused on only one of these domains, the outcome domain. Furthermore the outcome domain is usually discussed in terms of decision making. Blood and Wolfe (1960) were among the first to describe power as a decision making capability. They had 909 Michigan women report who had the final say in decision making within their marriages on a scale they developed that contained eight areas of decision making (husband's job, car, life insurance, vacation place, house or apartment, wife's employment, doctor, and food expense). Blood and Wolfe (1960) were able to categorize couples into three types of relationships: husband-dominant relationships, wife-dominant relationships, and egalitarian relationships. They further divided the egalitarian group into syncratic, which includes joint decision making, and autonomic, where an equal number of decisions were
made independently. They found that the wife-dominant group was least satisfied, that the syncratic-egalitarian group was most satisfied, and that the autonomic-egalitarian and husband-dominant groups fell between these two. There were two main problems with this study: the husbands were not interviewed, and the way couples were distributed into the groups was questionable. In order to keep group sizes equal, some of the couples in which husbands made more decisions were placed in the egalitarian group (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Although this study had its methodological problems, it did set a precedent for studying power within marital relationships that is now widely used: studies now generally consider husband-dominant, wife-dominant, and egalitarian groupings.

Decision making continued to be the prominent way of measuring power throughout the 1970's.

Corrales (1975) was interested in the relation of power configurations to marital satisfaction in early years of marriage. He measured decision making power with the Blood and Wolfe scale and referred to it as authority. The authority scores showed that husband-dominant marriages had the highest levels of satisfaction. Husbands in egalitarian and wife-dominant marriages showed no difference in satisfaction, and wives showed slightly higher satisfaction in egalitarian marriages than in wife-dominant marriages.

He then attempted to measure control though an interactional exercise between the husband and wife. Each spouse was given a list of words that were family-related value terms. Each spouse was asked to pick the five most important words and rank them. Then the couples were asked to make a joint list. Each individual ranking was compared to the joint ranking. The similarity between each individual list and the joint list indicated the amount of control the spouse possessed and resulted in a score for control. The couples were then categorized into husband-dominant, wife-dominant, or egalitarian groups. He found that the authority and control domains differed somewhat. The control scores indicated that the egalitarian couples showed the highest levels of
satisfaction, that the husband-dominant couples showed moderate levels of satisfaction, and that the wife-dominant couples showed the lowest levels of satisfaction. Corrales stated that these findings were tentative because they were not statistically significant; however, they did coincide with findings in previous studies.

McDonald (1980) addressed the need for more comprehensive methods of studying power than just examining decision making outcomes. The problem with examining power beyond decision making outcomes is that each researcher who studied power has a different and inventive way of studying and defining power, even within the outcome domain. In a review of the literature, Gray-Little and Burks (1983) noted that many researchers have come to define power as the "capacity to produce intended effects" (p. 514). They observed that few studies actually seemed to measure this capacity. Much research has been done with regard to the outcome domain, however the process domain is also a viable domain in which to study power.

The Process Domain.

The process domain refers to the methods used by an individual to attain desired results. This domain includes a number of different methods, such as influence, control, and self-defined power strategies.

In an attempt to define power, many researchers look at the amount of influence a person has in a marital relationship. For instance, when Huston (1983) defined power, he examined influence. He indicated that power is an ability to achieve particular and personal ends through the conscious use of influence. When describing assessment of influence he suggested determining whether there is intent in exerting influence. The means by which this exertion is measured include modes of influence (e.g., direct requests, suggestions) and motives. He further suggested that power is accurately measured through "the amount of resistance the individual can overcome" (p. 190). He reviewed ways in which power has been measured in the past and determined that there are problems in self-report measurement and observational measurement. The
difficulties with self-report measures included memory problems and problems that emerged because the subject was not accurately aware of the cause of pertinent behavioral changes (e.g., whether change was the result of social influence or some other cause). Problems with observational measures included the artificial quality of the laboratory and the effect of an obtrusive observer on couple interactions.

Howard, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1986) held that "... both partners explore the limits of their relative power by making various influence attempts" (p. 102). They stated that influence is used to change the behavior of another person, and asked subjects to provide their perceptions of their own influence tactics aimed at their partner. They developed a scale that consisted of 24 different influence tactics. Each subject rated his or her partner with regard to frequency of use of these tactics when the partner wants the subject to do something the subject does not want to do. These responses were factor analyzed resulting in six categories of influence tactics: manipulation, bullying, disengagement, supplication, autocracy, and bargaining. Because they were interested in identifying whether or not gender had an effect on power, they used gender as an independent variable. They found that being female was more closely associated with the perceived use of weak influence tactics such as manipulation and supplication and that being male was more closely associated with the perceived use of strong influence tactics such as bullying and autocracy.

Other researchers have examined control to assess power within relationships. Gray-Little (1982) studied control among couples through an interaction task. The sample consisted of 75 married couples that were solicited to be in the study on the basis of a census tract and block statistics. She recorded a 15 minute segment of conversation between spouses dealing with problem areas in marriage and studied directive statements, total time talking, and total number of interruptions. If one spouse exceeded the other in total time spent talking by one hundred seconds or more, that spouse was considered the dominant partner. Each couple was categorized into husband-dominant,
egalitarian, or wife-dominant groups. The egalitarian, husband-dominant, and wife-dominant couples did not differ significantly with regard to marital quality as measured by perceived marital satisfaction, amount of positive regard, and perceived reciprocity.

Gray-Little (1982) also measured control through an interactive game that each couple played during the study. The number of directive statements made by each spouse determined which category the couple would be assigned (husband-dominant, wife-dominant, or egalitarian). She found for this particular measure that husband-dominant couples had the highest levels of marital quality; egalitarian couples had the next highest level. Wife-dominant couples had considerably lower levels of marital quality than did the other two groups. Unlike other studies of the type, she found no suggestion that behavioral measures were superior to self-report measures. In fact, there was more agreement between husband reports and wife reports on the self-report measures than on the behavioral measures. She found that there were higher levels of marital satisfaction among couples with high disagreement on the behavioral measures and lower levels of satisfaction among couples with low disagreement on the same behavioral measures. The findings also indicated marital satisfaction may be better predicted by perceived power rather than by actual power interactions because of the likelihood that marital satisfaction is related to the subjective qualities of power (i.e., each couple's perception of power) rather than the objective qualities of power. She acknowledged the difficulty of validating power measures — there is no imperative reason to choose a specific measurement of power because the exact nature of power within marital relationships has no definite operational definition. She concluded that it may be impossible ever to validate any power measures.

Godwin and Scanzoni (1989) defined control when studying power processes by the extent to which the partner complies with suggestions, directives, and requests. They collected data from 188 married couples and assessed control through influence attempts by each spouse in an audiotaped session. The influence attempts were defined as
suggestions, directives, or requests that were used to alter behaviors of the partner. Control was determined to have occurred if one spouse made an influence attempt and the partner complied with it or responded positively to it. If the partner did not comply or respond positively then it was not considered control. The control score for each partner was the average number of times the spouse complied with the influence attempts. They found that perceived consensus over a decision the couple made together was greater when the spouses had similar control scores. They theorized that the greater the shared consensus is within a couple, the more satisfied each person is with the outcome.

Some researchers examine a variety of different power strategies that couples seem to employ when interacting. For example, Falbo (1977) designated different types of strategies used to conceptualize power within the process domain. She was interested in studying power through inductive methods that provide an objective view of power rather than studying power from the perspective of a preconceived theory. In order to do so she utilized open-ended responses from subjects and a limited definition of power. Subjects were asked to write an essay concerning the topic "How I Get My Way." These essays were studied and categorized by experts. The eight experts systematically combined the categories which allowed for further inductive study. The categories were determined by a collaborative effort of the judges. They concluded that there were 16 strategies of power that the subjects discussed in their essays: Assertion, Bargaining, Compromise, Deceit, Emotion-agent, Emotion-target, Evasion, Expertise, Fait accompli, Hinting, Persistence, Persuasion, Reason, Simple statement, Thought manipulation, and Threat. Further analysis was completed to ascertain that these categories were unbiased. Eight experts (four graduate students and four social psychologists) performed ratings of similarity among these 16 power strategies. These were then analyzed to determine that the categories were representative of the collected data. She found that different personality characteristics in subjects corresponded with the use of certain power
strategies. In 1980, Falbo and Peplau found that the use of certain power strategies change with the target of the interaction. For example, different strategies would be used with a person's boss as compared to a person's spouse. This indicates that there are specific power strategies used in marital relationships. Often power processes are difficult to measure and one particular process (i.e., influence) may be operationally defined in a number of ways by different researchers as is seen above.

The Power Bases Domain.

Power bases is the domain that is often studied in relation to violence within intimate relationships. Most researchers refer to power bases as the possession of resources one uses to attain a goal. The resource theory of violence indicates that when men lack traditional resources they tend to resort to violence as a means of power (Gelles, 1987). These traditional resources are generally considered to be education, income, and occupation (Gelles, 1987; Goodwin and Scanzoni, 1989; Gray-Little and Burks, 1983). It has been found that possession of these resources increases dominance in an intimate relationship. It has been theorized that lack of these traditional resources by the husband may lead to the occurrence of violence (Hornung et al., 1981).

Winter, Stewart, and McClelland (1977) found that there is more conflict in marriages where the wife works and the husband disapproves of it than in marriages where the wife works and the husband approves or where the wife does not work. Winter and colleagues (1977) undertook a 10 year longitudinal study that began with college freshmen. There were 51 male subjects included in the study. All subjects wrote stories to five Thematic Apperception Test pictures, which were later scored for power, affiliation, and achievement motives. The researchers also classified each subject's wife with regard to career type at the ten year interval (if the subject was married during this interval). The power motive during freshman year correlated negatively with the wife's career level at the ten year follow-up, indicating that the apparent need for power in the male subjects increased the likelihood that the wife did not pursue a career. The
researchers contended that the power-motivated men appear to suppress women and/or their career aspirations.

Godwin and Scanzoni (1989) broadened their definition of power bases (they used the term context instead of bases) to include partners' emotional interdependence through degree of love and caring for spouse and degree of commitment to the relationship. Degree of love and caring was measured with a subset of items from the Rubin Love Scale. Degree of commitment was measured with a single item from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, "Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship with your husband/wife?". Degree of love and caring and degree of commitment to the relationship (bases) were found to influence coersiveness and control (processes) which in turn influenced degree of perceived consensus (outcome).

Other researchers defined specific bases of power used in intimate relationships. Raven and his colleagues (1975) defined six specific bases of power: legitimate power (authority), referent power (determined by one's belief in the credentials of the other), expert power (the possession of supposed superior knowledge), informational power (use of persuasive communication to influence another), reward power (ability to provide rewards), and coercive power (the ability to administer punishment).

The difference in these power bases was an indication that there were different ways in which spouses may affect one another. The power bases were assumed to be commodities that each spouse brings to the relationship and possessed prior to the relationship. Raven and his colleagues (1975) used a sample that consisted of 410 wives and 337 husbands, each of whom was asked about decision making and about the above power bases. The decision making questions were developed from the Blood and Wolfe (1960) study and determined whether decisions were made by husband alone or wife alone or jointly by the two. The power bases questions consisted of a given scenario where the subject did something the spouse requested without seeing clearly why it
should be done. The subject was then asked to choose a reason why they did as requested. Each reason fell under the heading of one of the types of power bases. For example, one option for the subjects to choose was "because if you did so, then he/she would do or say something nice for you in return." This example was considered the reward base. Raven and his colleagues found that expert and referent power were the most likely bases for influence and coercion was least likely bases for influence. Use of coercion was positively related to dissatisfaction with the marital relationship, and it was the most used power base within dissatisfied marriages. In marriages where satisfaction was high, referent power was most often used by the spouse. The researchers found that gender, ethnic identification, age, education, and social class all affected conjugal power. Their intent of demonstrating systematic relationships between these variables was accomplished.

Once again, it is evident that the methods of studying power bases varies according to the experimenter. Generally power bases are referred to as the traditional resources of income, education, and occupation, but when researchers go beyond this common definition, each definition is unique.

Godwin and Scanzoni (1989) found that context (or power bases), process, and outcome variables were related, some in a predictor relationship. It may be beneficial then to consider power within this type of model. However, a recent study by Babcock and her colleagues (1993) that also utilized this model found that using such "multivariate power measures failed to produce an empirically consolidated construct" (p. 48). Once again we are faced with the difficulty of measuring power due to the varied operational definitions. Although many researchers label their studies as addressing power outcome, power process, or power bases, they often do not agree on the definition of these terms. There appears to be a considerable lack of consensus among experimenters studying power.
The Balance of Power

One theme that appears often within the literature is the power balance theory. It has been found that power is measured effectively when couples are categorized according to power balance (Bean, Curtis, & Marcum, 1977; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers, Raven & Rodrigues, 1971; Coleman & Straus, 1986; Corrales, 1975; Gray-Little, 1982; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Murphy & Meyer, 1991; Straus et al., 1980). Experimenters take distinct approaches to measuring balance of power. Although many researchers apply these categorical labels, they arrive at these labels through varied methods of measurement with varied theories and definitions of power. However, most studies that group couples according to dominance, regardless of the method used, discover similar patterns. The following reviews differences in levels of marital adjustment and marital violence between husband-dominant, wife-dominant, or egalitarian couples.

Egalitarian couples generally report the highest levels of satisfaction among the three groups. Gray-Little and Burks (1983) found that many explanations of this finding emphasize the reciprocity of this structure and that egalitarian couples are relatively free from control interactions that are aversive and lead to low levels of satisfaction. They also reported that egalitarian couples have higher need for continued interpersonal contact and involvement because of the requirement of greater exchange when it comes to decision making or determining who exercises the most control.

Couples are least likely to describe themselves as wife-dominant (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). This group is associated with low levels of marital satisfaction throughout all studies. It is often theorized that this category is contrary to the expectations of both spouses. Gray-Little and Burks (1983) determined, after reviewing the literature on power balance, that there are three central explanations that are supplied for the consistent findings of low marital satisfaction within wife-dominant marriages: the husband's role incapacity theory, the role incongruency theory, and the response set
theory. The husband's role incapacity theory, introduced by Blood and Wolfe (1960), states that the husband cannot assume the role of the family leader so that the wife is forced to do so, which makes both members of the couple unhappy.

Gray-Little, Hamby, and Baucom (1996) discussed the role incongruency theory with regard to the findings of high satisfaction levels among egalitarian couples. They were interested in determining if negative behaviors (e.g., complaints, whining, hostile comments) were linked to power because low levels of negative behaviors are associated with marital satisfaction. They found that egalitarian couples had the lowest levels of negative behaviors and the highest levels of satisfaction. The sample consisted of 53 distressed couples who were seeking marital therapy. Each couple was assigned to a power group after completing a behavioral exercise that involved finding a solution to a problem together. The spouse whose original position was accepted as a final solution was considered to have the most power. Gray-Little and her colleagues used the Inventory of Marital Conflict to determine the number and frequency of negative behaviors. They identified the role congruency theory as an explanation of the higher levels of satisfaction among egalitarian couples. They suggested that egalitarian couples are the modern-day cultural norm, and that to stay within this norm allows for higher levels of satisfaction within the marriage. They suggested that in wife-dominant couples, the wife may be more likely to nag a husband who is not assuming the role of family leader by placing more demands on him. This leads to lower levels of satisfaction.

The response set theory implies that reporting that the wife is dominant is not socially acceptable. Subjects may be reluctant to report this structure or reluctant to report satisfaction with this structure because it is not consistent with the conventional supposition that traditional husband-dominant or modern egalitarian structures are socially desirable. This theory is highly tentative because no research has been attempted to determine whether the low frequency of wife-dominant marriages are in fact misrepresentations, nor has any research attempted to determine if high satisfaction
levels among the other power balance groups are false. Corrales (1975) measured power balance through decision making with the Blood and Wolfe scale and through a behavioral exercise that determined power balance through a joint decision making process. He theorized that effective forms of communication are more viable in egalitarian marriages, which builds more self-esteem and other-esteem: therefore husbands and wives feel better about themselves and each other. He also found that husband-dominant couples and egalitarian couples had the highest levels of satisfaction among couples interviewed. He found this surprising in light of previous evidence that United States couples were moving in the direction an egalitarian structure (Cromwell, Corrales, and Torsillo, 1973).

Whisman and Jacobson (1990) measured power through the couple's communication style. They were interested in determining if power inequality was inversely related to marital satisfaction. They intended to investigate power through the patterns of expressive and receptive communication each couple used. The sample consisted of 31 distressed and 23 nondistressed couples that were obtained through community advertisements. Each couple was videotaped discussing their day. These interactions were coded and used to determine the power balance for the couple using a modified version of the Verbal Content Coding System (Jacobson & Anderson, 1982) to determine communication content. Each remark was categorized as either a self-disclosure, an inquiry eliciting information through a question, or summary statement of the other partner, a statement about the environment, or any other verbal statement. They found that indeed there was an inverse relationship between power inequality and marital satisfaction. Those couples who share power appear to be more satisfied with the relationship than are those couples in which one spouse is more dominant.

Coleman and Straus (1986) found that egalitarian couples had the lowest levels of conflict and violence in their marriages. Their sample consisted of subjects from the 1975 National Family Violence Survey in which 2,143 families were interviewed.
nationwide. For this particular study, Coleman and Straus (1986) measured power with questions concerning who has the final say in decision making fashioned after the Blood and Wolfe (1960) scale. They considered decision making regarding these six issues: buying a car, having children, housing, jobs, whether their partner should work or not, and weekly food budget. Each couple was categorized according to who had the final say in making decisions. Couples were determined either to share this responsibility (egalitarian) or to have one spouse having more say (either husband dominant or wife dominant). They measured the level of conflict and hypothesized that the higher the level of conflict the more likely violence would occur. They found that the power structure of the couple was important in determining the relationship between conflict and violence. Within the egalitarian structure, when conflict increases there is relatively little increase in violence. However, when the marital structure was not equal, violence increases as the conflict increases. They also found that there was considerably more conflict among husband-dominant couples than among wife-dominant couples or egalitarian couples. They theorized that if conflict rates were high within a marriage, then subsequently violence rates would also be high. Husband-dominant couples were nearly twice as likely to report high levels of conflict as compared to egalitarian couples (39% of the husband-dominant couples illustrated high conflict while only 20% of the egalitarian couples illustrated high conflict). It would seem that couples that had the highest levels of conflict would also have the highest levels of violence. This was not supported however, because wife-dominant couples were found to have higher levels of violence.

Finally, Babcock and her colleagues (1993) found that wife-dominant relationships had the highest levels of violence when the husband had lower decision making power than the did wife. They interviewed 95 couples and determined decision making power with the Who Does What questionnaire, which includes 12 items related to who makes decisions in certain areas of the relationship. Violence was measured with
the Conflict Tactics Scale. Decision making power was negatively correlated with male violence. They suggest that this implies that husbands compensate for lack of power with violence.

The literature thus reveals that there are prevalent power balance patterns with regard to marital adjustment and marital violence. The egalitarian couples generally report the highest levels of marital adjustment and the lowest levels of violence. The wife-dominant couples generally report the lowest levels of marital adjustment and the highest levels of marital violence. The husband-dominant couples generally report levels of marital adjustment and marital violence that fall between the egalitarian couples and the wife-dominant couples.

**Present Study**

The present study will attempt to determine if there is a relationship between spouses' perceptions of the balance of power in their relationship and important marital outcomes including relationship adjustment, relationship violence, and relationship stability. Previous research indicates that there is a relationship between the balance of power and relationship adjustment and violence when balance of power is operationally defined in terms of decision making roles. However, there are a number of problems with operationalizing power in this way. For example, McDonald (1980) maintained that measures of decision making actually reflect "normative expectations rather than decision making behaviors." He also theorized that couples are only able to report what decisions were made rather than actually being able to report who was responsible for making the decision. Another problem with decision making measures of power is the tendency to give all decisions equal status regardless of the impact of the decision being made, for instance, measuring decisions about career choices and movie choices with equal weight. It also seems possible that decisions are ambiguous and relative to the specific situation regardless of the decision being made; therefore, it is likely that decisions change from day to day without any consistency. Decisions need to be flexible.
as circumstances surrounding the decisions are constantly changing. Not only are there problems with this approach to measuring the balance of power, but it has been examined extensively. Moreover, there has been little consideration of the relationship of spouses' perceived influence to marital adjustment and marital violence.

Because of the lack of an operational definition of power, this study attempts to look at power in a different way than previous research. Thus this study examines power based on spouses' perceptions of the power balance within the marital relationship. It is appropriate to measure power according to individual perceptions because the subject is reporting on himself or herself only, and emphasis does not need to be placed on agreement between spouses. This emphasis on individual perceptions of power balance is also unique because the study does not rely on an outsider's view of the subject's situation. This study was conducted under the assumption that individuals act on their own perceptions. Therefore, the perceptions are an intrinsic part of the marital relationship and worthy of examination.

There is a noticeable lack of research examining the relationship between balance of power and relationship stability. Nonetheless, one would presume that if the balance of power plays a role in relationship adjustment and violence, it would also be related to the longevity of the relationship. Because of this lack of research, this study will examine the relationship between marital stability and power balance. This is especially important because relationship stability is the ultimate measure of relationship success.

Seventy-two married couples were categorized into husband-dominant, wife-dominant, and egalitarian groups based on each spouse's report of perceived level of influence relative to their partner. The mean levels of marital adjustment and marital violence were compared among the three groups. A follow-up was conducted to determine the marital status of each couple. The rate of dissolution was also compared among the three groups.
Hypothesis #1.
Levels of adjustment will vary according to the perceived balance of power within the marital relationship. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being egalitarian are expected to report the highest levels of marital adjustment. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being wife-dominant are expected to report the lowest levels of marital adjustment. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being husband-dominant are expected to report intermediate levels of marital adjustment.

Hypothesis #2.
Levels of violence will vary according to the perceived balance of power within the marital relationship. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being egalitarian are expected to report the lowest levels of marital violence. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being wife-dominant are expected to report the highest levels of marital violence. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being husband-dominant are expected to report intermediate levels of marital violence.

Hypothesis #3.
Longevity of the marital relationship will vary according to the perceived balance of power within the marital relationship. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being egalitarian are expected to report the lowest rates of marital separation or divorce. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being wife-dominant are expected to report the highest rates of marital separation or divorce. Spouses who perceive their relationship as being husband-dominant couples are expected to report intermediate rates of marital separation or divorce.
CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

This study utilized two different data sets. In one data set, the participants were first assessed in 1990 and 1991. Recruitment for a follow-up assessment was conducted in 1993. The initial sample consisted of 30 married couples that were recruited through a university participant pool. Each couple was initially paid $20.00 per hour for completing the study. In 1991, the average age of husbands was 33.4 years ($SD = 5.8$). The average age of wives was 31.2 years ($SD = 4.6$). The education levels of the men included 4% not finishing high school, 12% graduating from high school only, and 84% graduating from college. The education levels of the women included 8% not finishing high school, 27% graduating from high school only, and 65% graduating from college. The average income of the husbands was $34,447 ($SD = $15,044). The average income of the wives was $23,092 ($SD = $14,290). Eighteen of the men were Caucasian and 12 were from minority groups. Twenty-five of the women were Caucasian and 5 were from minority groups.

In the other data set, the participants were first assessed in 1993. A follow-up assessment was conducted in 1998. The initial sample consisted of 42 married couples that were recruited through advertisements in the local media. Each couple was initially paid $75.00 for completing the study. In 1993, the average age of husbands was 33.2 years ($SD = 8.5$) with an average of 13.9 years of education ($SD = 2.9$). The average age
of wives was 31.4 years (SD = 2.6) with an average of 14.4 years of education (SD = 3.1). The couples were married for an average of 56.2 months (SD = 58.8). The average family income was $36,750 (SD = $18,261). Thirty-six of the men were Caucasian, 5 were from minority groups, and one did not identify his race. Thirty-two of the women were Caucasian and 10 were from minority groups.

Materials

An initial demographics questionnaire was completed by each couple. It included questions about age, education level, income, marital and family history, and ethnicity.

The Power Balance Scale (Schmidt, 1990) was used to assess the balance of power within the marriage. It is an ten question measure that rates influence and decision making on a 7 point Likert-type scale. Five of these questions were used in the present study because they related to individual perceptions of personal power (see Appendix A). Questions #5 and #9 are inverted for accurate scoring. Internal consistency of these 5 questions was measured with alpha values (wives' alpha = .46; husbands' alpha = .41).

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; see Appendix B) is a 32-item self-report measure of marital adjustment (Spanier, 1976). Spanier (1976) discusses the psychometric properties of this scale. He found the scale to have a Cronbach's alpha = .96. Content validity was determined by three judges who found that the items where relevant measures of adjustment, consistent with pre-stated definitions, and appropriately worded. The construct validity was measured by correlating scores with another well-accepted marital adjustment scale (r=.86). A replication study was done by Sharpley and Cross (1982). They found that the DAS provided reliable data (all items were found to discriminate significantly between high and low adjustment groups). The mean and standard deviations of the DAS scores in this study are M=109.75, SD=16.06 for the wives and M=106.75, SD=19.60 for the husbands. This is comparable to the normative means and standard deviations of married couples as reported by Spanier (1976),
The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS: Straus, 1979; see Appendix C) assesses the occurrence and type of violence within the relationship over the past year on a 7-point Likert-type scale with anchors ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (more than 20 times). Straus (1979) designated a violence subscale that assesses the use of physical force against another. An example of such a question is "threw something at the other one." Straus (1979) stated that the violence subscale of the CTS has high scale reliability for husband and wife scores (Cronbach's alpha = .88). It has been reported that concurrent validity for wife and husband reports of violence on the CTS is low, which makes it necessary to look at gender specific reports rather than averaging the husband and wife scores (Jouriles & O'Leary, 1985; Straus, 1979). Straus (1979) also reports some construct validity in that violence theories correspond with this scale's measurements.

Procedure

In 1990 and 1991, one set of couples was recruited for a problem-solving research project. Each couple completed the questionnaires discussed above (subjects also completed other questionnaires and tasks that are not directly relevant here). Each couple received $20.00 per hour during this initial study. In 1993, each spouse was sent a letter asking them to participate in a longitudinal study along with questionnaires to complete, and a postage-paid return envelope. Upon returning the completed packet, each couple was paid $10.00. Twenty-three couples returned completed packets.

In 1993, the other set of couples was recruited for a communication research project. At that time, they completed the questionnaires discussed above (subjects also completed other questionnaires and tasks that are not directly relevant here). Upon completion of a battery of questionnaires, each couple received a check for $75.00. In 1998, 31 of these couples were contacted again via telephone and asked to participate in a longitudinal study. Upon agreement to participate, they were asked a series of brief follow-up questions. These questions included the current status of the relationship.
question 31 from the DAS (requests the subject to indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, within their relationship), and the four questions from the Power Scale used to assess the spouses' perceived balance of power. Question 31 from the DAS was used because it was found to be a reliable way to quickly screen subjects for marital adjustment (Sharpley & Cross, 1982).

The participants were assigned to either a husband-dominant group, an egalitarian group, or a wife-dominant group according to wife report and husband report, separately. A total power balance score was determined by the average score of the five questions. The sample was divided into three groups based on relative balance of power such that approximately one-third of subjects reporting the lowest scores were considered spouse dominant (i.e., considered husband dominant when the wife was reporting and wife dominant when the husband was reporting), approximately one-third of subjects reporting the middlemost scores were considered egalitarian, and approximately one-third of subjects reporting the highest scores were considered self dominant (i.e., considered husband dominant when the husband was reporting and considered wife dominant when the wife was reporting).
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The balance of power was measured according to each spouse's individual perception of the power balance within the marital relationship. Due to this form of measurement, the balance of power was evaluated twice throughout this study, once according to the wives' perception and once according to the husbands' perception. It is interesting to note that the husbands and wives lacked agreement when they reported their perception of the balance of power within their relationship \( r (69) = -0.09, \text{ ns} \) indicating that they perceive the balance of power differently.

Three hypotheses were evaluated in this study using each spouse's report of the perceived balance of power within the couple. The first hypothesis was evaluated four times: once according to the wife's report of power balance and the wife's report of marital adjustment, once according to the wife's report of power balance and the husband's report of marital adjustment, once according to the husband's report of power balance and the husband's report of marital adjustment, and once according to the husband's report of power balance and the wife's report of marital adjustment. The second hypothesis was also evaluated four times: once according to the wife's report of power balance and the wife's report of overall marital violence, once according to the wife's report of power balance and the husband's report of overall marital violence, once according to the husband's report of power balance and the husband's report of marital violence, and once according to the husband's report of power balance and the wife's
report of marital violence. The third hypothesis was evaluated twice: once according to the wife's report of balance of power and the overall report of marital status, and once according to the husband's report of power and the overall report of marital status.

**Hypothesis #1**

The first hypothesis was that spouses who perceived their relationship as egalitarian would report the highest levels of marital adjustment, spouses who perceived their relationship as being husband-dominant would report intermediate levels of marital adjustment, and spouses who perceived their relationship as being wife-dominant would report the lowest levels of marital adjustment. This hypothesis was evaluated with four Analysis of Variances (ANOVAs). The independent variable for each ANOVA was perceived balance of power, with three levels: husband dominant, egalitarian, and wife dominant. The dependent variable was level of marital adjustment. This was examined according to the husbands' reports and according to the wives' reports separately for each spouse's report of power balance.

The ANOVA using the wife's report of balance of power and the wife's report of marital adjustment was not significant, $F(2, 68) = 1.25$, ns (see Table 1). The ANOVA using the wife's report of balance of power and the husband's report of marital adjustment was not significant, $F(2, 68) = 0.28$, ns (see Table 1).

The ANOVA using the husband's report of balance of power and the husband's report of marital adjustment was not significant, $F(2, 68) = 2.06$, ns (see Table 1).

Although this was not significant, the means indicate that when husbands reported the relationship as being egalitarian, they reported the highest levels of adjustment, which is in the direction of the hypothesis. However, when the husbands reported their wives as dominant, they reported intermediate levels of adjustment, which is not in the direction of the hypothesis. The ANOVA using the husband's report of balance of power and the wife's report of marital adjustment was not significant, $F(2, 68) = 1.34$, ns (see Table 1).
Table 1

Analysis of Variance for Marital Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Dominant</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>113.90</td>
<td>14.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>109.33</td>
<td>16.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Dominant</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>105.04</td>
<td>15.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Dominant</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>108.32</td>
<td>14.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>113.88</td>
<td>17.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Dominant</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>106.50</td>
<td>15.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis #2

The second hypothesis was that spouses who perceived their relationship as egalitarian would report the lowest levels of marital violence, spouses who perceived their relationship as being husband-dominant would report intermediate levels of marital violence, and spouses who perceived their relationship as being wife-dominant would report the highest levels of marital violence. This hypothesis was evaluated with four Analysis of Variances (ANOVAs). The independent variable for each ANOVA was perceived balance of power, with three levels: husband dominant, egalitarian, and wife dominant. The dependent variable was level of marital violence. This was examined
according to the husbands' reports of overall violence and according to the wives' reports
of overall violence separately for each spouse's report of power balance.

The agreement of spouses' reports of violence was also examined. The husbands' report of the wives' violence correlated significantly with the wives' report of the wives' violence \( r(63) = .83, p < .01 \). The husbands' report of the husbands' violence also correlated significantly with the wives' report of the husbands' violence \( r(63) = .83, p < .01 \). These correlations indicated a high level of agreement between spouses regarding the occurrences of violence. There was also a strong correspondence between the extent to which husbands and wives were violent when wives reported violence \( r(64) = .81, p < .01 \) and when the husbands reported violence \( r(64) = .78, p < .01 \) indicating that when the husbands were violent the wives were also violent. Therefore, each spouse's report is an overall report of violent occurrences within the relationship. As might be expected, the level of reported violence was highly positively skewed when wives reported and when husbands reported. In order to reduce this skew, a log 10 transformation was performed. The skew of the transformed variables were substantially lower.

The ANOVA using the wife's report of balance of power and the wife's report of marital violence was significant, \( F(2, 61) = 3.45, p = .04 \) (see Table 2). Post hoc testing revealed that when wives reported themselves as dominant, they reported significantly higher levels of violence \( (M = .76, SD = .64) \) than when they reported their husbands as dominant \( (M = .36, SD = .51), p = .04 \). When they reported the relationship as being egalitarian, they reported intermediate levels of violence that were not significantly different from either the wife-dominant group or the husband-dominant group. The ANOVA using the wife's report of balance of power and the husband's report of marital violence was not significant, \( F(2, 61) = 3.00, ns \) (see Table 2). Although this was not significant, the means indicate that when wives reported themselves as dominant, husbands reported the highest levels of violence. When the wives reported their
husbands as dominant, the husbands reported intermediate levels of violence. When the wives reported the relationship as egalitarian, the husbands reported lowest levels of violence. This was not in the direction of the hypothesis.

The ANOVA using the husband’s report of balance of power and the husband’s report of marital violence was not significant, $F(2, 61) = 0.73$, ns (see Table 2). The ANOVA using the husband’s report of balance of power and the wife’s report of marital violence was not significant, $F(2, 61) = 0.66$, ns (see Table 2).

Table 2

Analysis of Variance for Marital Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Tactics Scale</th>
<th>Wife Report</th>
<th>Husband Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance of Power</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wife Report)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Dominant</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Dominant</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance of Power</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Husband Report)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Dominant</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Dominant</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis #3

The third hypothesis was that spouses who perceived their relationship as being
egalitarian at the time of initial assessment would report the lowest rates of marital separation or divorce at follow-up, spouses who perceived their relationship as being husband-dominant at the time of initial assessment would report intermediate rates of separation or divorce at follow-up, and spouses who perceived their relationship as being wife-dominant at the time of initial assessment would report the highest rates of separation or divorce at follow-up. The hypothesis was evaluated with two Chi Square analyses.

Using the wife reported power balance, there was no difference in the proportion of husband-dominant couples, wife-dominant couples, or egalitarian couples who divorced or separated, Chi Square (2) = 2.72, ns (see Table 3).

Using husband reported power balance, there was no difference in the proportion of husband-dominant couples, wife-dominant couples, or egalitarian couples who divorced or separated. Chi Square (2) = .58, ns (see Table 3).

Table 3
Chi Square Analysis of Power Balance and Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married Couples</th>
<th>Divorced Couples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husband’s Report</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Dominant</td>
<td>48% (20)</td>
<td>20% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>24% (10)</td>
<td>30% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Dominant</td>
<td>28% (12)</td>
<td>50% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husband’s Report</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Dominant</td>
<td>31% (13)</td>
<td>30% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>40% (17)</td>
<td>30% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Dominant</td>
<td>29% (12)</td>
<td>40% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the association between the perceived balance of power in marital relationships and marital quality and stability. Three hypotheses were examined. The first hypothesis predicted that levels of marital adjustment would vary according to the perceived balance of power of each spouse: spouses who perceived their relationship as egalitarian would report the highest levels of marital adjustment, spouses who perceived their relationship as husband-dominant would report intermediate levels of marital adjustment, and spouses who perceived their relationship as wife-dominant would report the lowest levels of marital adjustment. The data did not support this hypothesis. Although there were no significant results, it is interesting to note some of the direction of the findings.

Although not significant, when husbands reported the relationship as being egalitarian, they reported the highest levels of marital adjustment. This indicates that husbands are happiest when they perceive their relationships to be equal, as the hypothesis predicted. When they reported themselves as dominant, they reported the lowest levels of adjustment. This seems to indicate that the husbands are not happy when they feel they have more power than their wives, unlike the wives who feel happier when they perceive themselves to have the power within the relationship. This however, is not consistent with the hypothesis.

The second hypothesis predicted that levels of marital violence would vary
according to the perceived balance of power of each spouse: spouses who perceived their relationship as egalitarian would report the lowest levels of marital violence. Spouses who perceived their relationship as husband-dominant would report intermediate levels of marital violence, and spouses who perceived their relationship as wife-dominant would report the highest levels of marital violence.

The wives reported significantly higher levels of violence when they reported themselves as dominant than when they reported their husbands as dominant. They reported intermediate levels of violence that were not significantly different when they reported themselves as being egalitarian. This partially supports the hypothesis. This indicates that wives experience more violence when they report themselves as dominant. When the wives reported themselves as dominant, the husbands also reported the highest levels of violence, although it was not significant. When the wives reported the relationship as being egalitarian, the husbands reported the lowest levels of violence. Although this was not significant, it tends in the direction of the hypothesis.

When the husbands reported the balance of power, there were not significant results in terms of violence levels according to husbands or wives.

The third hypothesis predicted that marital longevity would vary according to the perceived balance of power of each spouse: spouses who perceived their relationship as egalitarian would report the lowest rates of marital separation or divorce, spouses who perceived their relationship as husband-dominant would report intermediate rates of marital separation or divorce, and spouses who perceived their relationship as wife-dominant would report the highest rates of marital separation or divorce. Again, the data did not support this hypothesis. Although no significant results were found, it is interesting to note the direction of the findings. When the wives reported themselves as dominant, the rates of divorce were higher. When wives reported their husbands as dominant, they reported the lowest rates of divorce. When husbands reported their wives as dominant, the rates of divorce were also higher. When husbands reported themselves
being as egalitarian, they reported the lowest rates of divorce. The husbands who reported themselves as being egalitarian also reported the lowest rates of divorce. Although this is not significant, it is in the direction of the hypothesis.

A number of things could have contributed to the fact that these hypotheses were not confirmed. Perhaps the hypotheses were incorrect. Previous research has supported these hypotheses, but balance of power was operationalized here in a different way. For example, Whisman and Jacobson (1990) found that levels of adjustment vary according to power balance when power is qualified through the patterns of expressive and receptive communication that each couple used. They found that couples who shared power appeared to be more adjusted than couples in which one spouse was more dominant. Gray-Little and her colleagues (1996) measured power through a behavioral exercise that involved spouses finding a solution to a problem together. They found that egalitarian couples had the highest levels of satisfaction. Other studies have found that levels of marital violence vary according to power balance. Coleman and Straus (1986) conducted an in-depth study of marital violence in which they measured the balance of power in the marital relationship through decision making roles. They found that husband-dominant couples and wife-dominant couples experienced more violence than did egalitarian couples. Babcock and her colleagues (1993) found that when the husband's decision making power is lower, the rates of violence within the marriage increase. Because other studies were able to find significant results when studying power, it is necessary that other aspects of the present study be scrutinized as well.

The methods of measurement in this study may not have been sound. Possibly the dependent variables were not measured accurately. This seems unlikely for the measurement of marital adjustment because the Dyadic Adjustment Scale is a widely used scale that has demonstrated high levels of reliability and validity in numerous studies. For instance, Sharples and Cross (1982) conducted a replication study of Spanier's (1976) development of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale that examined the
psychometric properties of the scale. The scale was analyzed with an item analysis, a
discriminant analysis to determine which items act as the best discriminators of dyadic
adjustment, and a factor analysis to replicate Spanier's original procedure. They found
that the DAS was a reliable measurement of dyadic adjustment. They also found that
question 31 (the overall degree of happiness with the relationship) correlates well with
the rest of the measure and suffices as a quick screening device.

The Conflicts Tactics Scale, which was used to measure marital violence in this
study, is also a widely cited scale that has demonstrated high levels of reliability and
validity in numerous studies. For example, Straus (1979) examined the ability of the
CTS to measure conflict between individuals. He found internal consistency reliability
by measuring the correlation of two forms of the questionnaire. He also found evidence
of concurrent and construct validity. Within these data, the husband and wife reports are
highly correlated, which suggests that the construct is being measured adequately.
Therefore, it appears likely that violence was measured appropriately.

The reporting of marital status at follow-up is very likely to be an accurate
measure. However, the sample size did decrease at the follow-up because there were
subjects who could not be located. The initial sample size consisted of 72 couples. Of
those 72 couples, 53 were located at follow-up. Perhaps the results were biased by this
attrition.

It is also possible that the independent variable was not measured appropriately.
The Power Balance Scale used in this study has not been widely used. There is no well
used scale for measuring the perceived balance of power. Because this study was
conducted under the assumption that all people act on their own perceptions, the
measurement was based on perceptions rather than objective coding that utilizes an
outsider's perception of the subject's situation. There may be distinct disadvantages to
studying power in this way that contribute to the lack of support for the hypotheses in this
study. People may not be consciously aware of the power balance that exists in their
marriage even though they report perceiving it a certain way. This suggests that there may be a distinction between perceptions and accurate awareness of a particular concept such as power balance within a marital relationship. These perceptions may indicate how the subject feels at the time of the measurement, but may not be reflective of the nature of the marital relationship. It is also possible that a subject's perception is separate from unfolding interactions between subjects and their spouses. The perceptions measured in this study do not take into account the behaviors and actions of the other individual involved in the marital relationship. The perceptions of one spouse may not affect the interchanges that unfold between spouses. Spouses have separate perceptions of their marital relationship and these may or may not come to bear on issues that the couple faces together; therefore, this measurement may not be a good predictor of how couples interact. The reality of a couples' interactions probably affect the adjustment levels of couples, the violence levels of couples, and the longevity of the relationship. Because other studies did report significant findings when measuring power differently (Babcock et al., 1993; Bean, Curtis, & Marcum, 1977; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers, Raven, & Rodrigues, 1971; Coleman & Straus, 1986; Corrales, 1975; Gray-Little, 1982; Gray-Little, Hamby, & Baucom, 1996; Murphy & Meyer, 1991; Whisman & Jacobson, 1990), it may be beneficial to adjust the measurement procedure.

Other studies that examined the balance of power focused on particular domains of power balance, unlike this study that attempted to ascertain a global measure of power. The disadvantage of studying power in this global context is that people may not assume power to have an all encompassing definition. The lack of a operationalized definition of power in the research literature may be evidence that a global definition does not exist. This may indicate that power is a complex concept that cannot be pinned down to a single definition. To understand power fully, it may be necessary to define it in terms of specific domains that can be operationally defined more easily.

Moreover, if it is difficult for researchers to agree on a global meaning of power,
it is likely that subjects have personal meanings of power that also vary considerably. If subjects (even married spouses) define power in different ways, then it may not be possible to measure power as a reality. It may be necessary then to examine power within a particular domain that objectively codes power. This would enable subjects to report on the particular domain that has been operationally defined.

Perhaps there existed some procedural aspects of this study that may have suppressed the effects of the independent variable. Certainly when a subject completes an entire battery of questionnaires, fatigue may effect the manner in which questionnaires are completed. The fact that the subjects completed a battery that concentrated so heavily on their marital relationship in one sitting may have effected the way they answered the questions, especially where perception of power balance is involved because it may not have been something they considered consciously prior to completing these questionnaires.

Future studies using this scale should concentrate on concurrent validity to validate this scale's ability to measure perceptions of power. Strengthening this scale with validity studies might lead to increased ability to measure power within a marital relationship. The importance of measuring power in terms of perceptions cannot be overlooked. If perceptions of power can be measured, then perceptions of power would be a viable area to attend to within the context of marital therapy. The measurement of these perceptions may be useful in ascertaining where to begin in marital therapy and what perceptions to concentrate on throughout the therapeutic experience.

Future studies that examine the effect that power has on marital violence may benefit from a sample that has more couples who report occurrences of violence within their marriage. It may be beneficial to recruit some subjects from a domestic violence shelter because the subjects would have encountered violence within their marital relationship. A more diverse cultural sample with more diverse levels of education and income than what is available in the present sample may prove beneficial when studying
this issue as well.

The individual's perception of power is important because one behaves, at least in part, according to one's beliefs and perceptions of situations they live through. In other studies of power, this perception is not examined. Other studies have concentrated heavily on the decision making classification of power. For example, Blood and Wolfe (1960) first studied the balance of power within the marital relationship within the decision making domain. They pioneered the use of a questionnaire that ascertained who made the most decisions in the relationship. Many studies used decision making as the basis for measuring power (Babcock et al., 1993; Coleman & Straus, 1986; Corrales, 1975; Gray-Little, 1982). When researchers define power in ways other than decision making, they branch off into different directions. Some researchers categorize couples into power balance groups after the couple completes a behavioral exercise. For instance, Gray-Little and colleagues (1996) had subjects find a solution to a problem together and whoever had the original solution match the final solution was considered to have the most power. Corrales (1975) also included a behavioral exercise to accompany his decision making questionnaire. Some researchers have used communication style in order to categorize couples into power balance groups. For instance, Whisman and Jacobson (1990) videotaped their subjects discussing their day. These videotaped interactions were coded and used to determine the power balance of the couple. Babcock et al. (1993) also studied the communication style of the couple in order to determine the balance of power. Although many different ways of measuring power seem to exist, there is not one that seems to measure the individual spouse's overall perception of their balance of power within their own relationship. It is recommended that future research concentrate on this aspect of power.
Power Questions

Please circle the number that corresponds with your response to each question.

1. Whether or not you actually use, what is your potential to influence your partner's attitudes and behaviors?

   Potential is
   Very Small       Potential is
   Very Great
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

2. If you had to bet on whether or not you could get your partner to do something he/she did not want to do and you could not know ahead of time what you had to convince your partner to do, how confident would you be that you would succeed?

   Not at all Confident       Very Confident
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

5. How much "say" do you have about what you and your partner do together? That is, how much influence do you have over your joint decisions?

   A Lot Of "Say"       Some "Say"       Very Little "Say"
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

9. When you think about the things the two of you do together, who is more likely to find themselves doing what the other person likes (more than what they like)?

   More Likely to Do       More Likely to Do
   What I Want              What Partner Wants
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

10. Who do you feel has more influence in this relationship, you or your partner?

    My Partner Has       I Have More
    More Influence       Influence
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7
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UMI
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