Commitment to Marital Relationships
The Case of American Newlyweds

Ying-Ling Hsiao

Department of Social Work, Shih-Chien University
e-mail: ylhsiao@mail.usc.edu.tw

Abstract

Why do people feel committed and choose to remain in marriage? Using social exchange perspectives, we developed and tested a model that explains the processes and consequences of marital commitment. We used data from a sample of 278 newly married couples, drawn from the first wave of a three-year panel study during 1991-1993 conducted in the state of Washington. A structural equation model was used to evaluate a model that explains the impact of power/dependence on marital commitment and the effect of marital commitment on marital interaction. The findings reported here indicate that a high mutual dependence (average power) and an inequitable distribution of resources (lack of power advantage) promote people's feelings of cohesion and attachment, which, in turn, induce positive communication styles in solving disagreements. These findings suggest that the fewer valued resources a couple has access to and the more feelings of commitment they feel, the less likely that the couple would engage in a high level of marital conflict.

This study also identified sources for dependence by examining the various types of resources in marital couples'

evaluation systems. The findings showed that newly-married couples placed more value on affection (e.g., liking), and interpersonal status characteristics and skills (e.g., understanding) than on socioeconomic resources. Since marriage in America has been viewed as a path for personal fulfillment and satisfaction, and as educational and occupational opportunities have increased for young women, newlyweds seem to value satisfaction derived from intimacy rather than socioeconomic resources.

Key Words: dependence, marital commitment, American newlyweds

At an earlier time in American society, marriage was perceived as a life-long commitment. However, there is growing evidence to suggest that marital commitment has shifted from a commitment to marriage as an institution to a commitment to a specific spouse. As far back as 1945, Burgess and Locke observed a transition from institutional marriage, with emphases on duty and conformity to social norms, to companionship marriage with emphases on mutual affection and consensus. In her book *The Future of Marriage*, Bernard (1982) demonstrated how commitment has changed from the focus on the institution of marriage to one that provides each spouse with love, care and comfort. Nevertheless, there continues to be some difference among Americans on the source of their commitment. People who hold a traditional view of marriage as an obligation and duty that goes beyond personal feelings are likely to keep working in a relationship even if it seems unrewarding. In contrast, people who view marriage as personally beneficial might deemphasize the elements of obligation and permanent commitment in marriage while looking to meet their own interests and wants (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996). For this latter group, if marriage no longer meets their needs, then it must end. The general impression is that this group represents the prevailing culture in the United States and Western Europe. Thus it appears that modern marriage is perceived as being primarily based on personal fulfillment, individual satisfaction and gratification in the West. Therefore, staying in or leaving a marriage is a matter of personal choice, rather than a socially-sanctioned promise or vow that must be kept until death.

This shift in the American family experience has resulted in an increased interest among family scholars in seeking to understand the causes of divorce and marital instability. Why do people choose to maintain or dissolve their marriage? The answers to this question are bound to be complex. Some researchers have

sought to uncover these patterns by examining changes in the social institutions which structure individual experiences, while others have investigated demographic factors and family processes that are associated with the decision to divorce (White, 1990). Previous studies have tended to produce empirical generalizations rather than theoretical perspectives that explain why people stay or leave a relationship in terms of general behavioral principles.

One perspective that holds the possibility of using such principles to account for developing and changing trends in marital relations is social exchange theory. The current research attempts to develop and test an exchange-based model of commitment by using the notion of power/dependence and examining its utility in predicting commitment and the behavioral consequences of commitment. We propose that an individual may be committed to the relationship because of a high dependence on that relationship and his or her feelings of commitment may decrease the level of marital conflict.

I. Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Evidence

A. Commitment

Social exchange theorists define interpersonal commitment in both behavioral and affective terms. Cook and Emerson (1978) emphasize the behavioral aspect of commitment that leads people to exchange repeatedly with the same partners within a field of alternatives. To the extent that persons form commitment over time, alternative relationships are considered insignificant and unattractive. Commitment is also defined as a subjective state, including feelings of attachment to a relation or group (Lawler & Yoon, 1993). This is thought to foster a wide range of behaviors that lead to relationship maintenance such as staying in a relationship even if favorable alternative partners exist. Tallman and his colleagues (Tallman, Gray, & Leik, 1991) emphasize both behavioral and affective aspects in their analysis of commitment. They define commitment as a binary choice

(stay or leave a relationship) but suggest that strong commitments, a result of high mutual dependence, can produce self-sacrifice and altruistic behaviors among members.

Despite the diversity in definitions, most theorists recognize that interpersonal commitment is a single construct with three dimensions. The first dimension consists of an attraction component that reflects an individual's dedication and attachment to the partner. Regardless of the different terms used (e.g., *attraction force,* Levinger, 1979a; *personal commitment,* Johnson, 1991; *commitment to the spouse,* Adams & Jones, 1997), they all refer to the positive force that draws people into the relationship. The second dimension is a constraining aspect, reflecting the costs that would be incurred upon leaving a relationship. Levinger's *barriers*, Johnson's *structural commitment*, and Adam and Jones's *feelings of entrapment* are all similar in their reference to various types of restraints that block people from leaving a relationship. The final dimension is a moral obligation to uphold the value and goals of the relationship. Due to fears of the discomfort caused by inconsistency and the possible violation in the sanction of norms and religion, individuals may feel obligated to continue a relationship. Both Johnson (*moral commitment*) and Adams & Jones (*commitment to marriage*) specify the moral dimension as a particular type of commitment, while Levinger (1979a) conceives it as a part of barriers.

All of these theorists emphasize the significance of a person's subjective experience in commitment. The subjective experience of attachment to the partner or relationship generates a positive force to maintain the relationship while the experience of feeling constrained by internal and/or external factors serves as a force that prevents actors from leaving it. Feeling obligated to a partner or a relationship is a moral force that ties people to the relationship. Committed people feel attached or connected to their relationships, and therefore stick with their partners for better or for worse.

Based on the conceptualizations discussed above, marital commitment has been measured in several different ways. First, as defined in behavioral terms, marital commitment has been equated

with relationship status, length and stability (e.g., Levinger, 1979a). Second, as defined through subjective experiences, marital commitment has been referred to as an individual's desire or intention to maintain his or her marriage. This desire or intention is frequently measured as the degree of attraction, attachment and dedication to the relationship (e.g., Miller, 1997; Swensen & Trahaug, 1985). Also, marital commitment has been analyzed as a perception of the costs of ending a marriage (Nock, 1995). These costs are associated with how different aspects of life (standard of living, career opportunities, sex life) might be worse if a person dissolves the marriage.

Given the different definitions and measures that exist in research literature, it is clear that marital commitment is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. In our view, marital commitment refers to an individual's intention or willingness to remain in, and to give their effort and loyalty to his or her marriage over a period of prolonged time (Blau, 1964). The intention or willingness to maintain a marriage is thought to spring from two essential components: (1) a reward component consisting of feelings of attraction and attachment; and (2) a cost component that refers to the threshold of negative or harmful behaviors that the individual would endure before considering leaving a relationship. Since people tend to maintain a marriage that is favorable, rewarding and pleasurable, committed people are those who are emotionally tied to their spouse and relationship, and are confident that they can depend on their spouse to reciprocate affection, and to fulfill their desires and goals. In family and marriage literature, a frequently-used variable in evaluating attachment and affection is intimacy. Intimacy refers to those feelings that foster "closeness, bondedness and connectedness" to the spouse (Sternberg, 1987: 339). Marital happiness is the subjective assessment of the marriage taking into consideration the degree to which an individual's needs, desires, and expectations are met (Bahr, 1989). The importance of a partner's confidence in the spouse's good intentions suggests that an important, if often neglected, aspect of commitment is the level

of trust the individual has in his or her partner. Trust implies the promise of increasing rewards in the future, and the expectation of the benefits of deeper involvement that ultimately increases the level of giving, investing and sacrificing made for the relationship (Holmes, 1991; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). In this sense, it can be viewed as a necessary reward component of commitment.

A second component of marital commitment is the painful or costly circumstances that impose limits beyond which the person will not endure in the marriage. Every marriage is filled with not only marital rewards and attractions but also tension and problems. Over time, some disturbing life events encountered may serve to test one's tolerance of the spouse's misbehavior and willingness to maintain the marriage. People with a high threshold of commitment view few or no situations as sufficient reason to tear their marriages apart while others may be willing to break up their marriage over what seems to others to be minor discomfort.

B. Dependence and Commitment

Based on social exchange perspectives, dependence is the most important factor influencing a person's commitment to a relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Rusbult, 1980a). As people continue to receive valued outcomes, the relationship is perceived as rewarding and dependable. The more a person relies on a given relationship, the more dependent he or she will be on the partner who is the source of the benefits and the higher the level of commitment to the relationship.

An individual's dependence on the other increases with the value of resources the other controls and decreases with the availability of alternative sources for the valued outcome (Emerson, 1972a, 1972b). In other words, dependency is thought to be a function of the valued resources an individual contributes, the distribution of the resource in the relationship, and the opportunities available for the person to engage in an alternative relationship that provides access to the valued resources. Thus, the degree of dependence experienced is determined by the degree

outcomes derived from the current relationship surpass perceived outcomes available from existing alternatives.

The question arises as to how to measure the value of resources that marital partners contribute. Resources exchanged in a marriage include not only tangible goods, services and money, but also status that produces socially desired outcomes and actions such as approval, admiration and companionship that provide psychological gratification (Blau, 1964; Foa & Foa, 1980). The value of these resources is determined by the magnitude of resources that people potentially can obtain and the need or desire people have for the resources. A fundamental assumption of this study is that the degree of dependence for a given resource is an indication of the value of the resources to the person and it varies with the distribution of that resource between partners in the relationship. Also, each person has a preference ordering across different types of resources. This can affect his or her dependencies and thus influence the power structure in the relationship (Molm, 1997). The higher a certain resource is in a person's preferential hierarchy (e.g., value system), the more dependent that person will be on his/her partner.

The power-dependence relation between two persons has been characterized along two dimensions their mutual (absolute) dependence, termed average power, and their relative dependence, termed power imbalance (Emerson, 1972b). Average power in an exchange relation is the average of the two persons' power/dependencies on each other. It is an estimation of the strength or solidarity of the relationship. The more valued resources both partners can bring to the relationship, the more dependent they are on each other and the stronger the strength or cohesion of that relationship. The power imbalance of a relationship is the difference between two persons' power/dependencies. If two persons are equally dependent on each other, the relation is considered to be power balanced. When persons occupy different positions in power-imbalanced relations, the less dependent person is considered to have a power advantage

whereas the more dependent person is viewed as power disadvantaged. Average power and power imbalance can vary independently in describing power/dependence in an exchange relation (Lawler & Yoon, 1996; Molm, 1990).

Empirical studies have indicated that when negative life events occur, the degree of dependence affects the chances for terminating the marital relationship. For example, Levinger (1979b) found that the chances of finalizing divorce were influenced by the husband's and wife's income distribution. Couples in which husbands have relatively high income and wives have no income were more likely to dismiss their application of divorce. Data also suggest that the reason battered women still remain in their abusive relationships is due to strong economic dependence on their husbands (e.g., Strube & Barbour, 1983). Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) reported that a high level of relational interdependence, characterized by satisfaction, equity, and internal and external barriers to the dissolution of the relationship, was positively associated with levels of commitment to the marriage. Nock (1995) further examined the effects for various types of dependency and found that relative amount of income and labor committed to household tasks and paid work were essential components in influencing marital commitment for both husbands and wives.

C. Consequences of Commitment

People who feel attached to the relationship and perceive it as a long-term commitment are likely to perform pro-relationship behaviors that help the relationship survive under negative and painful circumstances even when such behaviors are costly (Kelley, 1983; Lawler & Yoon, 1996; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). For example, highly-committed partners may be willing to stay in the relationship even when attractive alternatives exist (Kelley, 1983; Lawler & Yoon, 1993; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993), unilaterally providing token gifts to each other, and still contributing to the relationship when individual and collective interests do not match (Lawler & Yoon, 1993, 1996). Also, a high level of commitment

may promote the willingness to accommodate in the relationship (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Previous research has demonstrated that people who have stronger feelings of commitment tend to promote a relationship's duration by engaging in constructive and positive behaviors (e.g., actively attempt to solve problems) even when a partner has misbehaved (Rusbult, Verett, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991).

Empirical research has found that people who are committed to their spouse tend to express more love for their spouse, have fewer marriage problems (Swensen & Trahaug, 1985), and communicate and problem-solve more effectively (Robinson & Blanton, 1993) than those who are less committed. It is clearly difficult to establish the antecedent consequential relationship between commitment and couple interaction, since at any point in time, one of these variables can be viewed as affecting the order. However, in a recent study, Tallman and his colleagues reported data that support a model in which trust, a component of commitment, is an antecedent of couple interactions (Tallman, Gray, Kullberg, & Henderson, 1998). In this study, we will test a model that posits commitment as an influence on couple interactions, recognizing that in longitudinal research the directional pattern may switch.

In summary, the current research attempts to develop and test an exchange-based model of commitment by using the notion of power/dependence and examining its utility in predicting commitment. Based on research suggesting that the sources of dependence in marriage include both economic and non-economic resources, and that the significance of each resource may differ between husbands and wives, this research will explore the impact of both material and non-material resource exchanges on marital commitment for husbands and wives separately. Less commonly noted is the consequence of commitment. Committed persons tend to make the relationship work, to maximize mutual benefits, and to provide each other with the rewards felt necessary to protect the relationship (Kelley, 1983). Thus, feelings of commitment should exert both

general and profound effects on behavior in the relationship. We propose that an individual may be committed to the relationship because of high dependence on that relationship and his or her feelings of commitment may decrease the level of marital conflict.

II. Model of Marital Commitment

Marital commitment defined here includes two important elements: (1) a reward element involving attraction and attachment to the spouse and marriage, and (2) a cost element involving the threshold of ending current marriage under negative or painful situations. Building on the principles drawn from social exchange theory, we propose a model that 1) predicts how the couple's degree of dependence on the spouse influences the development of commitment to marriage, and 2) examines the effect of commitment on the quality of marital interaction. In the following discussion, we will provide the rationale for the predicted paths in the sequential model shown in Figure 1.
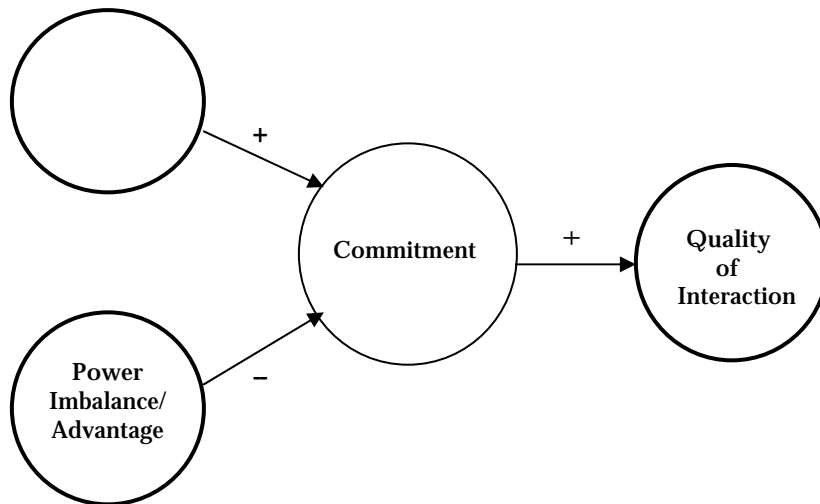

Figure 1   A Theoretical Model for Marital of Commitment

A. Dependence and Commitment

According to Emerson's power-dependence theory (1972a, 1972b), the dependence of B on A is determined by the amount of control in resources that provides A with the *potential* for influencing B's behavior. This control is determined by the extent to which B relies on the resources to meet his/her needs or desires. Following this definition, the wife's dependence on husband (D_{wh}) is determined by the value the wife places on resources that the husband controls (V_{hw}) and the husband's dependence on his wife (D_{hw}) is determined by the value of resources controlled by the wife (V_{wh}). Therefore,

$$D_{wh} = V_{hw}; D_{hw} = V_{wh}$$

The power-dependence relation between husbands and wives can be described on two dimensions: their mutual dependence, termed average power (AP), and their relative dependence, termed power imbalance (PI) (Emerson, 1972b). Average power, defined as the average of marital couples' dependencies on one another, is a measure of the strength and cohesion of the relation. Thus, average power can be formulated as follows:

$$AP = (V_{hw} + V_{wh}) / 2$$

The second aspect of power structure is power balance or imbalance. This derives from the distribution of valued resources that both husband and wife control. If either one holds more of the resource than the other, we infer an imbalance in the power relationship. Should both husband and wife possess equal amounts of a given resource, we may assume that each is equally dependent on the other for that resource and thus power is balanced. The power/dependence imbalance for a given resource (PI_{hw}) is thus defined as the difference in quantity of that resource controlled by the husband (V_{hw}) and wife (V_{wh}). Taking the absolute value of that difference, we obtain:

$$PI = \mid V_{hw} - V_{wh} \mid \qquad 0$$

People may occupy similar or different positions in the distribution of power/dependence. Power positions are identical when PI $= 0$. If the imbalance is in the husband's favor, then the husband has a power advantage. The wife is power advantaged when the imbalance is in her favor. The husband's power advantage (PA_{hw}) and wife's power advantage (PA_{wh}) is defined as follows:

$$PA_{hw} = V_{hw} - V_{wh} > 0$$
$$PA_{wh} = V_{wh} - V_{hw} > 0$$

A negative value (< 0) of PA_{hw} and PA_{wh} indicates that the husband or wife is in a power-disadvantaged position. The greater amount of resources a person has relative to his or her spouse, the greater the imbalance the power/dependence in the relationship. The power-advantaged person is likely to obtain relatively more benefits from the relationship than he/she reciprocates, whereas the power-disadvantaged person tends to equalize benefits.

We view power/dependence between the husband and wife as a structural factor that represents environmental constraints within which the couple must make a series of choices. Power/dependence provides a framework through which the couple can influence each other's behavior and exchange outcomes. The power structure that arises from the value of the resources controlled by marital partners produces different opportunities for maintaining a relationship under different conditions. In Figure 1, commitment is depicted as a positive function of average power, indicating that the greater average power or mutual dependence in marital couples, the greater the level of commitment to the relationship. Higher average power gives marital couples a broader boundary for adaptation and accommodation because each partner can obtain benefits from the current relationship. Commitment is also a positive function of balanced power, meaning that power equality enhances people's intentions or willingness to stay in the marriage.

It is predicted that people in a balanced relationship will tend to feel attractive and attached to their spouses and have a higher level of cost threshold for dissolving the marriage than those who are in an imbalanced relationship.

In the unequal power structure, the more dependent person with fewer resources is likely to tolerate unrewarding and unsatisfying relationships, whereas the person with a power advantage may sense that he or she can, with relative ease, acquire new resources and new partners. As discussed before, what people value and desire in marriage is an important issue that can lead to understanding the essence of dependence. This research examines this issue by focusing on the effects of various types of resources that have been suggested as relevant to close relationships in social psychology literature. They include four types of resources used to assess dependence between husbands and wives: (1) socioeconomic sources (income, education, and occupation), (2) affection (love and liking), (3) personal status characteristics and skills (intelligence, physical appearance, likeability, friendliness, and understanding), and (4) resources that can be obtained from alternative relationships (e.g., social support). A person will be more dependent upon the spouse or marriage if he or she has less economic and interpersonal resources, more affection towards the spouse and less social support to obtain from alternative relationships. In order to explore what resources are valued in marriage, we propose to examine the relationships between each of these resource domains, marital commitment, and the quality of couple interactions through processes depicted in Figure 1. The inference is that highly-valued resources will have a significant influence on these processes.

B. Commitment and Quality of Interaction

In the course of marriage, partners may encounter many types of relationship problems in areas including money, sex, communication, children (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Storaasli & Markman, 1990). In deciding how to deal with a specific

disagreement, marital couples may define the situations, think about their choices, examine their feelings for the spouse and the goal of marriage and then decide how to react. If the feelings for the spouse and marriage are positive and the goal of the marriage is long-term (e.g., they are committed), people should be motivated to perform pro-relationship behaviors that may actually produce more rewards (Holmes, 1981; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). If a person is willing to continue his or her marriage, even under stressful conditions, that person is likely to feel more concerned about maintaining a healthy relationship and consequently, the feelings of commitment should promote some types of accommodating behaviors. Empirical data has shown that happily-married couples perform more constructive and accommodative types of conflict resolution even in the most stressful conditions as with extramarital affairs (Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988). Negative behaviors, such as complaining, whining, criticizing, hostile comments, and sarcastic remarks are much more common in the interactions of unhappily-married couples compared to happily-married couples (Gottman, 1979).

To conclude, Figure 1 shows that power/dependence, characterized by average power and power balance/imbalance, affects the partners' level of commitment to the marriage while commitment influences the quality of marital interaction. It is hypothesized that a high average power increases positive feelings for the marriage and the level of cost threshold for leaving it whereas a power imbalance (power advantage) decreases the level of commitment to marriage. Finally, it is hypothesized that positive interaction patterns are promoted through this process: people who are committed to their spouse and marriage tend to use more positive than negative behaviors in resolving relationship problems.

III. Method

A. Sample

The data for the current study came from a three-wave panel

study of newly-married couples.[1] The sample was randomly selected from a pool of marriage license applications in two middle-sized metropolitan communities in the state of Washington in 1991 and 1992. Only couples in which both partners were over age 18, in their first marriages, and childless were included. Of the eligible couples who were contacted by letter, fifty-nine percent agreed to participate in the study. The time of the interview ranged between 2 and 219 days following the wedding, with the median time being 50 days. The final sample size was 313 couples.

The general aim of the panel study was to assess the effect of pre- and post-marital socialization on the marital dynamics of newly-married couples. There were 3 waves of data collection. Data collection each year involved a 90-minute face-to-face interview, four weeks of daily diary entries, and a 15-minute videotape of the couples' interactions about areas of disagreement. Of the original 313 couples, 278 couples completed all three phases of the research in Year 1.

The data used for the present analysis is based on information from the interview and videotapes in the first-wave of the data collection period. In this sample of 278 married couples, the mean age at marriage was 26 for husbands and 24 for wives. Ninety-one percent of the husbands and 85% of the wives were currently working for pay. The average family income was between US$25,000 and $35,000, and the mean education level for the couples was "some college."

B. The Behavioral Coding of Marital Interaction

Data on marital interaction was obtained from videotapes of conversations between husbands and wives as they discussed problems in their marriage. Before the videotaping, both husband

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[1] The research reported in this paper is part of a longitudinal study of first-time married couples, "Socialization into Marital Roles," funded by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NH46928). The research is under the direction of Irving Tallman, Peter J. Burke, and Viktor Gecas.

and wife filled out a sheet indicating the issues over which they disagreed most often and the magnitudes of those disagreements. Areas of disagreements included such issues as money, communication, in-laws, sex, religion, or children. The couple shared with the interviewer their general thoughts about these areas and together they identified up to three problems that seemed to produce the most serious disagreements in the marriage. The interviewer then instructed the couple to take 15 minutes to discuss one or more of these issues and, if possible, to reach some resolution about them. If they solved one problem before the 15 minutes were up, they were to discuss the next area and continue until all the problems were solved or the time was up.

The videotapes were coded by the Rapid Couples Interaction Scoring System (RCISS; Krokoff, Gottman, & Hass, 1989). This version of the coding system was developed in 1983 for speeding up the process of describing how couples resolve their marital disagreement. Based on this coding system, statements were coded by turns. A turn was defined as everything that a person said from the time he or she began to speak until he/she stopped or the other person started speaking. The unit could be a word, a phrase, a sentence or several sentences. Vocal listener backchannels (e.g., "Mmm-Hmm", "yeah", or laughter) were treated as a turn while nonverbal facial and body expressions in the part of the listener did not count as a turn but were coded as positive or negative listener behaviors.

The RCISS behavioral coding system can also be classified in terms of an underlying positive-negative dimension. In the present study, only codes assigned to speakers were used. These speaker codes covered 5 positive dimensions: neutral or positive problem description, task-oriented information, assent, humor/laugh, and other positive. They also included 8 negative dimensions: complain, criticize, negative relationship issue problem talk, yes-but, defensive, put down, escalate negative affect, and other negative. The codes of conversation need not be mutually exclusive or exhaustive. Therefore, the coder checked all the items that

described a turn so that multiple meanings could be revealed in any one turn.

The videotaped conversations were transcribed. Two trained observers watched the 15-minute videotaped discussions of each couple a first time. They then viewed the videotape a second time while reading the transcript and coding each turn for each spouse based on the RCISS. To determine the reliability of the observers' application of the codes to the interactional data, Cohen's (1960) kappa was calculated on a sample of the interaction tapes. [2] Cohen's kappa ranged from .74 to .85, scores similar to those found in other studies (Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

C. Measures

(A) Power/dependence

Power/dependence was assessed by three different indicators at the dyad level. The first indicator was average power, measured by the average of a given resource controlled by the husband and wife. The second indicator was power balance/imbalance, assessed by the absolute differences between husband and wife on each of the variables employed in the analysis. Lastly, power advantage was estimated by how much more of a given resource an individual could contribute to the marital relationship compared to his/her spouse.

Four types of resources were examined in this study. First, socioeconomic resources consisted of respondents' income, education, and occupational status. Respondents' income was assessed in 8 categories [3] and education was measured in 13

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[2] Cohen's kappa is an agreement coefficient that corrects for chance and is formulated as $k = (P_0 - P_c) / (1 - P_c)$ where P_0 is the proportion of agreements observed and P_c is the proportion of agreements expected by chance.

[3] Response categories for income were coded as follows: 1=under $5000, 2=$5000-9999, 3=10000-14999, 4=$15000-24999, 5=$25000-34999, 6=$35000-49000, 7=$50000-74999, 8=75000 and over.

categories.[4] To measure occupational status, respondents' answers were coded using the Total Socioeconomic Index (TSI) for males and females (Stevens & Cho, 1985). The second type of resources was affection measured by Rubin's love and liking scales (Rubin, 1970, 1973) in which respondents were asked to assess their own feelings toward their spouse on the scale ranging from 1 to 8. The 13 items (e.g., "I would do almost anything for my spouse.") were used to measure love with an alpha reliability of .72 for husbands and .76 for wives. Another 13 items (e.g., "My spouse is one of the most likeable people I know.") were used to measure liking with an alpha reliability of .85 for husbands and .83 for wives.

The third type of resources was interpersonal status characteristics and skills indicating respondents' self-ranking on intelligence, physical appearance, likeability, friendliness, and understanding. Respondents were also asked to estimate their spouse's characteristics. Responses on the scales varied between 0 (completely lacking in the attribute) to 100 (perfect representation of that attribute). The reliability coefficients for the scale of self-ranking were .75 for husbands and .77 for wives; those for the scale of spouse-ranking were .71 for husbands and .77 for wives.

Finally, the social support variable measured the extent to which respondents could obtain help from individuals other than their spouse for instrumental or expressive support under a series of conditions.[5] People who had experienced these situations were

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[4] Response categories for education were coded as follows: 1=no formal education, 2=some graduate school, 3=completed grade school, 4=some junior high or middle school, 5=completed junior high or middle school, 6=some high school, 7=completed high school or equivalent, 8=completed high school plus other training but not college, 9=some college, 10=completed 2-year college, 11=completed 4-year college, 12=some graduate work, 13=graduate degree.

[5] Instrumental support involves the following situations: (1) need to pay living expenses, (2) need help with housework, (3) need help with repairs, (4) need to run errands, (5) lack of transportation, (6) need someone to take care of the respondent when s/he is ill, (7) financial crisis, (8) no place to stay. Expressive support involves the following situations: (1) something bothered the respondent, (2) the respondent was lonely and needed someone to talk to,

asked to whom they went for help (spouse, parents, other relatives, friends, professional help, or other). We averaged the frequencies of obtaining social support from individuals other than the spouse under these situations to estimate the degree of social support for each spouse.

(B) Marital Commitment

Commitment was defined in terms of two components. The rewarding component consisted of attraction (marital happiness) and attachment (closeness and trust). Marital happiness was measured by a question asking respondents how happy they were with their marriage (1=not at all happy to 5=very happy) and spousal intimacy was measured by asking respondents how close they felt to the spouse today (1=not at all close to 5=very close). Trust was assessed using the Dyadic Trust Scale designed by Larzelere and Huston (1980). Respondents were given the following instructions: "Please complete the following scale indicating whether you agree with these statements:" and statements such as "My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me." Answers to these statements ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The alpha reliability coefficients in the current sample were .81 for both husbands and wives. Three of the items were reverse coded. Responses were summed. Higher scores reflect greater trust in the spouse.

The degree of cost threshold for ending the marriage was measured by a 10-item scale developed by Tallman for the study of "Socialization into Marital Roles." This instrument asked the couples how much they agree they would break up their marriage under 10 situations.[6] Response categories ranged from 1 (strongly

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(3) the respondent felt sad and needed cheering up, (4) the respondent had trouble with his/her spouse and wanted to talk to someone about it, (5) the respondent was seriously ill and felt the need for someone to comfort him/her, (6) someone the respondent loved was gravely ill and the respondent wanted to talk about this with someone, (7) the respondent had something very good happen to him/her that he/she wanted to tell someone about.

[6] The situations include (1) my spouse always engaged in hitting and screaming,

agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). These items had alpha reliability coefficients of .88 for husbands and .86 for wives. The responses to these items were then summed up to form a commitment scale: a high score indicated a high degree of commitment and a low score indicated a low degree of commitment to the marriage.

(C) Marital Interaction

Two different computations were used to assess the interaction patterns of husbands and wives. First, the relative frequencies of 13 speaker codes were calculated (see Table 3). The relative frequency was measured as the number of codes in a given item for the husband and wife divided by the total number of codes for the couple. Second, the ratio of positive minus negative frequencies to positive plus negative frequencies for the overall conversation was computed separately for husbands and wives. A high score indicated that a person's interactions tended to be positive.

IV. Results

The couples' power/dependence and feelings of commitment in the first year of marriage are presented separately by gender in Table 1. On average, husbands contributed more income than wives did. Husbands also reported greater love for their spouse than did wives whereas wives reported more liking for their spouses than did husbands. Husbands rated themselves as more intelligent than their spouse while wives rated themselves as more understanding than their spouses. Not surprisingly, wives were more likely than husbands to

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yelling and insulting me and I knew he/she would not change, (2) I did not love my spouse, (3) my spouse was unfaithful, (4) my spouse and I ever stopped communicating with each other, (5) my spouse ever lied to me, (6) my spouse and I ever stopped having fun together, (7) my spouse and I constantly quarreled, (8) my spouse ever yelled at or insulting me, (9) my spouse and I were constantly bored with one another, (10) my spouse and I disagreed on fundamental values.

Table 1　Descriptive Statistics and Gender Differences
for Power/Dependence and Marital Commitment Variables (N=278)

Variables	Husbands		Wives		H-W
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Difference
A. Power/Dependence					
Resources					
Income	3.702	1.740	2.768	1.753	.934***
Education	9.583	1.731	9.500	1.733	.083
Occupation	37.102	18.822	35.491	16.746	1.611
Love	89.011	8.740	86.036	10.279	2.975***
Liking	86.789	10.462	90.133	9.276	-3.344***
Perception of Self					
Intelligence	77.421	11.200	73.633	12.759	3.788***
Physical appearance	70.219	13.241	69.201	14.427	1.018
Likeability	79.748	12.050	78.694	12.357	1.054
Friendliness	78.644	13.423	80.432	12.802	-1.788
Understanding	75.514	15.004	81.043	12.866	-5.529***
Overall perception	76.309	9.271	76.601	9.427	-.291
Perception of Spouse					
Intelligence	78.475	10.845	80.996	10.213	-2.522**
Physical appearance	82.788	11.809	81.763	12.435	1.025
Likeability	85.112	11.343	85.799	12.397	-.687
Friendliness	84.687	12.480	83.899	15.045	.788
Understanding	80.906	13.936	82.604	12.825	-1.698
Overall perception	82.394	8.260	83.012	9.133	-.619
Social support	.934	.127	.959	.088	-.024**
B. Marital Commitment					
Happiness	4.831	.438	4.885	.372	-.054*
Closeness	4.813	.443	4.853	.403	-.040
Trust	48.568	5.886	48.975	6.298	-.406
Cost Threshold	28.874	5.895	28.538	5.483	.336

Note: *t* tests were used to compare husbands and wives in the variables above.

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

obtain social support from individuals other than their spouse. In general, husbands and wives were relatively balanced regarding such resources as education and occupational status. The virtual absence of differences in educational attainment may reflect the high level of educational homogamy in American marriages (Kalmijn, 1991). Since the newlyweds studied here were relatively young and just starting out their own careers, occupational statuses of husbands and wives might be expected to change after the first year of marriage.

In the first year of marriage, wives felt happier than husbands. Both husbands and wives reported the same levels of closeness and trust placed in their spouse, and cost threshold for ending their marriage.

Table 2 presents the magnitudes of disagreement for the areas identified by the newlyweds as problematic in their first year of marriage. It shows a consistent pattern for both husbands and wives: money, division of household labor, communication, and the time spent together were the top four salient problem areas. Partners' discussions of problem areas typically reflected such themes as how to manage financial issues and who should do what around the house. These issues appear to be of particular relevance in the beginning stages of forming role performance patterns. Major disagreements on communication and time spent together may reflect couples' concerns about integrity and intimacy in their developing relationship. These findings suggest that the newlyweds seem to focus more on potential trouble spots within the relationship than on problems outside the marriage (e.g., work, friends, and religion).

Table 3 presents data relevant to gender differences in communication styles. The results show that wives were more likely than husbands to employ negative behaviors such as complaining, criticizing, and negative relationship talk. They were more likely than husbands to give qualified agreement or apology statements by using the "Yes, but" term although they tended to use less defensive talk than husbands. Wives were more likely to escalate negative affect yet show other positive affect during the conversations. Husbands, on the other hand, were more likely to

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Disagreement Intensity Identified by Husbands and Wives (range 0–100)

Areas of Disagreement	Husband Mean	Husband SD	Wife Mean	Wife SD
Money	32.219(1)	28.631	31.713(1)	30.937
Who should do what around the house	24.277(2)	26.907	26.008(2)	28.394
Communication	20.786(3)	24.668	22.606(3)	26.071
The time we spend together	18.281(4)	22.784	18.528(4)	25.309
Recreation	17.044(5)	21.530	12.412(7)	19.432
The time we spend with friends	17.016(6)	23.103	12.329(8)	19.939
In-laws	15.944(7)	22.307	14.267(5)	22.830
Sex	15.134(8)	20.800	13.299(6)	19.851
Friends	14.704(9)	22.012	11.163(11)	19.467
How much time we spend at work	14.631(10)	22.700	11.967(9)	21.042
Jealousy	11.044(11)	18.597	11.514(10)	19.572
Religion	10.290(12)	21.000	9.346(13)	20.962
Alcohol and drugs	9.727(13)	19.709	0.008(12)	22.223
Children	7.820(14)	17.108	6.903(14)	17.021

Note: Area ranks are shown in parentheses.

use assent in the speaker role. In general, the results indicate that wives used more negative behaviors in conversation. For both husbands and wives, most of the speaker activities (57%) occurred in the area of neutral or positive problem description. Therefore, the couples can in fact be described as task oriented when they try to resolve marital disagreements. Also, most of the actions happen in the positive area (81%). The most common interaction patterns between husbands and wives in the discussion of marital disagreements occurred in a neutral or positive tone and in the frequent agreement (assent) areas. The balance of positive to negative behaviors has been found to be an important factor that can distinguish between happily and unhappily-married couples (Gottman, 1994; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). These positive interaction patterns may be one mechanism that maintains a stable marital relationship (Tallman et al., 1998).

A. LISREL Analysis of Models

The model considers power/dependence as the exogenous factor that sets a process in motion that fosters commitment between marriage partners, and commitment, in turn, contributes to positive marital interactions. LISREL 8.13 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) was used to evaluate the model depicted in Figure 1. The overall fit of the model was evaluated using three indices of goodness-of-fit statistics: chi-square (χ^2), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI). Chi-square should be regarded as a measure of goodness-of-fit between the sample covariance matrix (S) and the fitted covariance matrix (Σ) in the sense that a small chi-square indicates a good fit. Both GFI and AGFI (adjusted for degrees of freedom) measure how much better the model fits as compared to no model at all and range in value from 0 to 1. A value of each index closer to 1 indicates a good fit.[7]

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[7] As recommended by Acock and Schumm (1993), an adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) over the value of .90 indicates a satisfactory fit to the data. A simple model usually has a lower AGFI value than a complex model.

Table 3 Means of Percentages and Standard Deviations of Behavioral Codes (N=278)

| | Husband | | Wife | | H-W |
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Difference
Negative Codes					
Complain	.983	1.515	1.801	1.906	-.818***
Criticize	1.091	1.651	1.717	2.040	-.627***
Negative relationship issue problem talk	2.647	5.351	3.729	6.340	-1.082***
Yes-but	1.521	1.325	1.890	1.693	-.369***
Defensive	1.062	1.807	.888	1.790	.175*
Put down	.334	.876	.323	.772	.010
Escalate negative affect	.146	.515	.264	.821	-.118**
Other negative affect	.141	.424	.216	.491	-.076*
Positive Codes					
Neutral or positive problem description	28.919	6.971	28.327	7.514	.592
Task-oriented relationship information	1.443	1.994	1.426	2.061	.017

(to be continued)

Table 3 Means of Percentages and Standard Deviations of Behavioral Codes (continued)

	Husband		Wife		H-W
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Difference
Assent	8.598	5.525	7.642	5.005	.955**
Humor/laugh	1.773	1.718	1.528	1.678	.245
Other positive affect	.742	.869	.849	1.006	-.106*
% Negative codes	7.925	9.288	10.829	11.088	-2.904***
% Positive codes	41.475	9.792	39.771	10.323	1.704***
Ratio (Positive−negative)/(Positve+negative)	67.771	37.522	58.030	41.916	9.741***

Note: t tests were used to compare husbands and wives in behavioral codes.

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the hypothesized measurement models for the concept of commitment. The initial results revealed that the proposed model provided a good fit to the data for wives but not for husbands. All the wives' factor loadings, except for cost threshold, were significant at least at the .05 level. Cost threshold contained a weak factor loading and a fairly low reliability for both husbands and wives. The results suggest that cost threshold was not strongly associated with the commitment factor and thus it was removed from the model. The commitment factor was then recalculated with the remaining three measures, indicating the attraction dimension of commitment.

Our primary goal in this study was to examine the process model depicted in Figure 2. In general, measures of fit indicated that each of models fit the data reasonably well, as reflected in the high goodness-of-fit statistics.[8] Specifically, we sought to examine whether power/dependence for different resource domains influenced couple commitment, which, in turn, affected the quality of marital interaction. The findings that include the measures of *average power* and *power advantage* are reported in Table 4 for husbands and wives. Consistent with our hypotheses, the results show that husbands' commitment was significantly affected by average power and their power advantage in terms of love, liking, likeability, friendliness, understanding, and overall perceptions. The higher the average power for those resources, the more husbands felt committed to the marriage. Also, the less power advantages they had on those resources, the greater their commitment. In wives' models, the higher average power on education, liking, appearance, understanding, and overall perceptions

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[8] The chi-square values for some of the models were relatively large and significant. The significant residuals in these models suggest a substantive modification because it involves a change in the structural model. One direct path from average power to interaction should be added in these models. The modifications resulted in non-significant chi-square values and increased the goodness of fit statistics, suggesting that the alternative models provided a better fit to the data. The paths from average power to interaction ( ) were positive and significant in wives' models (.27 for education).

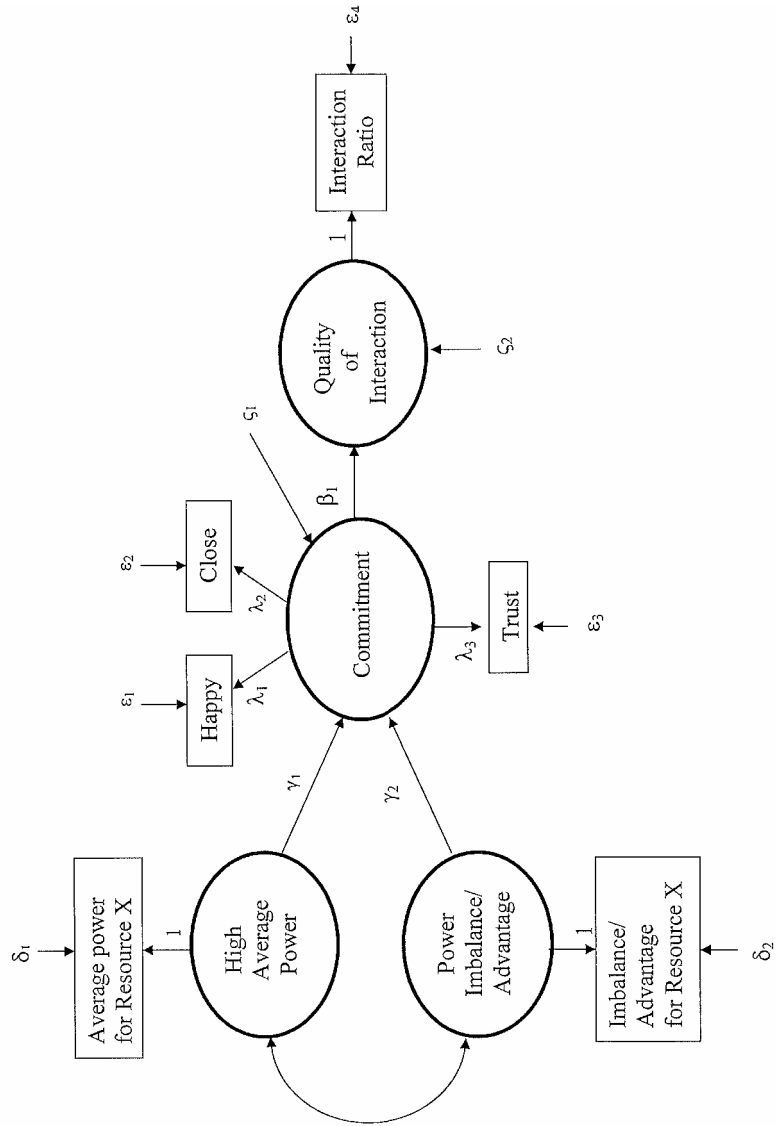Figure 2 Measurement and Structural Models for Marital Commitment

Table 4 Estimated LISREL Standardized Coefficients for Structural Models

Husband

Coefficients	Income	Occupation	Education	Love	Liking	Intelligence	Appearance	Likeability	Friendliness	Understanding	Perception	Support
γ_1	.15	.26*	.36*	.34*	.53*	.20*	.27*	.32*	.35*	.48*	.46*	.06
γ_2	-.09	.01	.00	.24*	.17*	-.11	-.09	-.19*	-.22*	-.20*	-.30*	.18*
β_1	.43*	.46*	.47*	.21*	.43*	.43*	.40*	.44*	.43*	.43*	.42*	.39*
Model Fit χ^2	3.17	6.41	7.31	5.41	8.27	5.58	8.36	13.06	10.14	9.03	6.99	9.38
Model Fit df	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
p	.87	.49	.40	.61	.31	.59	.30	.71	.18	.25	.43	.23
GFI	1.00	1.00	.99	.99	.99	.99	.99	.98	.99	.99	.99	.99
AGFI	.99	.98	.97	.98	.97	.98	.97	.95	.96	.97	.97	.97

Wife

Coefficients	Income	Occupation	Education	Love	Liking	Intelligence	Appearance	Likeability	Friendliness	Understanding	Perception	Support
γ_1	.12	.16	.34*	.35*	.59*	.14	.21*	.29*	.35*	.42*	.37*	.03
γ_2	-.12	-.04	-.19*	.13	.22*	-.01	-.24*	-.07	-.08	-.30*	-.26*	-.22*
β_1	.26*	.29*	.34*	.23*	.23*	.26*	.23*	.24*	.20*	.23*	.20*	.24*
Model Fit χ^2	16.81	22.28	26.20	8.78	18.54	3.21	4.65	17.17	12.78	2.57	11.87	1.72
Model Fit df	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
p	.02	.002	.001	.27	.01	.86	.70	.02	.08	.92	.11	.97
GFI	.98	.97	.97	.99	.98	1.00	.99	.98	.98	1.00	.99	1.00
AGFI	.94	.92	.91	.97	.93	.99	.98	.94	.95	.99	.96	.99

Note: γ_1 = the path from average power to commitment
γ_2 = the path from power advantage to commitment
β_1 = the path from commitment to quality of interaction
*$p < .05$

increased wives' commitment level while power advantages for those resources decreased their commitment level. In our preliminary LISREL analysis, the effort to demonstrate the effects of *power imbalance* was not successful.

Among other resources examined, power/dependence on income did not yield significant effects on husbands' commitment. Although an average power based on occupation, education, intelligence, and physical appearance had a significant impact on husbands' commitment, a power advantage for these resources did not influence his commitment to the marriage. An unexpected finding was that a power advantage on social support had a significant effect on husbands' commitment, indicating that the more social support husbands were able to obtain compared to their wives, the more committed they were to the marriage. As for wives, both average power and power advantage for income, occupational status and intelligence did not influence their commitment level. Only average power on love, likeability, and friendliness significantly increased wives' commitment; a power advantage for social support decreased their commitment.

As hypothesized, the paths from commitment to the quality of interaction were positive and significant in all husbands' and wives' models, suggesting that the more they felt committed to the marriage, the more likely they were to engage in positive behaviors to solve disagreements.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

This research had three primary goals: first, to use social exchange principles as a basis for conceptualizing and measuring commitment and power/dependence; second, to develop and evaluate a model which seeks to explain the quality of marital interactions in terms of a process that links couples' power/dependence to marital commitment and marital commitment to marital interaction; and finally, to explore the hierarchy of various types of resources in marital couples'

evaluation system, including socioeconomic status, affection, personal status characteristics, and social support.

With regard to the first goal, the present study sought to determine theoretically and empirically some basic features of commitment in marriage. We viewed commitment as a construct with multidimensional properties. The inclusion of multidimensionality here helped to evaluate the existing dimensions of commitment presented in the literature and determine the degree of convergence among those dimensions (e.g., attraction, constraints). The results of the confirmatory factor analyses showed that the reward component, which was based on happiness, closeness, and trust, represented the primary factor of commitment. The robustness of the dimension of attraction and attachment has been demonstrated by several empirical studies in the context of marriage, friendship, and dating relationships (Adams & Jones, 1997; Stanley & Markman, 1992; Rusbult, 1980a, 1980b). Trust, often neglected in the commitment literature, was found in this study to be an important additional aspect of marital commitment. Since trust between husbands and wives reflects the level of confidence in the spouse for future rewards as well as the degree of willingness to give and contribute to the relationship (Holmes, 1991; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), it encapsulated a key ingredient in commitment to marriage.

In contrast, the cost component, which was based on the threshold of tolerance of negative circumstances in marriage, did not represent an essential factor of commitment in this study. Thus, when people indicated that they were in a happy, close, and trusting relationship, they did not necessarily report a higher level of threshold for marital dissolution. In fact, the magnitudes of the correlations among indicators of commitment suggested that cost threshold for ending a marriage may be a distinct dimension, unrelated to other indicators of attraction and attachment. The inability to develop a commitment factor based on both attraction to the marriage and cost threshold for ending the marriage may be attributed to the fact that newlywed couples' threshold for dissolving their marriages was significantly associated with religious participation (r= .39 for

husbands, r= .33 for wives) in this sample. The more people indicated religious devotion, the higher the level of the cost threshold.

These results suggest that the reward and cost components of commitment may reflect two distinct aspects of marital commitment. Whereas attraction to the marriage emphasizes its personal dedication (Johnson, 1991; Rusbult, 1980a), cost threshold for ending the relationship highlights its external constraints, including the moral, religious, and normative elements of commitment found in Johnson's moral commitment (Johnson, 1991). This aspect of commitment may reflect the respondents' own value system regarding morality in general, religious integrity, obligations, and social responsibilities. The values and beliefs that people hold may legitimize how an unsatisfactory marriage might be endured and the resulting commitment made to it. Several empirical studies found that the greater the religious devotion of both husbands and wives, the more they stay committed to marriage (Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987). Bellah and his colleagues (1996) also demonstrated that for evangelical Christians, who place duty and obligation above personal gratification and believe in a lifetime commitment in marriage, stay in marriage no matter how unfavorable the current relationship seems to be. For such couples, such factors as happiness and trust may only be minimally associated with cost threshold.

Based on Emerson's (1972a, 1972b) notion, power/ dependence is thought to be determined by the values of resources controlled by partners involved in a given relationship. It represents a potential source of action, inherent in the structure of mutual and relative dependencies (average power and power imbalance) created by the unequal distributions of valued resources controlled by partners. It is also conceptualized as a nonzero-sum relationship (Emerson, 1972b; Lawler & Yoon, 1996), which can allow two different dimensions of power and dependence, average power and power imbalance, to vary independently in the relationship. The results of this study support the separate and/or addictive effects of these two power dimensions on commitment,

suggesting that this conceptualization of power, which has often been tested in laboratory experiments, is also empirically useful in the context of marriage.

Regarding the second goal, the model presented and tested here concerns the linkages between power/dependence, commitment, and marital interaction. The results of the LISREL analyses are, in general, consistent with the social exchange perspectives that state that dependence on the spouse for valued resources, along either or both higher average power and lower power advantage, promotes one's feelings of commitment to marriage. For husbands, total and relative amounts of resources such as love, liking, and personal status characteristics (especially in likeability, friendliness, understanding, and overall perception) were shown to generate their commitment to the relationship. For wives, total and relative amounts of education, liking, and personal status characteristics (e.g., physical appearance, understanding, and overall perception) played an important role in predicting their feelings of commitment.

Evidence in the current study suggests that the impact of power/dependence on commitment can be conceptualized as a constraining force that influences people's subjective evaluations of relationships, subsequently affecting the choices that are made. Marital commitment implies psychological and affective attachment as well as long-term involvement in relationships that are reflected in the communication patterns of marital couples. A high level of commitment induces high ratios of positive to negative behaviors when marital couples engage in conflict. These processes of commitment (structural power $\rightarrow$ commitment $\rightarrow$ behavior) have been documented in previous studies of negotiated exchanges (Lawler & Yoon, 1993, 1996). Our data suggest that they can be applied to the family and marriage and have implications for understanding the marital relations that lead to stability.

The third goal of our study concerns the hierarchy of values associated with a variety of resources. These values are inferred

from the significant effect of a given resource on commitment processes. Whereas much of the previous research has focused on material resources such as money, our findings suggest that both husbands and wives tend to place a higher value on affective resources and interpersonal status characteristics in the early stages of marriage. Specifically, liking was found to be an important affective resource valued by newlywed couples. Liking involves the feelings of respect and admiration, and a sense of similarity toward their spouse serves as a foundation for love to develop (Rubin, 1970). Also, liking can be a power resource that brings future rewards, elicits perceptions of altruistic or benevolent intentions, and mitigates responsibility for doing harm (Tedeschi, 1974). If a person is liked more by his or her spouse than he or she likes the spouse, that person is considered to be more influential and powerful in the marriage in the sense that he or she is more likely to receive favorable outcomes and gain compliance and forgiveness for harmful actions from the spouse.

One interesting feature of our findings is that a power advantage in love had a significant impact on commitment for husbands rather than for wives. The greater the relative amount of love (husband loves the wife more than she loves him), the more the husband feels committed to marriage. Cancian (1987) has argued in her book, *Love in America*, that love is culturally identified for women, with feminine qualities such as tenderness and the expression of feelings. Women are perceived as being more skilled at love than men, in terms of verbal disclosure, the expression of intense feelings (e.g., sadness, fear, love), and the interpretation of other's emotions. On the other hand, men are thought to have a different style of love that emphasizes overt behaviors, including "practical help, shared physical activities, spending time together, and sex" (Cancian, 1987: 75). The feminine style of love, which is covert and repressed, devalues men's dependence on women, whereas the masculine style of love, which is overt and exaggerated, increases women's dependence on men. Our results suggest that husbands are not uninvolved and

insensitive to love as culturally defined; in contrast, they seem to particularly need and be dependent on their wives' love. Our data suggest that the feelings of an imbalance that results from giving more and receiving less love place husbands in a power-disadvantaged position that increases their commitment to marriage in the hope of obtaining what may be perceived as a scarce commodity.

Personal status characteristics were also found to be a valued resource for both husbands and wives. Specifically, the significant effects of unequal distributions of expressive skills on feelings of commitment suggest that emotional work is important to both marital partners. Emotional work that involves understanding and sociability (England & Farkas, 1986; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990) has been rated as an essential element in close relationships by both men and women, although both genders reported women contributed more emotional work to relationships than men.

Surprisingly, our results indicated that women valued physical appearance more than intelligence in their partner. Literature has shown that men and women equally weigh intelligence as an important resource (Regan & Sprecher, 1995); however, men, more than women, value physical attractiveness in their partner. Yet our findings suggest that wives, in their first year of marriage, were more sensitive in a balance of physical attraction between themselves and their partners .

We were surprised that socioeconomic resources had no impact on commitment to marriage for the couples. Income and occupational status have been a major source of marital power that is of particular benefit to wives in household decision-making processes and continues to benefit them should they leave the relationship. Given the power structure within marriage in which husbands continue earn more money than wives, we expected that an increase in women's actual income and earning abilities would serve to decrease their dependence on husbands, weakening their commitment to marriage. However, wives' power advantage based on socioeconomic resources did not influence their commitment. It

may be that at the early stage of marriage and career represented in our sample, wives are troubled more by imbalances of the spouse's affection and status characteristics than by the inequality of financial ability.

Why do people feel committed and choose to remain in the marriage? One basic reason may be because they are dependent upon their spouse for fulfilling their needs and desires. Individuals' experience of dependence is a reflection of the amount of resources they can potentially gain and the degree to which those resources can fulfill their needs and desires. The more valued resources people can obtain from their spouse and the fewer alternatives they have for the resources, the more dependent they will be on the marriage. The findings reported here indicate that a high mutual dependence (average power) and an inequitable distribution of resources (lack of power advantage) promote people's feelings of cohesion and attachment, which, in turn, induce positive communication styles in resolving disagreements. These findings suggest that the less the valued resources a couple has access to and the more feelings of commitment they feel, the lower the likelihood that a couple would engage in a high level of marital conflict.

When applying social exchange theory to the context of marriage, we need to know the specific resources that foster two partners' dependence on one another. The results of this study showed that both husbands and wives, in their first year of marriage, placed more value on affection (especially liking), interpersonal status characteristics, and skills (especially understanding) than on socioeconomic resources. Modern marriage, at least in America, has been viewed as a path for personal fulfillment, emotional satisfaction, sexual gratification, and self-development (Cancian, 1987); therefore, newlyweds appear to emphasize reciprocal appreciation, affection, understanding, and acceptance. Moreover, as educational and occupational opportunities have increased for young women, marital couples seem to be more focused on satisfaction derived

from intimacy rather than from economic attainment or occupational status.

The model developed and tested here compliments and extends current approaches to the study of dependence and commitment by exploring the types and ranges of resources marital partners are dependent upon. However, we were unable to include the cost component in the model of commitment due to its lack of reliability and validity. Therefore, this version of the model pertains only to commitment as characterized by cohesion and attachment rather than the constraints imposed on leaving the marriage. Moreover, because commitment is best regarded as a phenomenon that varies over time (Kelley, 1983), our results at best show a snapshot of commitment taken in the first year of marriage. Although the current research contributes to our present understanding of marital commitment and its behavioral consequences, future research is still needed to explore the development and change of commitment throughout the course of marriage. We also urge researchers to study how changes in dependence over a period of time influence changes in commitment level and how these changes in dependence and commitment affect actual stay-leave decisions.

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