Communication and Decision-Making Styles, Power Base Usage, and Satisfaction in Marital Dyads

Virginia P. Richmond, James C. McCroskey, and K. David Roach

This research focused on use of power, decision-making and communication styles of spouses in marital dyads, and the level of marital satisfaction of the partners in these relationships. Drawing primarily on previous work involving Management Communication Style and decision-making styles in organizational and instructional communication contexts, but also examining directly relevant work within the marital context, three hypotheses and five research questions were advanced. Marital satisfaction for members of 136 marital dyads was examined to determine its relationship with self- and spouse-reported communication and decision-making styles and use of various power bases in communication designed to influence marital partner. The three hypotheses were supported by the findings: 1) Self-reported satisfaction as a member of a marital dyad was positively related to the spouse's use of a more co-active style of communication and decision-making; 2) Such satisfaction was positively related to one's spouse's communication of referent power; and 3) Such satisfaction was negatively related to one's spouse's communication of coercive power. Use of reward power was also found to be negatively associated with a spouse's marital satisfaction. With only one meaningful exception, results for husbands and wives were very similar.

KEY CONCEPTS: power, communication styles, satisfaction, couples, marriage

Virginia P. Richmond (Ph. D., 1977, University of Nebraska) and **James C. McCroskey** (Ed. D., 1966, Pennsylvania State University) are Professors of Communication Studies at West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26506-6293. **K. David Roach** (Ed. D., 1989, Texas Tech University) is a Professor of Communication Studies at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409.

While it may have been that "once upon a time" males made all the important decisions in marital relationships and females dutifully complied with whatever the males wished, that is not the dominant pattern in contemporary U.S. marital relationships. Although men are generally observed to exercise more power than women within the marriage relationship today (Gerber, 1991; see also Burgoyne, 1990; Donnan, 1990; and Williams, 1990), more marital relationships in the U.S. are striving for an equalitarian pattern—a balance of power

Communication Quarterly, Vol. 45, No 4, Fall 1997, Pages 410-426

and decision-making. Notably, most modern theories addressing the marriage relationship contain "ideas of behavioral reciprocity and sharing in intimate relationships" (Bagarozzi, 1990, p. 52). Such relationships are highly dependent on communicative interaction for decision-making and mutual influence of the marital partners on each other. The way these communicative events occur may have a major impact on the satisfaction of the marital partners. The resulting satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) may determine whether the couple's relationship will be maintained or ended, on their general life happiness level, and on the environment in which their children will be raised.

The importance of communication to marital satisfaction has been established through considerable research. For example, Bell, Daly, and Gonzalez (1987) determined that over half the variability in women's marital satisfaction could be predicted by communication behaviors representing just five affinity-maintenance categories. While it is not surprising that such pro-social communication behavior would have a major impact on marital satisfaction, it seems at least equally likely that communication designed to influence a marital partner's behavior could have an important impact. This kind of communication is likely to produce resistance, as well as compliance, and so may stimulate very negative interaction and conflict. Such outcomes are likely to result in marital dissatisfaction.

COMMUNICATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Much of the work done related to decision-making and communication has focused on the organizational context. Within this context there is a natural "pull and tug" for control of decisions between those at higher and lower levels of the organization--supervisors and their subordinates. Within this context decision-making often is viewed as the prerogative of those at higher levels and may involve those at lower levels only if the "higher-ups" choose to delegate such authority to them. Various managers have different styles of decision-making. These styles fall on a continuum. At one end are those who chose to make most or all of the decisions themselves, and those at the opposite end are those who choose to delegate all or most of the decisions to those below them. The nature of the communication in these different decision-making contexts is highly varied. This led Richmond and McCroskey (1979) to advance the construct of "Management Communication Style" (MCS). This construct recognizes that people vary in their general approach to decision making and that the individual's approach has important, observable impact on their communication behavior. While the construct was originally advanced within the organizational context, and we will begin by discussing it in that context, we believe it may be applied in other contexts as well, including the very different type of context represented by the marital dyad. While the analogy between the superior/subordinate relationships and marital relationships is far from perfect, since married people do need to "manage" or influence one another from time to time, there are some similarities. We will address application to this context directly later.

Central to the MCS construct was the theoretical work of Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958), the film *Styles of Leadership* (1962) based on this earlier work, and the research of Sadler (1970). Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) postulated a continuum of leadership orientations within an organization from the extreme "boss centered" to the extreme "subordinate centered." As one moves from the first extreme toward the latter, the use of authority by the manager decreases and the involvement of

subordinates in decision making increases. Based on the later work of Tannenbaum and Schmidt and the research of Sadler, the MCS construct was advanced as a continuum with the labels of Tell, Sell, Consult, and Join identifying varying points on that continuum. Each of these labels represents a specific style of decision making which may be employed by a manager. The MCS construct recognizes that blends of these styles exist between the pairs of the marker points along the continuum (Richmond & McCroskey, 1979).

MCS IN MARITAL DYADS

The traditional marital dyad with the husband in charge and making decisions and the wife complying with those decisions, with minimal resistance or question, represents the extreme "Tell" orientation. The equalitarian marital dyad, which exists in many marriages today, represents the opposite "Join" extreme. In this type of relationship the decision-making is shared by the marital partners, with some being made together and others "delegated" by one partner to the other. Ironically, research in the mid-1970s indicated that these two extreme types of dyads resulted in the highest levels of marital satisfaction in both husbands and wives (Corrales, 1975). In both of these types, approximately seventy-five percent of the people studied reported being "very satisfied." The type which was found to result in the least satisfaction was, however, also an extreme "Tell" dyad, but one in which the wife assumed the decision-making role. Only twenty percent of the people in this type of marital dyad reported being "very satisfied."

These extreme types of marital dyads, of course, do not represent all of the types which exist. It will be useful, therefore to examine the MCS conceptualization as it can be applied to the context of the marital dyad. We will examine the four major points on the MCS continuum and the communication which is characteristic of each.

Tell. A spouse employing this MCS habitually makes decisions and simply implements those decisions or announces them to her/his spouse with the expectation the decision will be accepted and carried out without challenge. *Communication:* Primarily unidirectional (dominant spouse to submissive spouse) and noninteractive. Questions are acceptable if they are concerned with clarification or how the decision is to be carried out. Inquiries questioning the desirability of the decision are discouraged or even just not tolerated. Expressed concern for the other spouse's satisfaction with the decision is rare.

Sell. A spouse employing this style also makes the decisions, but rather than simply implementing the decisions or announcing them to her/his spouse, he/she tries to persuade her/his spouse of the desirability of the decisions. *Communication:* Primarily, but not exclusively, from decision-making spouse to other spouse; sometimes bidirectional and interactive. Questions are generally encouraged and challenges often are met openly with persuasive counter-arguments. Concern for the satisfaction of the other spouse's satisfaction with the decision often is explicit.

Consult. The spouse employing this style also makes the ultimate decisions, but not until the problem has been presented to the other spouse and her/his advice, information, and suggestions have been obtained. *Communication:* Primarily from the non-decision-making spouse to the decision-making spouse; bidirectional and inter-active. One spouse provides input so the other can make a better decision than he/she could otherwise. There is exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of various options based on needs, well-being, and satisfaction of both spouses.

Join. The spouse employing this style does not make the decision, rather the authority to make decisions is delegated to the other spouse either in cooperation with this spouse or in her or his absence. This spouse announces the problem and may indicate limits of possible solutions, but decisions must be based on a consensus after open interaction. *Communication:* Bidirectional and highly interactive. Spouses communicate with each other as equals. Each spouse's well-being and satisfaction are the primary criteria for decision making in the interaction.

While the above MCS approaches are presented as categorical, it is important to remember that these reflect points on an underlying continuum and no spouse would be likely to operate at all times at only one point on that continuum. Most spouses will have a general tendency to operate near one point but will have considerable variability around that point.

Theoretically each spouse has a choice of what MCS to employ. However, if one spouse assumes a strong tell or sell orientation, the flexibility of the other spouse is dramatically reduced. It is extremely difficult for one spouse to implement a consult or join style when confronted with a spouse operating in the tell or sell mode. Such discrepancies are very likely to lead to ineffective communication and dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 1

There is a strong link between marital decision making power and marital satisfaction (e.g. Beach & Tesser, 1993). Early research relating to decision making and satisfaction indicated that subordinates in production organizations expressed much more satisfaction under the sell, consult, and join styles than under the tell (Sadler, 1970). In Sadler's research, the four styles were treated categorically. In research employing the MCS conceptualization and measurement which treats MCS as a continuum, Richmond and McCroskey (1979) obtained similar results within the organizational environment. Their results indicate a positive relationship between both general satisfaction and supervisor satisfaction and an MCS more in the join direction. General dissatisfaction and willingness to move to a new position were found to be positively associated with a more tell-oriented MCS. Later research replicated these results (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1982; Richmond, McCroskey, Davis, & Koontz, 1980).

The marital relationship differs from the supervisor/subordinate relationship in important ways. It is not structurally hierarchical, at least not in the U.S. cultural and legal environment. The cultural presumption of equality in marital relationships makes it more difficult for either spouse to assume a tell orientation. That, of course, does not mean it is not done. Not everyone within the culture will conform to any given cultural norm. It is reasonable to expect that the spouse of the cultural nonconformist may be very dissatisfied, possibly even more so than the organizational subordinate who works under the tell-oriented supervisor. Therefore, it is hypothesized that *the self-reported satisfaction of a member of a marital dyad will be positively related to that person's perception of a more join-oriented MCS on the part of their spouse.*

We anticipated the responses of both husband and wives would be consistent with this hypothesis. However, the earlier research which indicated a far less positive response to a wife-tell style than to a husband-tell style led us to pose a follow-up question:

RQ1 Is the relationship between MCS and satisfaction similar for husbands and wives?

USE OF POWER IN MARITAL DYADS

As Fitzpatrick (1988) notes, power within the context of the marital dyad is the ability to produce intended effects on the behavior of the emotions of the spouse. Many factors such as money (e.g., Burgoyne, 1990; O'Connor, 1991), education (e.g., Williams, 1990), hidden agendas (e.g., Krokoff, 1990), women's employment (e.g., Pyke, 1994) and sex role ideology (e.g., Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989) can influence the balance of power in marriages. In all of these, however, communication is the key. There is "a growing body of literature that links communication practices to power" (Scudder & Andrews, 1995, p.31). It is necessary in all marital relationships for both husbands and wives to influence their partners' behavior and/or emotions. Consequently, power is a fact of everyday life in marital dyads.

Although a perfect 50/50 balance of power in a relationship may often be an unachievable ideal, more and more relationships today target this as a goal. This balance remains a challenge to many couples. Many studies point to imbalances in marital power as a primary issue in marital conflict (Feld & Urman-Klein, 1993). When the power balance is not mutually acceptable, serious problems arise. Bagarozzi (1990) suggests that "when separation and/or divorce are not considered acceptable options, spouses frequently resort to various interpersonal as well as intrapersonal strategies and maneuvers in their attempts to bring about a more satisfying and rewarding system of social and behavioral exchanges" (p. 52-53). These maneuvers can include the development of psychiatric symptoms "used by the less powerful spouse to bring about a more equitable balance of power in the couple's exchange system" (Bagarozzi, 1990), p. 51). Kaslow and Carter (1991) note the relationship between imbalance of marital power and depression in women. Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, and Gottman (1993) found that in domestically violent marriages, husbands who felt less powerful were more likely to be physically abusive. Other negative outcomes of marital power imbalance include verbal/symbolic aggression (e.g., Straus & Sweet, 1992), marital violence (e.g., Gerber, 1991; Anson & Sagy, 1995), and relationship dissolution. Thus it is important that couples pursue the goal of power sharing in marriage and, though they may reach some balance less than perfect, it still must be mutually acceptable. An equal balance (or at least an acceptable balance) is strongly linked to marital satisfaction (Aida & Falbo, 1991: Whisman & Jacobson, 1990).

Power balance is only part of the picture. To use power wisely, one must have an understanding of the various forms and effects of power use. As was the case with MCS, much of the research on power has been focused on supervisor/subordinate relationships in organizations. One of the conceptualizations of power which has been related effectively to the organizational context is that advanced by French and Raven (1968). Their conceptualization suggests there are five primary bases of power: coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, and expert. Each of these depends on how people see one another in relationships. How these presumably operate in marital dyads follows.

Coercive. This base of power rests on one spouse's perception that he/she will be punished by her/his spouse if he/she does not conform to that person's influence attempt. Thus, when one spouse communicates messages of threat or force in an attempt to influence the other spouse, the coercive base of power is being employed. While use or threat of physical violence is one example of the use of coercive power, it is the most extreme form. More commonly, coercion of a more subtle sort will occur in marital dyads. Threats or inferences that something desired by one spouse will be

withheld or taken away by the other as punishment for nonconformance to influence attempts are far more common.

Reward. This base of power rests on one spouse's perception that he/she will be rewarded by her/his spouse if he/she conforms to that person's influence attempt. Thus, when one spouse communicates messages of promise of reward, reward power is being employed. Direct promises of tangible reward, like "I will give you $100 if you will do this for me," is an obvious and extreme example of the use of reward power. More commonly, more subtle or implied rewards are employed in marital dyads.

Coercive and reward power are essentially two sides to the same coin. One is the carrot, the other the stick.

Legitimate. Within organizations people are assigned presumably legitimate power by higher-ups in the organization. Thus, a person's rank or title in the organization is taken as an indicator to most people that the person has the right to expect certain kinds of conformance to their "legitimate" influence attempts.

Within marital dyads legitimate power rests on the perception of one spouse that the other spouse has certain rights as a function of "being married." These rights generally are culturally determined and vary widely from culture to culture. In more traditional marriages in the U.S., for example, it generally would be seen as appropriate for the husband to speak outside the house for both members of the dyad, make certain decisions about spending the couple's resources, and generally direct the wife's behavior outside the home. In more contemporary marriages in the U.S., however, none of these "legitimate" behaviors likely would be considered "legitimate." In contrast, members of this type of dyad would be likely to work out specific rights for both dyad members cooperatively, and in some cases prior to the actual marriage through a pre-nuptial agreement.

Referent. This base of power rests on the strength of the personal relationship between the two dyad members. In supervisory relationships, "referent power is influence based on care and trust developed in a relationship; it is earned through trustworthy relating" (Nelson, 1991, p. 364). In the context of a marriage, the more affection and respect one has for the other, the more that person will try to please the other. When one person is strongly attracted on in love with the other person, it is likely they will identify their own well-being with the other's well-being. Under circumstances of such positive identification, one person is likely to conform to their spouse's influence attempts simply because they want to be close to that other person.

Expert. The final power base defined by French and Raven (1968) focuses on the knowledge or special abilities of an individual making an influence attempt. In supervisory relationships, "expert power is influence based on the knowledge and expertise of the supervisor; it is earned through education, training, experience, and the communication of those to trainees" (Nelson, 1991, p. 364-365). Within the marital dyad, expert power is based on one spouse's perception of the other's competence and knowledge in the specific area in which an influence attempt is made as well as a general perception of expertise. When one spouse considers the other to be considerably more expert on a given issue, it is likely he/she will simply conform because he/she thinks the other person must be correct.

Hypotheses 2-3

Early research in the organizational environment reported by Student (1968) indicated that as supervisor use of expert and referent power increased, subordinates

had fewer excused absences. Other bases of power were not related to absenteeism. In terms of performance, use of expert and referent power were associated with positive outcomes, coercive and legitimate were associated with negative outcomes, and there was a mixed picture for reward power. Student did not directly measure job satisfaction.

In more recent research Richmond, McCroskey, Davis, and Koontz (1980) examined use of power both as a correlate of job satisfaction and in relation to MCS. Their results indicated that, across a variety of subject samples, coercion and legitimate power were associated with a more tell-oriented MCS, while referent and expert power were more associated with a join-oriented MCS. Importantly, they also found referent and expert power to be associated with higher satisfaction and coercion to be associated with lower satisfaction. Legitimate power had a weak association with dissatisfaction in some samples and no association in another. Reward power had a weak association with satisfaction in one sample, and no association in others. In a follow-up study involving 87 supervisors and 432 subordinates, Richmond, Wagner, & McCroskey (1983) found strong relationships between use of coercive and referent power with satisfaction. Subordinates of supervisors who employed extensive coercion were significantly less satisfied, while those with supervisors who drew upon referent power were significantly more satisfied. None of the other power bases had any meaningful relationship with job satisfaction.

Richmond and McCroskey (1984) also examined the impact of teachers' use of power on the students' satisfaction with their instructor. The results of this study of over 2000 students indicated that teachers who used relatively high amounts of coercive and legitimate power produced much lower satisfaction in their students. In contrast, teachers who used relatively high amounts of referent power produced substantially more satisfied students.

As we have noted previously, the marital relationship is very different than the supervisor/subordinate relationship. So is the teacher/student relationship. However, the strong findings observed in the organizational and instructional research are highly suggestive of what might exist in relationships in other contexts. The organizational and instructional results related to coercive and referent power appear highly likely to reflect what happens in marital dyads as well. Consequently, we advanced two hypotheses:

H2 The self-reported satisfaction of a member of a marital dyad will be negatively related to her/his perception of her/his spouse's use of coercive power.

H3 The self-reported satisfaction of a member of a marital dyad will be positively related to her/his perception of her/his spouse's use of referent power.

Since there is little in the organizational and instructional literature that would suggest what we should expect with the use of expert, reward, and legitimate power, we chose to address this concern with research questions:

RQ2 What is the relationship between legitimate power and marital satisfaction?

RQ3 What is the relationship between reward power and marital

satisfaction?

RQ4 What is the relationship between expert power and marital satisfaction?

We anticipated the responses of both husband and wives would be consistent with these hypotheses and similar with respect to the research questions. However, given the association between coercive power and the tell orientation, as well as the relationship between referent power and the join orientation, we posed a final follow-up question:

RQ5 Is the relationship between use of power and satisfaction similar for husbands and wives?

METHODS

Sample

A sample was drawn from married individuals enrolled in adult education classes in communication at an Eastern university. Each student who volunteered to participate agreed to take an identical research instrument to her/his spouse and request her/his participation. A random code number was assigned to each volunteer who, in turn, placed it on her/his questionnaire and on the one taken home to the spouse. A postage-paid return envelope was provided the spouse so he/she could return the instrument privately. Instruments returned in any other manner were discarded. A total of 324 instruments were collected. Instruments with the same code numbers were paired and all other instruments were discarded. A total of 136 married couples constituted the final sample.

Measurement

The following instruments were employed to measure the variables included in this investigation:

Marital Satisfaction. The instrument used to measure marital satisfaction was a Likert-type measure employing five-step response formats. The instrument included four items: 1) In general, how often do you think things between you and your spouse are going well? (never, seldom, sometimes, usually, always). 2) Have you ever considered separating from your mate? (never, seldom, sometimes, often, very often). 3) Everything considered, how happy has your marriage been for you? (very happy, happy, somewhat happy, unhappy, very unhappy). 4) If you had your life to live over, do you think you would marry the same person? (definitely, probably, possibly, probably not, definitely not).

This instrument was developed by Powers and Hutchinson (1979) and generated an internal reliability estimate of .92 in their initial investigation. In addition to the clear face validity of the instrument, the construct validity of the instrument in previous work has been good. In the current investigation the Alpha reliability was .93 for females and .91 for males.

The MCS instrument developed by Richmond and McCroskey (1979) was adapted for use with marital dyads in this investigation. This instrument is a 19-point continuum ranging from Tell (10), through Sell (16), through Consult (22), to Join (28). The procedure for using this instrument is to distribute information describing the four steps on the continuum and the communication associated with each step. Then the subject is asked "What style of decision making does your spouse use with you *in*

general?" They are additionally asked to "circle only one number on the continuum." Respondents were asked to complete another version of this same instrument, except that they were asked to indicate what was their own general MCS.

In previous research (Richmond & McCroskey, 1979) the test-retest reliability on this instrument was .85. Test-retest reliability was reported to be .87 in two other studies (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1982; Richmond, McCroskey, Davis, & Koontz, 1980). No test of reliability was possible in the current investigation because the instrument was only administered once. However, in a pilot investigation employing 112 married individuals from the same population of adults employed in the main study, but not their spouses, the test-retest reliability was found to be .84 over a three-week period.

Bases of Power. The Relative Power Measure (RPM) developed by McCroskey & Richmond (1983) was employed in this investigation. The procedure for use of this instrument calls for first providing the participants with a full explanation of each of the five bases of power in written form. Then the individual is asked to respond to the following:"Presuming that 100% represents all of the power that your spouse uses with you, *please estimate the percentage which he/she uses in each of the following categories.* For example, if he/she uses a lot of coercive power but little else, you might respond as follows: *80* coercive; *5* reward; *5* legitimate; *5* referent; *5* expert. Be sure your total adds to 100%."

This is followed by a listing of the five bases of power with a space before each for the participant's response. Respondents also completed another version of this instrument that was identical except it asked them to estimate their own power base usage.

In a pilot test of this instrument involving 163 married individuals (but not their spouses, drawn from same population as the previously noted pilot study), a canonical correlation estimate of the reliability of the instrument over a three week period was .83. No reliability estimate could be made in this study because the instrument was administered only once. This instrument has strong construct validity based on previous investigations.

Procedure. Participants were invited to volunteer for participation in this study. No inducements were provided. Although the classes in which the volunteers were enrolled were in communication, no material related to the study was discussed prior to their completion of the project. They were debriefed subsequently, at the time of the course when material relevant to the study was normally introduced. Questionnaires received from spouses within the next 16 days after they were provided to the volunteers were retained for the study. Those received later were not included. Questionnaires were paired by code number and identified by sex of respondent.

Data Analyses. Preliminary analyses involved computation of the means and standard deviations for all of the measures. These are reported in Table 1. The data related to the first hypothesis, concerning the relationship between one's own satisfaction and that person's perception of their spouse's MCS, were analyzed by means of simple correlations. The data related to RQ1 were examined by simple correlations and t-tests of differences between correlations.

The data related to hypotheses 2 and 3, concerning the relationship between one's own satisfaction and that person's perception of their spouse's power usage, were analyzed by means of simple correlations, as were the data related to RQ2-RQ4. The

TABLE 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Measure by Sex of Respondent

Measure	Female		Male	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Marital Satisfaction	16.7	2.9	16.8	2.6
MCS Self-Report	23.8	4.1	22.3	4.7
MCS Spouse-Report	24.3	4.7	23.4	4.6
Power Base Percentage--Self-Report				
Coercive	06.4	10.1	09.4	14.5
Reward	12.7	13.8	11.6	12.9
Legitimate	10.6	13.8	11.1	12.4
Referent	45.3	26.2	40.2	26.5
Expert	25.0	23.0	27.7	20.9
Power Base Percentage--Spouse-Report				
Coercive	10.7	16.9	07.0	13.2
Reward	13.3	14.7	10.6	12.9
Legitimate	12.5	15.8	12.5	16.6
Referent	42.6	28.0	44.6	29.0
Expert	20.9	20.5	25.3	24.8

data related to RQ5 were examined by simple correlation and t-tests of differences between correlations. Supplementary data analyses will be noted in the results section below.

RESULTS

MCS

The correlation results relating to hypothesis 1 are reported in Table 2. The two most relevant correlations are those between spouse reports of their own satisfaction and their partner's MCS. The correlation for the wives was r=.53 and that for the husbands was r=.46. The difference between these two independent correlations was not significant ($z<1$). Hypothesis 1 was confirmed, the observed correlations between a member of a marital dyad's marital satisfaction and the person's perception of their

TABLE 2

Correlations Between MCS and Marital Satisfaction by Sex of Respondent*

Measure	Female Satisfaction	Male Satisfaction
MCS Female Self-Report	.19	.22
MCS Male Self-Report	.31	.27
MCS Female Spouse-Report	.53	.33
MCS Male Spouse-Report	.41	.46

* All correlations significant at $p<.001$.

partner's MCS is positive, meaning more "join" oriented. The absence of a significant difference between the correlations we obtained for husbands and wives indicates the answer to RQ1 is that the relationship between MCS and satisfaction is the same for both spouses.

Supplementary analyses resulted in similar associations between one partner's perception of their spouse's MCS and their spouse's report of satisfaction. Wive's reports of satisfaction were significantly correlated with their husband's perceptions of the wife's MCS (r=.41). The reciprocal correlation (husband's satisfaction and wife's perception of husband's MCS) was also significant (r=.33). These two correlations are not significantly different (z<1).

The primary correlations indicate higher satisfaction of one member of a marital dyad is correlated with use of a more join-oriented MCS on the part of their partner. The secondary correlations indicate that a more join-oriented MCS, as perceived being used by one's partner, is also correlated with one's own satisfaction. Since the former results are suggestive of a causal pattern from use of a join-oriented MCS to a partner's satisfaction, and the latter results are suggestive of a causal pattern of one's own satisfaction leading to one's use of a join-oriented MCS, it was important to look at the strength of both types of relationships.

A test for differences between dependent correlations (Bruning & Kintz, 1968) between the relevant correlations for the wives (r=.53 and r=.41) indicated a significant difference between the two relationships (t=4.56, p<.001). The tests for husbands (r=.46 and r=.33) also indicated a significant difference between the two relationships (t=4.69, p<.001). While reciprocal causality is most likely present in this type of context, these results indicate the stronger causal path leads from use of a more join-oriented MCS by one marital partner to marital satisfaction on the part of the other marital partner.

This inference is strengthened by the correlations obtained between self-reported MCS use and satisfaction. All of the correlations (see Table 2) were in the same direction as the spouse reports indicated above, and all were statistically significant (at least at the .05 level). However, in all comparisons the self-reports indicated weaker associations between MCS and one's own satisfaction than the relationships between one's spouse report of one's MCS and one's own satisfaction. These results signif-icantly weaken the case for the causal path of one's own satisfaction leading to one using a more join-oriented MCS.

Use of Power

The correlation results relating to hypotheses 2 and 3 are reported in Table 3. The most relevant correlations are those between spouse reports of their own satisfaction and their partner's use of coercive and referent power. We will consider these in turn.

Coercive power. The correlation for use of coercive power for the wives was r=-.33 and that for the husbands was r=-.41. The difference between these two independent correlations was not significant (z=.76). Hypothesis 2 was confirmed, the observed correlations between a member of a marital dyad's satisfaction and the person's perception of their partner's use of coercive power is negative. The absence of a significant difference between the correlations we obtained for husbands and wives suggests, re RQ5, that both respond similarly to a spouse's use of coercive power.

Supplementary analyses resulted in similar associations between one partner's perception of their spouse's use of coercion and their spouse's report of satisfaction. Wive's reports of satisfaction were significantly negatively correlated with their

TABLE 3

Correlations Between Power Bases and Marital Satisfaction by Sex of Respondent*

Measure	Female Satisfaction	Male Satisfaction
Coercive		
Female Self-Report	-.25	-.25
Male Self-Report	-.35	-.36
Female Spouse-Report	-.33	-.41
Male Spouse-Report	-.49	-.41
Referent		
Female Self-Report	.30	.32
Male Self-Report	.34	.41
Female Spouse-Report	.32	.30
Male Spouse-Report	.26	.34
Reward		
Female Self-Report	-----	-.27
Male Self-Report	-.18	-.28
Female Spouse-Report	-.23	-----
Male Spouse-Report	-----	-.27
Legitimate		
Female Self-Report	-----	-----
Male Self-Report	-----	-----
Female Spouse-Report	-----	-----
Male Spouse-Report	-.25	-.19
Expert		
Female Self-Report	-----	-----
Male Self-Report	-----	-----
Female Spouse-Report	-----	-----
Male Self-Report	-----	-----

* All reported correlations, $p<.05$. Non-significant correlations not reported.

husband's perceptions of the wife's use of coercion ($r=-.41$, $p<.001$). The reciprocal correlation (husband's satisfaction and wife's perception of husband's use of coercion) was also significant ($r=-.49$, $p<.001$). These correlations are not significantly different ($z<1$).

The primary correlations indicate higher satisfaction of one member of a marital dyad is correlated with lower use of coercive power on the part of their partner. The secondary correlations indicate that less use of coercion, as perceived by one's partner, is also correlated with one's own satisfaction. As was the case with the MCS results discussed above, these results are supportive of causal links in both directions between satisfaction and use of coercion. Hence it was important to look at the strength of the relationships.

For husbands, the relationships were of equal strength, r=-.41 in both cases. For wives the difference between the relevant correlations (r=-.49 and r=-.33) indicated a significant difference between the two relationships (t=2.17, p=.05). These results indicate the stronger causal path for wives leads from marital satisfaction (actually *dis*satisfaction) to their use of coercive power. The correlations between self-reported use of coercive power and satisfaction (see Table 3) followed the same pattern as the spouse reports for wives, reinforcing the interpretation in support of the causal link between dissatisfaction and higher use of coercion. A similar pattern for males appeared in the self-report data for husbands, but not in the spouse report data. Hence, the reciprocal causality explanation for the relationship between dissatisfaction and use of coercive power for husbands is more justified. For *neither* is the explanation that use of coercive power leads to dissatisfaction acceptable as the primary explanation for the relationship between these two variables.

Referent Power. The correlation for use of referent power for wives was r=.32 and that for the husbands was r=.34. The difference between these two independent correlations was not significant (z<1). Hypothesis 3 was confirmed, the observed correlations between a member of a marital dyad's marital satisfaction and the person's perception of their partner's use of referent power is positive. The absence of a significant difference between the correlations we obtained for husbands and wives suggests, re RQ5, that both respond similarly to a spouse's use of referent power.

Supplementary analyses resulted in similar associations between one partner's perception of their spouse's use of referent power and their spouse's report of satisfaction. Wive's reports of satisfaction were significantly positively correlated with their husband's perceptions of the wife's use of referent power (r=.30, p<.001). The reciprocal correlation (husband's satisfaction and wife/s perception of husband's use of referent power was also significant (r=.26, p<.001). These correlations are not significantly different (z<1).

The primary correlations indicate higher satisfaction of one member of a marital dyad is correlated with higher use of referent power on the part of their partner. The secondary correlations indicate that higher use of referent power, as perceived by one's partner, is also correlated with one's own satisfaction. As was the case with the MCS and coercive power results noted above, these results are supportive of causal links in both directions between satisfaction and use of referent power. Hence , once again, it was important to look at the strength of the relationships.

For both husbands (r=.30 and .34) and wives (r=.32 and .26) the difference in the strength of the relationships was not statistically different (z<1). Hence, the reciprocal causality explanation for the relationship between satisfaction and the use of referent power is more justified. There is no evidence one causal path is likely to be stronger than the other.

Other Power Bases. The relationships between use of other power bases and marital satisfaction generally were much weaker than those associated with use of coercive or referent power. Many of the relationships were so small as to be non-significant. In fact, no significant relationships with use of expert power were obtained.

As noted in Table 3, five of the eight correlations between satisfaction and use of reward power were significant, as were two of the eight correlations between satisfaction and use of legitimate power. All of these correlations demonstrated negative relationships. These relationships need to be interpreted with caution. The reward power results suggest that using or promising reward in the context of a

marital dyad may evoke a response not unlike the use or threat of punishment. In short, it appears to be resented by the recipient and may lead to dissatisfaction, and prompted to use by a spouse who is already dissatisfied. Likewise for legitimate power use, the impact likely to come from the "Do it because I am your Husband/Wife" injunction is most probably will be negative. Our answers to RQ2-RQ4 appear to be that use of these other power bases are less likely to have much of a relationship with marital satisfaction, but to the extent that some relationship exists, it appears to be negative. With regard to the differences between relationships for husbands and wives on these power bases, no meaningful pattern emerged. There does not appear to be any socially significant interaction of gender with these relationships.

Fitzpatrick (1983) noted that in her research predicting couple's communication behavior from their self-reports was less problematic than she had anticipated. As she concluded, "we have been able to relate systematically what individuals say about their relationships to how they behave in those relationships" (p. 79). In the current research we found substantial correlations between marital satisfaction and both self- and spouse-reports of communication behavior. In several instances the spouse reports were even more associated than were the self-reports. Future research which includes both members of marital dyads is very desirable. However, the results of the present research indicate that obtaining data from both members of the dyad may not always be necessary. It is highly likely that one will get comparable results when only one member of the dyad is available if both self- and spouse-reports are obtained from those available individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

All of the hypotheses posed for this investigation were supported. In the marital dyads studied, greater satisfaction of dyad members was found to be associated with higher use of a consult-to-join communication pattern leading to decision-making in the dyad. Similarly, higher use of referent power and lower use of coercive power while attempting to influence one's spouse was found to be associated with higher satisfaction on the part of both members of the marital dyad.

Data related to the use of other bases of power indicated that while use of expert power had no observable relationship with marital satisfaction, use of legitimate and reward power had either non-significant or significantly *negative* relationships. The use of reward power was associated with satisfaction levels which closely paralleled those for the use of coercive power, but were not as strong.

It is important to recognize that this research involved married couples in on-going relationships. It was not experimental research. Hence, any speculation related to causation must be just that, speculation. Such speculation is most valuable for generating hypotheses which can be tested in future research. However, because this research is rooted in work previously conducted in organizational and instructional contexts, and the results are quite parallel to those obtained in that research, we have a better basis for such hypotheses than we would otherwise. With that reservation, we may examine possible implications of the current results.

If we view these results from the perspective of one person wanting to influence her/his spouse, the assumption that one spouse's use of power may cause more or less satisfaction in one's partner is in operation. From this perspective, two conclusions appear obvious: 1) use referent power, and 2) do not use coercive power. There are times, particularly when disagreements become heated, that referent power may not

be as effective as it is at others. It is important to recognize that use of power is designed to influence one's spouse, not to build a stronger marital relationship. One only hopes not to do serious harm to that relationship. With this in mind, it is clear that individuals within marital dyads should not simply discount expert, legitimate, or reward power. All three have potential to be effective in generating desired influence. The current results indicate use of expert power is unlikely to do any harm, hence it may be a very valuable tool. The relationships of legitimate and reward power with marital satisfaction are negative, but importantly, they are less negative than are those with coercive power. Hence, before resorting to the more negative coercive strategy, use of legitimate or reward power bases should definitely be considered.

The nature of the correlational relationships obtained in this research generally support a reciprocal causation explanation of these results. That is, people who are more satisfied in their marital relationships are less likely to use a tell-to-sell communication pattern in decision-making in the dyad and are more likely to depend upon referent power (and less likely to depend on coercive power) to influence their spouse. Equally important, those people who use a more consult-to-join communication pattern in decision-making, as well as more reliance on referent power and less reliance on coercive power to influence their spouse, will generate more satisfaction in their spouse.

The exception to this unqualified support for the reciprocal causation explanation was that wives' dissatisfaction was more associated with their own choice of using coercive power than it was to the use of that power by their husband. This was the only instance in which a uni-directional explanation of causation was observed to be statistically superior to a reciprocal explanation. This also was the only instance where any meaningful difference in relationships could be attributed to gender. The remaining data related to our research question concerning the roll of gender in these relationships generally indicated no socially significant pattern.

Results from research in the early 1970s indicated that marital dyads with either male-dominant or equalitarian decision-making and influence patterns were equally (and highly) likely to be associated with very satisfied dyad-partners, but female-dominated influence patterns were not likely to do so. The current results suggest that marital dyads in which either partner is clearly dominant (or both partners communicate from a domineering position) and uses directive rather than co-active communication are associated with substantial marital dissatisfaction. Future research needs to focus on the specific message patterns which are reflective of these positive and negative communicative orientations in order to identify the specific kinds of communicative messages which should be employed and which should be avoided if one wishes to enhance their marital relationship.

Again, it is very important for the reader to recognize that no causal relationships could be established in this research. This work was entirely correlational. The exploratory analyses we report here only indicate differential probabilities in the direction of causation and reinforce the probability that reciprocal relationships exist. Nevertheless, the results observed here are completely consistent with Gottman's (1994) causal conclusions based on observations of couples' communication behavior over time. His conclusion in that work was that increases in use of strategies that increase negativity relative to positivity decreases marital satisfaction and over time can lead to divorce. He identified such behaviors as expressing contempt for the other person, using sarcasm or excessive criticism, failing to communicate admiration, and

simply reducing communication (by males) are the kinds of strategies that increase negativity and decrease marital satisfaction. To that list we may now add employing strategies based on coercion rather than reference power to influence a spouse's behavior and using tell or sell decision-making strategies rather than consulting with or joining with one's spouse to make decisions which are important to both members of the relationship. Future research should focus on specific communication behaviors on the part of one spouse that are associated with the other spouse perceiving these as negative influence attempts. Also, it is important that research be conducted over extended time periods so that causality can be directly tested rather than necessarily left to speculation as is the case in most of the extant research in this area, including the present study.

REFERENCES

Aida, Y., & Falbo, T. (1991). Relationships between marital satisfaction, resources, and power strategies. *Sex Roles, 24,* 43-56.

Anson, O., & Sagy, S. (1995). Comparing women in violent and nonviolent unions. *Human Relations, 48,* 285-305.

Babcock, J. C., Waltz, J., Jacobson, N.S., & Gottman, J. M. (1993). Power and violence: The relation between communication patterns, power discrepancies, and domestic violence. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61,* 40-50.

Bagarozzi, D. A. (1990). Marital power discrepancies and symptom development in spouses: An empirical investigation. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 18,* 51-64.

Beach, S. R. H., & Tesser, A. (1993). Decision making power and marital satisfaction: A self-evaluation maintenance perspective. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 12,*471-494.

Bell, R. A., Daly, J. A., & Gonzalez, M. Christina (1987). Affinity-maintenance in marriage and its relationship to women's marital satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49,* 445-454.

Bruning, J. L., & Kintz, B. L. (1968). *Computational handbook of statistics.* Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Burgoyne, C. B. (1990). Money in marriage: How patterns of allocation both reflect and conceal power. *The Sociological Review, 38,* 634-665.

Corrales, R. G. (1975). Power and satisfaction in early marriage. In R. E. Cromwell & D. H. Olson (Eds.). *Power in families* (pp. 197-232). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Donnan, H. (1990). Mixed marriage in comparative perspective: Gender and power in northern Ireland and Pakistan. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 21,* 207-225.

Feld, B., & Urman-Klein, P. (1993). Gender: A critical factor in a couples group. *Group, 17,* 3-12.

Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1983). Predicting couples' communication from couples' self-reports. In R. N. Bostrom & B. H. Westley (Eds.), *Communication Yearbook 7* (pp. 49-82). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1988). *Between husbands and wives: Communication in marriage.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

French, J. R. P., Jr., & Raven, B. (1969). The bases for social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Gerber, G. L. (1991). Gender stereotypes and power: Perceptions of the roles in violent marriages. *Sex Roles, 24,* 439-458.

Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce? The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kaslow, N. J., & Carter, A. S. (1991). Gender-sensitive object-relational family therapy with de-

pressed women. *Journal of Family Psychology, 5,* 116-135.
Kingsbury, N. M., & Scanzoni, J. (1989). Process power and decision outcomes among dual career couples. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 20,* 231-246.
Krokoff, L. J. (1990). Hidden agendas in marriage: Affective and longitudinal dimensions. *Communication Research, 17,* 483-499.
McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (1983). Power in the classroom I: Teacher and student perceptions. *Communication Education, 32,* 175-184.
Nelson, T. S. (1991). Gender in family therapy supervision. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 13,* 357-369.
O'Conner, P. (1991). Women's experience of power within marriage: An inexplicable phenomenon? *The Sociological Review, 39,* 823-842.
Powers, W. G., & Hutchinson, K. L. (1979). The development of an instrument to measure spouse communication apprehension. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 41,* 89-96.
Pyke, K. D. (1994). Women's employment as a gift or burden? Marital power across marriage, divorce, and remarriage. *Gender and Society, 8,* 73-91.
Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (1979). Management communication style, tolerance for disagreement, and innovativeness as predictors of employee satisfaction: A comparison of single-factor, two-factor, and multiple-factor approaches. In D. Nimmo, Ed. *Communication Yearbook 3* (pp. 359-373). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (1984). Power in the classroom II: Power and learning. *Communication Education, 33,* 125-136.
Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., and Davis, L. M. (1982). Individual differences among employees, management communication style, and employee satisfaction: Replication and extension. *Human Communication Research, 8,* 170-188.
Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., Davis, L. M., & Koontz (1980). Perceived power as a mediator of management communication style and employee satisfaction: A preliminary investigation. *Communication Quarterly, 28,* 37-46.
Richmond, V. P., Wagner, J. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (1983). The impact of leadership style, use of power, and conflict management style on organizational outcomes. *Communication Quarterly, 31,* 27-36.
Sadler, P. J. (1970). Leadership style, confidence in management, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 6,* 3-19.
Scudder, J. N., & Andrews, P. H. (1995). A comparison of two alternative models of powerful speech. *Communication Research Reports, 12,* 25-33.
Straus, M. A., & Sweet, S. (1992). Verbal/symbolic aggression in couples: Incidence rates and relationships to personal characteristics. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 54,* 346-357.
Student, K. R. (1968). Supervisory influence and work-group performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 52,* 188-194.
Styles of leadership. (1962). 16 mm film. Beverly Hills, CA: Roundtable Productions.
Tannenbaum, R., & Schmidt, W. H. (1958). How to choose a leadership pattern. *Harvard Business Review, 36,* 95-101.
Whisman, M. A., & Jacobson, N. S. (1990). Power, marital satisfaction, and response to marital therapy. *Journal of Family Psychology, 4,* 202-212.
Williams, L. B. (1990). Marriage and decision-making: Inter-generational dynamics in Indonesia. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 21,* 55-66.