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**Confusion in decision-making roles, argument level, and
self-esteem within marital dyads**

Jernigan, Nathan Scott, M.A.

Middle Tennessee State University, 1990

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**Confusion in Decision-Making Roles,
Argument Level, and Self-Esteem
Within Marital Dyads**

Nathan Scott Jernigan

**A thesis presented to the
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts**

December 1990


Confusion in Decision-Making Roles,
Argument Level, and Self-Esteem
Within Marital Dyads

APPROVED:

Graduate Committee:


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Abstract

Confusion in Decision-Making Roles, Argument Level, and Self-Esteem Within Marital Dyads

by Nathan Scott Jernigan

Confusion between spouses in decision-making roles, number of marital arguments, and self-esteem of spouses were examined. The volunteer couples were university students and church members from the Middle Tennessee area. Confusion level and argument information were determined with a take-home survey given to both spouses who were instructed to complete them independent of each other. Confusion level was computed by the differences in spousal responses to questions of marital decision-making. A regression equation was used, and a statistically significant positive correlation was found between confusion level and number of marital arguments. The relationship between confusion level and self-esteem of husbands and wives (separately) yielded no significant effects. A regression equation yielded no significant effect for self-esteem of husbands on argument frequency; however, a statistically significant negative correlation was found for argument frequency and self-esteem of wives. A stepwise regression analysis including all variables for husbands and wives combined revealed that confusion level and self-esteem were useful in predicting the frequency of marital

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arguments. Gender was not found to be a useful predictor.

No significant interaction effects were found.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Many researchers have attempted to assess power in marital dyads. Specifically, which spouse carries the most power has been frequently examined. Most often researchers have used surveys of marital decision-making in their determinations of marital power.

The most often referred to study of this kind was done by Blood and Wolfe (1960). In this study, 909 married women volunteered to participate in structured interviews. They were asked to report (among other things) how final decisions were made in the following areas: (a) husband's choice of job, (b) choice of car, (c) whether or not to buy life insurance, (d) where to go on a vacation, (e) choice of house or apartment, (f) whether or not the wife should work, (g) choice of doctor, and (h) expenditure of funds for food. This information was used in determining the division of power in the relationships. Since this benchmark research, many others have conducted studies using similar formats (Buric & Zecevic, 1967; Fox, 1973; Kandel & Lesser, 1972; Michel, 1967; Richmond, 1976; Safilios-Rothschild, 1967, 1969; Szinovacz, 1978).

Theories and Findings from Previous Research

Although studies using surveys to determine marital power have several drawbacks (to be discussed later) and are

typically viewed with some skepticism, a number of interesting findings have resulted from them, many of which have been successfully replicated. Additionally, a number of theories have surfaced based on the various research.

Resource theory. Along with their study, Blood and Wolfe (1960) pioneered a benchmark theory in this field. The resource theory was developed in an attempt to append reasoning and explanation to some of the apparent trends in marital power. It is based on the notion that the relative power of husbands and wives in making family decisions depends upon the resources (such as education, income, employment, and occupational status) which each spouse brings into the marriage. The theory states that the spouse with the most resources will have the most power in the marriage.

Although a large number of studies have supported resource theory, a number of others have not. For example, in support of resource theory, a study by Kandel and Lesser (1972) found that husbands who have achieved a lower level of educational attainment than their wives have less power in the marriage. Husbands were found to have more power when they had more education than their wives or when both spouses had completed the same education level, whether high or low. However, Katz and Peres (1985) found a negative correlation between husband's education and power in marriage.

Safilios-Rothschild (1969) found that wives with college-educated husbands reported approximately equal frequencies of equalitarian, husband-dominated or wife-dominated decisions. Additionally, the same pattern was found to be true when wives had more education than their husbands.

Income level is another resource that has been examined. Centers, Raven, and Rodrigues (1971) found that husband power increased with husband-income level. On the other hand Safilios-Rothschild (1970) found that husbands who earned less money carried more decision-making power in marriage. In defense of Blood and Wolfe, the amount of husband's income cannot be used to confirm nor disconfirm resource theory unless it is compared with wife's income. Studies such as these are often cited as supporting or refuting resource theory. However, the data are inadequate to do so if the resources of the husband and the wife are not compared within each couple.

In a study by Kandel and Lesser (1972), wives were found to have more marital power when they work, full- or part-time, outside of the home. However, in other studies, wife employment has shown no significant effect (Centers et al., 1971; Safilios-Rothschild, 1969).

A very interesting and replicated finding since the development of resource theory is that wives' resources are

better predictors of conjugal power than are husbands' resources (Fox, 1973; Katz & Peres, 1985).

Normative-resource theory. In response to the failings and criticisms of resource theory, Rodman (1972) developed a "theory of resources in cultural context" which has come to be known as normative-resource theory. Rodman's theory states, "The balance of marital power is influenced by the interaction of (a) comparative resources of husband and wife and (b) the cultural and subcultural expectations about the distribution of marital power" (Rodman, 1972, p. 60). Rodman's theory is differentiated from resource theory primarily because it allows for subcultural influence. For instance, the results of studies which used all white subjects may not be generalizable to blacks.

Exchange theory. Another theory in response to resource theory was developed by Heer (1963) and is referred to as "exchange theory." This theory (as its name may indicate) is based on a perceived threat of divorce. It poses that the spouse who could most likely marry another person who could be as desirable or much more desirable than his (her) present spouse has a very important resource on his (her) side.

However, the relative degree to which the one spouse loves and needs the other may be the most crucial variable in explaining total power structure. The spouse who has relatively less feelings for the other may be the one in the

best position to control and manipulate all the resources that he (she) has in his (her) command in order to effectively control marital decision-making. Safilios-Rothschild (1970) voiced that a "relative love and need" theory may be more basic in explaining power structure.

In a later study, Safilios-Rothschild (1976) found that the spouse who is most in love feels vulnerable because of a greater investment of emotions. Because of this feeling of vulnerability, the spouse who is most in love willingly yields power to the spouse who is least in love as a trade-off perceived necessary to maintain the relationship.

Also among the wealth of previous research is a study by McDonald (1980) which found that husband-dominance and equalitarianism are associated with high marital satisfaction. Wife-dominant marriages tended to have the lowest marital satisfaction (Centers et al., 1971; Madden, 1987; McDonald, 1980). Of the three types of marital power arrangements, clearly the most popular in terms of frequency is equalitarianism. The second is husband-dominance, which is approximately two and one-half times more frequent than wife dominance (Centers et al., 1971).

Studies of the effect of religious affiliation on marital power have had mixed results. Centers et al. (1971) found a small but statistically significant relationship between religious affiliation and husband power, while Blood and Wolfe (1960) found no significant effect. Husband power

has been found to decrease with age and with length of marriage (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers et al., 1971).

Husband power has also been found to be less where a second marriage is involved (Centers et al., 1971). Contrary in part to these findings were those from a study by Kingsbury and Scanzoni (1989), which showed that men who had been married the longest had the most power.

Response Inconsistency: A Major Criticism of Previous Research

Research of this type has been heavily criticized because of the frequent reliance on one spouse's information, usually the wife (Douglas & Wind, 1978; Hill & Scanzoni, 1982; Kandel & Lesser, 1972; Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989; McDonald, 1980; Monroe, Bokemeier, Kotchen, & McKean, 1985; Quarm, 1981; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970). This format assumes a high level of consistency among wives' responses and husbands' (would be) responses. Many researchers have supposed that the potential for inconsistency among these husband and wife responses have flawed this data or at best rendered it insufficient. It has been recommended that studies involving only one spouse be altered in format to interview both spouses (Monroe et al., 1985; Quarm, 1981).

Of the studies that have used the responses of both spouses, the majority have verified the suspected incongruence between husband and wife responses to questions of marital decision-making. Turk and Bell (1972) reported a

between-spouse disagreement rate of 79% for the Blood and Wolfe (1960) Index of Power in Decision Making. Safilios-Rothschild (1969), examining a similar index, found that 77% of the couples in her Detroit sample were not in complete agreement. In their reexamination of Blood and Wolfe's (1960) decision-making questions, Granbois and Willett (1970) ironically found that husbands' and wives' answers were very similar when compared in the aggregate. They computed a Husband Mean Power Score for both sets of responses. The scores were 3.20 for husbands' responses and 3.22 for wives' responses. However, a comparison of individual spousal responses within dyads indicated discrepancies about 50% of the time. Wilkening and Morrison (1963) examined 23 decision-making items, finding spousal disagreement ranged from 23 to 64%. Douglas and Wind (1978) reviewed a number of studies from the late 60s and early 70s which reported similar levels of discrepancy between spouses. Similar to the findings of Granbois and Willett (1970), they also reported that at the aggregate level (i.e., all husbands compared with all wives) the discrepancy levels were slight. Monroe et al. (1985) found disagreement levels between spouses ranging from 26 to 40%, while an aggregate analysis revealed substantially lesser levels of disagreement for husbands and wives.

Possible Explanations for Response Inconsistency

Inconsistency in spousal responses to questions of marital decision-making has been considered a major drawback to studies of marital power. Some researchers have attempted to isolate and explain the reasons for the disparity.

Ideological bias. One possible source of disagreement between spousal responses is ideological bias (Heer, 1962; Turk & Bell, 1972). Heer assumed that both husband dominance and equalitarianism, but not wife dominance, were ideologically acceptable to most respondents. He said that in a wife-dominant dyad a conflict occurs for respondents between their own ideological orientation and the reality of the marriage. He concluded that respondents would tend toward denial in an attempt to cast themselves as consistent with their ideological beliefs. However, Heer's data, in many respects, did not support his belief. However, since his data did not include measures of ideology, he was unable to test his hypothesis directly.

In a study by Turk and Bell (1972), measures of ideology were included. This allowed for a direct examination of the relationship between self-reports of marital power and ideology. They found the two were related for both spouses. Further analysis revealed that the relationship between ideology and the self-report was slightly stronger for husbands than for wives.

Turk and Bell interpreted the relationship between ideology and self-report measures of marital decision-making as an indication that respondents tended to respond to such measures in a way they deemed normally appropriate, instead of describing the actual decision-making role relationships in their marriages.

Another plausible explanation for the findings of Turk and Bell is that the relationship exists because the ideologies of both spouses influence the decision-making role relationships that are being described by the respondents. Thus, rather than being an indication that self-reports are poor measures of marital decision-making, the relationship between ideology and self-reports of marital decision-making may indicate that the ideological beliefs of the respondents influence their marital behavior (Quarm 1981). Because it is impossible to determine conclusively from the data which explanation is correct (Quarm, 1981; Turk & Bell, 1972), it is impossible to draw absolute conclusions about the effect of ideology.

Item ambiguity. A second possible source of disagreement between spousal responses is associated with differences in spousal perceptions of the questions being asked. Safilios-Rothschild (1969) explained her "differences in spouses' perceptions" hypothesis by suggesting "the possibility of two 'realities,' the husband's subjective reality and the wife's subjective

reality--two perspectives which do not always coincide. Each spouse perceives 'facts' and situations according to his own needs, values, attitudes, and beliefs" (p. 291).

Quarm (1981) cites an excellent example of the differing perceptions problem from a 1974 interview survey. The wife was interviewed first and was asked the following question:

Who usually makes the final decision about what car to get?

- (a) Husband always.
- (b) Husband more than wife.
- (c) Husband and wife exactly the same.
- (d) Wife more than husband.
- (e) Wife always. (p.532)

She responded "husband always" very emphatically and then began to describe the last family-car purchase. She explained that her husband had bought a new car without even consulting her. It was apparent to the interviewer that this had upset her.

Later, when the husband was asked the same question, he answered, "husband and wife exactly the same." Before the interviewer could proceed with the next question, the husband explained that the last time a car was purchased he bought it on his own and this upset his wife terribly. He concluded by saying that he would never again buy a car unless it was on the basis of a joint decision made by him and his wife. Even though both spouses told essentially the same story about their most recent car purchase, they

responded differently to the questions because the wife answered in terms of the past, while the husband answered in terms of the future (Quarm, 1981).

Safilios-Rothschild (1970) stated that differing perceptions may cause spouses to answer the same question at different levels. For example, one spouse may make the decision concerning how much money should be spent weekly on food, but the other spouse may, first, decide how all available money must be used. There is obviously potential for two correct but different answers, depending on the level at which the question is viewed.

The preceding examples illustrate how vagueness and ambiguity in questions can explain at least a part of the disagreement which usually exists between husband and wife responses within dyads. Another potential source of item ambiguity is in the response categories. For example, one wife was asked the following question:

Who does the evening dishes?

- (a) Husband always.
- (b) Husband more than wife.
- (c) Husband and wife exactly the same.
- (d) Wife more than husband.
- (e) Wife always.

She responded with a slight irritation in her voice, "'Wife always.' My husband hasn't done the dishes since last year when I was sick" (p. 531). When her husband was interviewed and asked the same question, he replied, "Well, I did do the

dishes last year when my wife was sick, so I guess I'd have to say 'Wife more than husband'" (p. 532).

It is apparent from the answers given that both the husband and wife perceived the same reality in this case. However, the wife chose the "wife always" response since she did the dishes over 99.5% of the time, but the husband chose the "wife more than husband" response since his wife did not do the dishes 100% of the time (Quarm, 1981). Several researchers agree that a major source of disagreement in answers to decision-making questions is differing spousal perceptions caused by vagueness and ambiguity in survey questions and/or response sets. If more attention were given to item specificity, part of the disagreement (involving differing spousal perceptions) could be eliminated (Douglas & Wind, 1978; McDonald, 1980; Quarm, 1981; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970).

Other Criticisms of Previous Research

Many studies such as the influential work of Blood and Wolfe (1960) have been criticized for referring to their studies as assessments of family power. This claim has two major problems, both of which can be found in the term family power. First, studies such as these systematically exclude the possible power of children and other members of the kinship network. The actual unit of analysis is limited to the husband-wife dyad. Thus, the term family power seems errant (Heer, 1963; McDonald, 1980).

Second, most studies of this type have a similar array of decision-making questions (and many include a series of task allocation items) from which power is determined. Unaccounted for here is the idea that power in a marital relationship may have a wider range than decision-making roles (and, occasionally, task allocation). In fact, it could be that the spouse who makes most of the decisions makes those decisions because the more powerful spouse has delegated that authority, or perhaps the more powerful spouse does not wish to be bothered with those decisions and has allowed the weaker spouse to make them, but maintains the right to reclaim the authority at any time. Having a role as decision-maker implies probable power, but this is not an absolute certainty. Thus, the term family power again seems errant. These studies may be more accurately described as measures of marital decision-making roles or perhaps measures of power in marital decision-making (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989; McDonald, 1980; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970).

Present Study

The present study will utilize methods very similar to those previously discussed (and heavily criticized), but for a very different purpose. The primary purpose of this study is not to assess marital power. Instead, it is to examine the effect of disagreement between spouses in decision-making roles on argument frequency. Therefore, the level of

disparity between husbands' and wives' responses to questions of marital decision-making will not be a drawback, but the focus of this study.

This study will be differentiated from previous research of its kind in both survey questions and answer options. In an effort to reduce measurement error, survey items will be more situation specific than in previous studies. Even though disparity of answers is being sought, it is "true disagreement" that is desired, not differences resulting from differing spousal perceptions caused by item ambiguity.

Hypothesis. Confusion in marital decision-making roles within dyads will correlate positively with the frequency and severity of the couples' marital arguments.

This correlation is expected because these differing perceived realities between spouses of decision-making roles can create a number of opportunities for stress. This stress, because it is caused by an unknown (invisible) source, can be pent-up inside waiting for a suitable (visible) outlet. For instance, there would certainly be an opportunity for friction if the decision of whether or not to purchase a new car was perceived by the husband to be primarily his decision while the wife perceived it to be primarily hers. Conversely, invisible stress could be created if the husband perceived it to be his wife's decision and the wife perceived it to be her husband's

decision (one or both may become frustrated waiting for the other to decide).

It is important to note that the magnitude of the decision the couple is faced with is not expected to be a factor. It is felt that very minor decisions in which opposing decision-making role assumptions are present can produce the same level of invisible stress. For example, a wife who cooks for her husband may feel that he should have the main voice in deciding what they have for dinner. The husband, although he may have a preference, out of respect for the fact that the wife does the cooking, feels that this should be her decision and she should prepare whatever she is in the mood to cook. If she cooks something he does not want, he may feel that he has done something noble and worthy of credit by not stating a preference and consequently having an undesired dish for dinner. However, if she detects his dissatisfaction, she may become agitated at him for not stating a preference or feel failure. Either way this creates stress.

In the previous example, each spouse tried to do something nice for the other by forfeiting the weight of the decision, but it backfired. If the invisible stress of differing opinions in who carries the weight of the decision is not discovered and communicated, it will in all likelihood create frustrations which will have the tendency to eventuate into arguments, again and again.

In addition to the stated hypothesis, the relationships among confusion level, self-esteem, and marital arguments of husbands and wives were examined.

Chapter 2

Method

Subjects

Volunteer subjects were married couples from the Middle Tennessee area. The volunteers (or at least one spouse from each couple) were from two churches, psychology classes at Middle Tennessee State University, and a graduate level statistics class at Tennessee State University. Fifty-six couples volunteered to participate in the research and were given take-home surveys (two per couple). These were in self-addressed, stamped envelopes and were to be mailed back to the examiner upon completion. Surveys from 34 of the couples were received. Three had been filled out incompletely or incorrectly to the extent that they could not be interpreted and were discarded. Data from 31 couples were used in the analysis. Of the 62 individual respondents, 8 were under 30, 12 were from 30 to 39, 14 were from 40 to 49, 20 were from 50 to 59, and 8 were 60 or older.

Materials

Data were collected from a take-home survey completed by both husbands and wives. The survey consisted of an instructions/informed consent page (see Appendix A) and a 66-item questionnaire (see Appendix B). Before any couples were surveyed, written approval of the study was granted by

the Middle Tennessee State University Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix C).

Items 1-10 on the questionnaire assessed marital decision-making. Items 11-15 assessed the frequency and severity of arguments. Items 16-39 were included for potentially categorizing subjects among different variables. The first 38 items, though based on previous research, were original to this author. The final 27 items were an administration of the Self-Esteem Scale. This scale is a true/false instrument based on the assumption that low self-esteem is indicated when someone feels inferior, inadequate, unworthy, disliked, helpless, etc. (Good & Good, 1975).

The decision-making questions used in this study were worded in such a manner as to eliminate as much ambiguity as possible. It is believed that this provided control against differing spousal perceptions caused by item ambiguity. In answering, the respondent was asked to think in terms of a future decision (i.e., "the next time you and your spouse go to a movie"). The questions were constructed in this way in order to prevent respondents from mentally isolating one specific past occurrence involving the decision in question and answering based on the recollection of how the decision was made that particular time. Because an answer derived from a specific incident may not represent the respondent's actual understanding of the ongoing decision-making roles involved, this could lend itself to disparity of answers

resulting from differing spousal perceptions caused by item ambiguity. This would have been probable especially if the other spouse recalled a different past experience.

Though respondents were asked to answer in terms of a future decision, it was to be based on the previously established decision-making roles (i.e., "based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past"). This was to prevent respondents from having their answers influenced by a strong opinion they may have about a specific upcoming decision. For example, if a respondent has a strong desire to see a particular movie, this could influence the response to the question of who will choose the next movie the couple sees. Thus, while the items were created to be unambiguous through situation specificity, they were also created in a way to prevent respondents from answering based on any one remembered or foreseen incident.

The answer options were presented in a long box containing 15 cells (see Appendix D). Respondents were instructed to put an "X" in the cell which best describes the couple's mode of decision-making for the particular question. The cell on the extreme left specifies "wife," the cell on the extreme right specifies "husband," while the center cell indicates "both." This is designed to be a graduating scale. Therefore, any answer marked to the left of the "both" cell indicates that the wife has more influence than the husband in that particular decision. The

further to the left, the more influence the wife has. The same pattern holds true for the husband's influence when an answer is selected to the right of the "both" cell.

These answer options were arrived at in preference over using the customary 5-point scale. Having a 15-point scale helps to insure an immediately appropriate answer option for any perceived reality by the respondents. This makes respondents' answers less likely to fall in between answer options. On a 5-point scale, answer options would probably be similar to the following: (a) husband only, (b) husband more than wife, (c) both husband and wife equally, (d) wife more than husband, or (e) wife only. If one spouse felt that the husband had 65% of the influence in a decision, while the other spouse credited the husband with 85% of the influence, both respondents would select "(b) husband more than wife" as their answer. Though both spouses would have chosen the same answer (and would have been correct in doing so), their realities would differ by 20%. On the 15-point scale, a difference such as this is measurable because of the availability of more options for the respondents (they each could have selected more appropriate answer options). Therefore, it is a more sensitive measure.

Procedure

Volunteers were given the take-home survey (two per couple) and asked to answer the questions individually (see Appendix A for detailed instructions).

Although subjects were asked to sign the Informed Consent page on the questionnaire, anonymity was protected. When the completed questionnaires were collected, the answer sheets were removed and shuffled into a stack of identical answer sheets. Couples' answer sheets were paired for comparative analysis by matching 4-digit numerals selected by each couple and recorded on both answer sheets. "Husband" or "wife" was determined by having the appropriate response (male or female) marked on the answer sheet.

The amount of disparity between spousal responses (confusion level) was derived from the decision-making questions (Items 1-10, see Appendix B). For each item, each spouse indicated the amount of influence that each spouse has in making a specific family decision (see Appendix D). For each question, the number of cells separating husband and wife answers was tallied. The sum of the differences for the decision-making questions was the confusion level for each couple.

The number and severity of arguments was assessed in Items 11-15. Each item asked for the number of arguments that the couple has in one month (0 to 13 or more). Each item addressed a different level of severity ("severe," "fairly severe," "average," "fairly mild," and "mild"). When spouses gave different answers on a particular item, the answers were averaged to arrive at the number of arguments (argument level).

Chapter 3

Results

Means and standard deviations of confusion level, argument level, and self-esteem are presented in Table 1. Correlation matrices of confusion level, argument level, and self-esteem for husbands and wives are presented in Table 2. Table 3 contains a reliability analysis for the Self-Esteem Scale as computed for husbands. Table 4 contains a reliability analysis for the Self-Esteem Scale as computed for wives. Although the analyses reveal that the deletion of certain items would improve the total alpha levels (husbands = .6207, wives = .7966), the differences reported would be marginally quite small. Even if all such items were deleted, the differences would be negligibly slight.

A regression analysis was conducted on confusion level (CL) and argument level (AL). For this and all subsequent equations, standard error will be abbreviated S. A statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .601$, $S = 4.602$) was found, $F(1, 29) = 16.37$, $p = .004$. The regression equation is $AL = .332325(CL) + .688077$. This supports the hypothesis. This indicates that as confusion level increases so does the number of arguments.

Regression analyses were conducted on confusion level of couples (CL) and self-esteem (SE) of husbands and wives separately. No statistically significant relationships were

Table 1

Means (\bar{X}) and Standard Deviations (SD) of Confusion Level,
Number of Arguments, and Self-Esteem

		\bar{X}	SD
Confusion level		21.23	10.23
Number of arguments	Husbands	6.84	5.67
	Wives	8.87	7.74
	Combined	7.74	5.66
Self-Esteem	Husbands	18.90	3.47
	Wives	15.13	5.03

Table 2

Correlation Matrices of Confusion Level (CL), Argument Level (AL), and Self-Esteem (SE) for Husbands and Wives

	Husbands		Wives		
	CL	AL	CL	AL	
AL	.601**		AL	.601**	
SE	-.259	-.168	SE	-.110	-.369*

Note. *p = .02. **p = .0004. Self-Esteem is the only variable computed separately for husbands and wives.

Table 3

Reliability Analysis for Self-Esteem Scale: Husbands

Survey Item No.	Item Scale Mean	Item Scale Variance	Corrected Item Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
40	.7097	.4614	.3932	.5874
41	.7419	.4448	.3486	.5935
42	.5161	.5080	.4456	.5781
43	.5806	.5016	.3505	.5911
44	.7419	.4448	.1396	.6171
45	.9355	.2497	.3538	.6031
46	.8710	.3408	.3561	.5976
47	.8065	.4016	.1867	.6119
48	.5806	.5016	.1626	.6152
49	.7419	.4448	.0502	.6268
50	.7742	.4250	.4050	.5850
51	.5484	.5059	-.0006	.6353
52	.7742	.4250	.3798	.5908
53	.5484	.5059	.1166	.6210
54	.9677	.1796	.1043	.6188
55	.2258	.4250	.0518	.6259
56	.7742	.4250	.1368	.6171
57	.8065	.4016	.0383	.6265
58	.6774	.4752	.3037	.5979
59	.8387	.3739	.4715	.5846
60	.8065	.4016	.0140	.6288
61	.1935	.4016	-.2404	.6526
62	.5161	.5080	.1360	.6069
63	.7097	.4614	.0347	.6312
64	.8710	.3408	.2107	.6091
65	.6452	.4864	.0607	.6228
66	.6459	.3984	.2447	.6050

Table 4

Reliability Analysis for Self-Esteem Scale: Wives

Survey Item No.	Item Scale Mean	Item Scale Variance	Corrected Item Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
40	.6774	.4752	.3556	.7885
41	.5161	.5080	.5436	.7786
42	.1613	.3739	.2016	.7950
43	.4615	.5059	.3061	.7910
44	.6452	.4864	.4036	.7861
45	.6129	.4951	.3692	.7892
46	.7097	.4614	.3656	.7880
47	.4839	.5080	.5751	.7781
48	.6774	.4752	.2882	.7919
49	.6452	.4864	.3857	.7871
50	.3226	.4752	.3009	.7912
51	.5484	.5059	.3170	.7904
52	.5161	.5080	.5597	.7778
53	.7742	.4250	.0025	.8060
54	.1290	.3408	.3799	.7878
55	.7097	.4614	.0588	.7996
56	.6129	.4951	.3239	.7901
57	.3226	.4752	.3224	.7901
58	.5806	.5016	.4529	.7838
59	.6452	.4864	.3601	.7882
60	.4839	.5080	.3154	.7905
61	.8387	.3739	.2743	.7926
62	.4516	.5059	.4309	.7864
63	.4839	.5080	.2089	.7959
64	.6452	.4864	.4295	.7846
65	.4839	.5080	.2719	.7926
66	.5325	.4961	-.0220	.8072

found. For husbands, the correlation was $r = -.259$, $S = 10.028$, $F(1, 29) = 2.217$, $p = .080$. For wives, the correlation was $r = -.1095$, $S = 10.342$, $F(1, 29) = .352$, $p = .279$. This indicates that knowing the self-esteem of either spouse will not give a clear indication of confusion level.

Regression analyses were also conducted on argument level of couples (AL) and self-esteem (SE) of husbands and wives separately. No statistically significant relationship was found for husbands. The correlation was $r = -.168$, $S = 56.645$, $F(1, 29) = .948$, $p = .183$. A statistically significant relationship was found for wives. The correlation was $r = -.369$, $S = 53.497$, $F(1, 29) = 4.58$, $p = .020$. The regression equation is $AL = -4.158079(SE) + 140.327059$. This indicates that as self-esteem of wives decreases, argument level increases.

A stepwise regression analysis was done including all variables to determine which variables were the best predictors of argument level. The predictor variables in the equation were confusion level, self-esteem, and gender. For this analysis, arguments were entered separately for husbands and wives based on their individually reported number of arguments (in the previous analyses, argument reports from both spouses were averaged to determine the argument level for each couple). This change was made in order to achieve gender effects. The stepwise regression analysis found that confusion level (CL) and self-esteem

(SE) were statistically significant predictors of argument level (AL); gender was not. The correlation was $r = .559$, $S = 5.737$, $F(2, 59) = 13.426$, $p = .0001$. The regression equation is $AL = .298342(CL) + (-.395161, SE) + 8.335631$. This indicates that if confusion level and self-esteem are known, they can be used to predict argument level.

Regression analysis was also used to investigate the main effects of the predictor variables and their interactions. The main effect of confusion level was statistically significant: $r = .487$, $S = 5.995$, $F(1, 60) = 18.624$, $p = .0001$. The main effect of self-esteem was also statistically significant: $r = .346$, $S = 6.44$, $F(1, 60) = 8.142$, $p = .006$. The main effect of gender was not statistically significant: $r = .183$, $S = 6.746$, $F(1, 60) = 2.086$, $p = .154$. This again confirms that confusion level and self-esteem are useful in predicting argument level. Gender, however, is not.

None of the interaction effects were statistically significant. This indicates that the effect of any one of the variables does not depend on the effect of any of the others in its relationship to argument level.

An interesting relationship to argument level was found to exist for Question 38 on the survey (see Appendix B). The question assessed marital happiness, and answer options were coded 1 (very unhappy) through 5 (very happy). Statistically significant negative correlations were found

between argument level and reported marital happiness for both husbands and wives. For husbands, the correlation was $r = -.3571$, $p = .024$. For wives, the correlation was $r = -.5072$, $p = .002$. This indicates that the more arguments couples have the less happy both spouses are with the marriage. Though this is certainly not a surprising finding, it verifies the negative effect higher numbers of arguments have on marital relationships. Therefore, these findings support the choice of argument level as a variable depicting negativeness in marriage for use in the study of confusion in decision-making roles.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The hypothesis in this study was supported by the data. A clear relationship was found to exist between the degree of difference in spousal responses to questions of marital decision-making and the number of reported arguments within marital dyads, i.e., the greater the confusion in decision-making roles, the more marital arguments there were and vice versa. Basically, the findings suggest that couples who have no clear communicated understanding of who is in charge of making what decisions argue more than couples who have a clear understanding of their decision-making roles.

Other analyses revealed a significant relationship between self-esteem of wives and number of reported marital arguments. The data indicated that the lower the self-esteem level of wives, the more marital arguments there were and vice versa. This is not surprising given the rationale of the Self-Esteem Scale which was employed in this study. It is based on the assumption that low self-esteem is indicated when someone feels "inferior, inadequate, unworthy, disliked, helpless, etc." (Good & Good, 1975). Feelings such as these seem to naturally lend themselves to argumentative circumstances.

The findings of this study are significant because of the ease with which confusion level can be manipulated.

When a couple seeks counseling because of marital arguing, there is no immediate formula for reducing arguments. However, since this relationship between confusion in decision-making roles and argument level has been found to exist, one step worth exploring may be to assess their confusion level and help the couple to negotiate definite decision-making roles. Perhaps lowering confusion level (which could be accomplished with relative ease) would eventuate into a decrease in marital arguments.

Supporting the use of reported marital arguments as a variable compared with confusion level in this study was the relationship found between argument level and marital happiness. Both husbands' and wives' reports of their marital happiness correlated negatively with argument level for the couples. This validates the accuracy in the use of argument level as a variable depicting negativeness in marriage. To generalize, this also indicates the negativeness of a high level of confusion in marital decision-making roles.

A weakness of this study is that no provisions were made for a follow-up study with the same subjects. A good direction for future research would be a longitudinal, controlled experiment in which confusion level and argument level are assessed, confusion level is reduced by assisting the couple in negotiating definite decision-making roles, and argument level is later (six months or so) assessed

again. A control group could be employed which does not receive the treatment (decision role negotiations). Obviously, the experimenter is looking for a significant reduction in marital arguments for couples in the experimental group.

A clear result of this study is that the wealth of studies using surveys of marital decision-making to assess power in marriage are potentially very flawed. This supports the criticisms expressed by many researchers (Douglas & Wind, 1978; Granbois & Willett, 1970; Hill & Scanzoni, 1982; Kandel & Lesser, 1972; Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989; McDonald, 1980; Monroe et al., 1985; Quarm, 1981; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Turk & Bell, 1972). The incongruence between spousal responses in this study indicates that a clear picture of marital power not only is likely unavailable for the researcher, but is likely unknown by the respondents.

Another clear result of this study is that more research is needed. It is hoped that the findings of this study will inspire further research into this often noted, often measured (inadvertently), but largely uninvestigated phenomenon.

Appendices

Appendix A

Instructions and Informed Consent

1. Both spouses, please answer all 66 questions honestly.
2. Please do not look at any questions prior to taking the survey.
3. If at any time you become uncomfortable with the survey or its questions and do not wish to continue, please destroy all survey materials.
4. Please do not write on the survey. Write only on this page and on the answer sheet.
5. Please decide (with your spouse) on a random, four-digit, numeral and write this on your answer sheets in the "Special Codes" section under letters KLMN (same four-digit number on both answer sheets) before taking the survey.
6. Also, darken either M or F under the heading "Sex" on your answer sheet.
7. Do not fill in the name, birthdate, identification number, or grade sections on your answer sheet.
8. Please complete the survey separately. Do not discuss questions, conspire on answers, or compare answers. Please do not complete the survey in each other's presence.
9. Please fill in Items 1-66 on the answer sheet, following the marking instructions given on the back of the answer sheet.

10. Please do not write your name anywhere on the answer sheet. It is preferred that the survey remain completely anonymous.
11. When you turn in your survey materials, they will be shuffled into three separate stacks: signed Instructions and Informed Consent Sheets, Answer Sheets, and Surveys.

I understand that I am a voluntary participant in this survey and that I can discontinue at any time. I also understand that this survey is completely anonymous.

Signature

Appendix B

Survey of Decision-Making Roles, Argument Level, and Self-Esteem Among Married Couples

Please answer all questions as you think would be most accurate even if they do not apply to you at this time.

Questions 1-10 assess marital decision-making in hypothetical situations. Record your answers to Questions 1-10 on Typed Answer Sheet 1. You have 15 answer options for each question. Place an "X" in the box that would best describe the relative degree of influence between you and your spouse for each decision. The further to the left, the more emphasis the wife has in the decision. The further to the right, the more emphasis the husband has in the decision.

1. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the next time you and your spouse buy a car, the decision of which car to buy will probably be made by . . .
2. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the next time you and your spouse go to a movie, the decision of what movie to see will probably be made by . . .
3. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the decision to have a/another child would probably be made by . . .

4. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the next time you and your spouse eat dinner (at home, on a normal evening), the decision of what you will eat will probably be made by . . .
5. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the site of your next vacation (other than a vacation which is already planned) will probably be decided by . . .
6. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the decision of which house or apartment that you and your spouse will move into next will probably be made by . . .
7. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the next time you and your spouse are deciding what to watch on TV, the decision will probably be made by . . .
8. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the next time your furniture gets rearranged, the arrangement will probably be decided on by . . .
9. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the next time the wife has a job or career-related decision (go to work, take a promotion, change jobs, etc.), which does not involve a major relocation forcing the family to move, the decision will probably be made by . . .

10. Based on how you and your spouse have made decisions in the past, the next time the husband has a job or career-related decision (go to work, quit work, take a promotion, change jobs, etc.), which does not involve a major relocation forcing the family to move, the decision will probably be made by . . .

Questions 11-15 assess the amount and severity of marital arguments. Record your answers to Questions 11-15 on Typed Answer Sheet 2. Place an "X" in the box under your chosen answer.

11. How many "severe" arguments (for example, blows are exchanged and/or one or both spouses leaves for a day or two) do you and your spouse have on average, in one month?
12. How many "fairly severe" arguments (for example, long periods of loud yelling and/or long periods of one or both spouses not speaking or ignoring each other) do you and your spouse have, on average, in one month?
13. How many "average" arguments (for example, voices are raised and/or one or both spouses don't speak or ignore each other for awhile) do you and your spouse have, on average, in one month?
14. How many "fairly mild" arguments (for example, snide remarks with a few raised voices and/or one or both spouses don't speak or ignore each other for a short

while) do you and your spouse have, on average, in one month?

15. How many "mild" arguments (for example, a few snide remarks are exchanged and/or one or both spouses don't speak or ignore each other for a few minutes) do you and your spouse have, on average, in one month?
For Questions 16-66, use the General Purpose Answer Sheet. Begin on your answer sheet at 16.
16. What is your age? (a) under 30, (b) 30-39, (c) 40-49, (d) 50-59, (e) 60 or older.
17. How long have you been married to your spouse?
(a) 5 years or less, (b) 6-12 years, (c) 13-18 years, (d) 19-25 years, (e) more than 25 years.
18. In your opinion, how often does your spouse make errors in judgment? (a) constantly or almost constantly, (b) frequently, (c) occasionally, (d) seldom, (e) never or almost never.
19. What is your present education level? (a) less than high school, (b) high school, (c) some college, (d) college graduate, (e) post-graduate degree.
20. Who do you think is "most in love" in your marriage?
(a) myself, quite a bit; (b) myself, a little;
(c) my spouse and I are equally in love; (d) my spouse, a little; (e) my spouse, quite a bit.

21. Do you consider your spouse to be "bullheaded"?
(a) yes, (b) much of the time, (c) some of the time,
(d) rarely, (e) no.
22. Do you trust your spouse? (a) completely, (b) almost
all of the time, (c) much of the time, (d) sometimes,
(e) rarely or no.
23. What percent of the family income do you make?
(a) about 100%, (b) about 75%, (c) about 50%,
(d) about 25%, (e) about 0%
24. How would you describe your work situation?
(a) a full-time job, (b) a part-time job, (c) a career,
(d) unemployed.
25. How would you rate your job satisfaction? (a) I love
my job, (b) I like my job or it's okay most of the
time, (c) it's okay some of the time or I dislike my
job, (d) I hate my job, (e) unemployed.
26. How many children do you have? (a) 0, (b) 1, (c) 2,
(d) 3, (e) 4 or more.
27. How many children do you have under six years old?
(a) 0, (b) 1, (c) 2, (d) 3, (e) 4 or more.
28. How many children do you have from 6-12 years old?
(a) 0, (b) 1, (c) 2, (d) 3, (e) 4 or more.
29. How many children do you have from 13-19 years old?
(a) 0, (b) 1, (c) 2, (d) 3, (e) 4 or more.
30. How many children do you have who are 20 or older?
(a) 0, (b) 1, (c) 2, (d) 3, (e) 4 or more.

31. How many children do you have living with you now?
(a) 0, (b) 1, (c) 2, (d) 3, (e) 4 or more.
32. How long was your premarital courtship with your spouse? (a) less than six months, (b) six months to one year, (c) one to two years, (d) two to three years, (e) more than three years.
33. How long did you and your spouse know each other prior to beginning your courtship? (a) no time at all or virtually no time at all, (b) about one month, (c) one month to one year, (d) one to three years, (e) more than three years.
34. Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?
(a) very much so, (b) above average, (c) about average, (d) not really, (e) no.
35. How often do you pray (not including before meal times)? (a) more than once daily, (b) daily, (c) more than once weekly, (d) once weekly or less, (e) rarely or never.
36. How often do you and your spouse pray together (not including before meal times)? (a) once daily or more, (b) more than once weekly, (c) weekly, (d) less than once weekly, (e) rarely or never.
37. Is this your first marriage? (a) yes, (b) no.
38. How would you describe your marriage? (a) very happy, (b) happy, (c) not really happy or unhappy, (d) unhappy, (e) very unhappy.

39. In your opinion, how should marital decision-making be handled? (a) husband should be primary decision-maker, (b) husband should have more influence in decision-making than wife, (c) husband and wife should be equal in decision-making, (d) wife should have more influence in decision-making than husband, (e) wife should be primary decision-maker.

Items 40-66 were an administration of the Self-Esteem Scale (Good & Good, 1975).

Appendix C

Middle Tennessee State University Research
Ethics Committee Approval Letter

on-campus memo:



To: Nathan Jernigan
From: Michael Principe, Chair *MP*
MTSU Research Ethics Committee
Subject: I.R.B. Review
Date: September 30, 1990

I have reviewed the materials for the proposed investigation "Confusion in Decision-Making Roles, Argument Level, and Self-Esteem within Marital Dyads." I approve this study through the expedited review procedures authorized in 46.110 of 45 CRF Part 46.

I have kept a copy of your proposal and permission memorandum for our files. If this is a problem contact me.

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