Power and Dependency in Close Heterosexual Relationships: A Test of an Exchange Theory Hypothesis

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POWER AND DEPENDENCY IN CLOSE HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS:
A TEST OF AN EXCHANGE THEORY HYPOTHESIS

by

Gregory L. Sanders

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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POWER AND DEPENDENCY IN CLOSE HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS:
A TEST OF AN EXCHANGE THEORY HYPOTHESIS

Gregory L. Sanders, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1987

Ninety-nine heterosexual couples were surveyed to test the exchange theory hypothesis that interpersonal power and relative dependency are inversely related in dyadic relationships. Controlling for gender, this hypothesis was examined through a path analysis for each of six groups: the overall population, dating couples, engaged couples, cohabiting couples, married couples, and couples treated as a single unit. Results indicate that males are reported as relatively more powerful than females, and this gender effect is found to increase with the permanence of the relationship. Relative dependency has effects on power which also vary according to the type of relationship. Self-reported "subjective dependency" was inversely related to power for all subgroups. "Objective dependency," which is the exchange formulation of dependency, was either not significantly related to power or, in some cases, was directly related. Thus, perhaps the exchange theory of power and dependency needs revision as applied to intimate heterosexual relationships.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Doing a Master's Thesis is like learning to swim; at first one must
depend almost completely on the expertise of others. Later on, pre­
sumably, the benefit of experience will enable one to conduct research
more autonomously. Since this research is my first, then, the contri­
butions made by the following individuals cannot be overestimated. The
greatest debt, perhaps, is to Dr. Paul L. Wienir, my thesis advisor, who
spent many hours from the first stage of design to the final stage of
typing. Much gratitude I also express to Dr. Paul Yelsma and Dr. Herbert
Smith who so helpfully and courteously served on my thesis committee.
All three of these individuals performed their duties not only with
professionalism but with great personal warmth, for which I wish to
express sincere thanks.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The study of power is a major focus of sociology. Bertrand Russell (1983) states, "The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics" (p. 87). In the realm of close heterosexual relationships, early studies on power often focused on the effects of power differences between husbands and wives on decision-making and other family practices (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Hill, 1965). More recently, sociologists have searched for the roots of power in gender (Brehm, 1985; Molm, 1985; Peplau & Gordon, 1985), personality (Heer, 1958), differential resources (Centers, Raven & Rodrigues, 1971; Foa & Foa, 1974; Heer, 1963; Peplau, 1984), similarity of rewards (Kidder et al., 1981), and various normative structures (Bernard, 1972; Burr, 1973; Rodman, 1972).

One causal origin for interpersonal power advanced by Thibaut and Kelley (1959), and used extensively by other exchange theorists (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1960, 1962; Homans, 1961), is "relative dependency," a measure of differential dependency between partners in an enduring relationship. Despite its popularity with exchange theorists, however, this variable as conceptualized by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and its effects on power within previously existing relationships has been explicitly examined in only one study by Michaels, Acock, and Edwards.
(1984). The Michaels' et al. (1984) study operationalized the concept of relative dependence in four different ways and explicitly tested the exchange proposition that relative dependence is inversely related to interpersonal power. Contrary to theoretical predictions, two of their measures were directly related to power, and the effect of another was not significant. Only one of their four measures was inversely related to power. Furthermore, this measure was the one which least resembled "relative dependency" as formulated by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). The paucity of research on relative dependency (within established relationships), the intuitive plausibility of Thibaut and Kelley's formulations concerning relative dependency, and the indeterminate nature of the findings of the Michaels' et al. (1984) study form the impetus for the present research.

Statement of Purpose

With substantial revisions in methodology, the present study replicates and expands the Michaels' et al. (1984) study by addressing the following research questions:

1. With improved measurement, can the predicted inverse relationship between power and relative dependency be observed for intimate heterosexual relationships in general?

2. Does the predicted inverse relationship for power and relative dependency operate equally in all types of intimate relationships?

3. What are the separate dimensions of interpersonal power as expressed in heterosexual relationships, and how are these differentially related to relative dependence and gender?
4. What are the interaction effects of gender with relative dependency, overall power, and dimensions of power?

First with the entire sample and then while controlling for "type" of relationship (e.g. dating, engaged, cohabiting and married couples), the present study employs several path analyses of the major variables, a multiple factor analysis of the power measure and a path analysis of "couple data" (where each couple is treated as a single case) to address these questions. As a preliminary procedure, the issue of measurement validity for the key variables of interest is addressed extensively through a critique of the Michaels' et al. (1984) design and measurement procedures. This assessment is undertaken in light of the relevant literature describing the orientation of exchange theory in general, and then more specifically outlining the conceptualization of the key variables of power, gender, and relative dependency.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Exchange Theory

The core of modern exchange theory is contained in the writings of Thibaut and Kelley (1959), George Homans (1961), Richard Emerson (1960, 1962), and Peter Blau (1964). The central propositions form a type of hybrid between operant psychology and classical economics. Human actors are seen to behave in ways which maximize personal rewards and minimize costs, mediating the rewards and costs for others through patterns of social exchange. George Homans (1961) makes clear the basic tenet of exchange theory when he states, "human behavior is a function of its payoff: in amount and kind it depends on the amount and kind of reward and punishment it fetches" (p. 12). Employing a "marketplace" interpretation of human nature which bears some similarities to Rousseau's "social contract" and Adam Smith's "social economy," exchange theory envisions a society where social bonds are formed and broken on the basis of the value of exchanged goods or commodities. Exchange theorists typically argue that if the costs of any relationship exceed its rewards, dissolution of the social bond is imminent (Levinger & Huesmann, 1980; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

There was a notion among early exchange theorists that the social-psychological principles of rewards, costs, and equitable exchange had wide applicability to most forms of human behavior. Emerson (1962)
says of his own work,

My purpose in these chapters is to address 'social structure' and structural change within the framework of exchange theory. . . . It may well be that psychological principles can provide important building blocks for sociological concepts and principles. . . . Attention is focused on aspects of the relationship as such with little or no regard for particular features of the persons or groups engaged in such relations. Personal traits, skills or possessions (such as wealth), which might be relevant to power in one relation are infinitely variable across the set of possible relations, and hence have no place in a general theory. (p. 41)

Emerson's work is infused with a Skinnerian optimism which sees principles of reinforcement as playing a major role in all forms of human behavior.

Homans expressed similar hopes for the utility of exchange propositions but was careful to acknowledge the influence of broad societal norms and institutional patterns on constraining the freedom of human behavior within certain parameters. However, Homans did not emphasize the coercive nature of social norms. Rather, his emphasis was on an exchange analysis of "elementary behavior" to explain why norms are created in the first place and why they are followed. Through studying "small groups" and dyadic interactions, he hoped to uncover the more or less universal properties of human behavior which lay a foundation for societal structure as well as govern everyday interaction. In his book, Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms, Homans (1961) argues, "(we) cannot demonstrate that the elementary forms of social behavior are universal among mankind; we must take it on faith" (p. 5).

What Homans took "on faith," others have tried to demonstrate through critical examination. Recent research seems to support the applicability of exchange principles to diverse settings. The Principle of
Least Interest, for instance, which is somewhat akin to the concept of relative dependency, was found to be inversely related to reported power both in studies of lesbian couples (Caldwell & Peplau, in Brehm, 1985) and in heterosexual dating couples (Peplau, 1979). Brehm (1985), after a discussion of related theory and research, states the belief that this pattern can also be demonstrated among married couples and then asserts,

So far, we have concentrated on the way the social exchange model of power applies to married couples. But what about unmarried couples? Do the principles of social exchange affect the balance of power in these relationships too? The answer is a clear 'yes'; the basic processes of social exchange apply regardless of marital status or sexual orientation. (p. 232)

Certainly exchange theory is not the only model for explaining the dynamics of dating and marital relationships. Many social scientists raise objections to the purely self-satisfying model offered by exchange theory and favor the admittance of selfless, altruistic behavior into the sociological lexicon (Kelley, 1979; Lederer & Jackson, 1968; Levinger, 1979; Rubin, 1973; Schwartz & Marten, 1980; all in Brehm, 1985, p. 160). Murstein (1979) examines "exchange orientations" and "non-exchange orientations" among actors involved in social exchanges. Clark and Mills (1979) distinguish between "exchange relationships" where reinforcement and reciprocity operate, and "communal relationships" where altruism is the norm and exchange-like calculations of costs and rewards are avoided and sometimes even sanctioned.

The exchange rebuttal presumably would be that such formulations hardly go beyond "common sense," and that sensitivity to rewards accrued and costs incurred even in sentimental relationships will make explicit the dynamics of interaction which a normative analysis only obscures.
Perhaps, as Emerson (1960) suggests with his insistence that the "exchange relation" be the primary unit of analysis, exchange-like patterns may not be observable in enduring relationships until the balance of all exchanges involved in that relationship are taken into account. Altruistic behavior may well be the norm in intimate relationships for specific encounters, but this altruism may well fit into a larger equation of rewards and alternatives for the overall relationship which is not easily observable in studies which focus on the single exchange.

The utilitarian image of human nature given by exchange theory has at times been called "egoistic" and "selfish" (Brehm, 1985), but it is tempered by the fact that in most social exchanges interaction is mutually reinforcing to both parties to varying degrees. The rewards brought to the interaction by each actor are considered as "resources" to barter in the exchange, and in heterosexual relationships each person typically offers a variety of resources which are desired by the other partner: love, companionship, money, sex and intimacy, practical favors, etc. (Foà & Foà, 1974). The giving of a reward may constitute a cost for the donor, but it is typically rewarded with a gift in kind which makes the exchange worthwhile.

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) argue that dependence on the outcomes (O) of an existing relationship is related to rewards available through alternative relationships (CLalt). In other words, dependence is not solely a function of present relationship outcomes; it is the "difference" between present outcomes and the potential outcomes of a person's next best alternative relationship or situation. Thus,
dependency can be expressed in equational form as: 0 - CLalt, or present outcomes minus alternative outcomes. "Relative dependency" between partners (with the "respondent" designated as "r" and "partner" as "p") can be similarly be expressed as: (r0 - rCLalt) - (p0 - pCLalt), or the dependency of one partner subtracted from the other (Michaels et al., 1984).

The theoretical formulations of Thibaut & Kelley, Homans, Emerson, and Blau did not, however, lead to much research concerning relative dependency within enduring relationships. Some studies measured related concepts such as degree of relative "involvement" in relationships (Caldwell & Peplau, in Brehm, 1985; Peplau, 1984), others have studied power and dependency within the laboratory context of a single exchange or limited set of exchanges (Crosbie, 1972; Molm, 1985), but only the Michaels' et al. (1984) study explicitly measured relative dependency as a function of partner differences of outcomes minus alternative outcomes within enduring relationships.

Relative Dependency

One of the most unique contributions of exchange theory to the social-psychological literature (and of central importance to this study) is the formulation of relative dependency by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). This variable has important antecedents. Over thirty years earlier, Ross (1921) first formulated the Law of Personal Exploitation: "In any sentimental relation the one who cares less can exploit the one who cares more" (p. 58). Three decades later Waller & Hill (1951) formulated the similar Principle of Least Interest by stating, "That person is able to
dictate the conditions of association whose interest in the continuation of the affair is least" (p. 191). These ideas are extended by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) to include the consideration of alternatives, "The general assumption is made that for a dyadic relationship to be viable it must provide rewards and/or economies in costs which compare favorably with those in competing relationships or activities available to those two individuals" (p. 49).

The concept of relative dependency is at the heart of exchange theory. Goods and services given in a social exchange make a person dependent on the supplier for the goods received. Blau (1964) writes, "Regular rewards make recipients dependent on the supplier and subject to his power, since they engender expectations that make their discontinuation a punishment" (p. 116). All actors in an exchange are dependent to some extent, but one person will often be "more" dependent than his or her partner. This dependency imbalance, which is a function of both outcomes received and available alternatives, is called "relative dependency" by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and is argued to explain inequities of interpersonal power.

At first, exchange theorists were inclined to view relative dependency and other variables of social exchange in light of single exchanges, but gradually these principles were seen to operate within relationships as a whole. Homans (1961) argued that elementary social exchange behavior "is the face-to-face contact between individuals, in which the reward each gets from the behavior of the others is relatively direct and immediate" (p. 7). Emerson (1962), by contrast, rejected the notion that rewards must be immediate and argued that people often are
willing to tolerate an imbalanced exchange in a single encounter if the overall relationship is favorable. He thus defined the "smallest meaningful unit" of analysis not to be an isolated encounter but the "exchange relation" (p. 45). Emerson believes that with the concept of the "exchange relation, we are now in a position to move in a direction different from that taken by most economic theory, but required by social theory . . . our concept links each transaction to a history and a future for specified actors" (p. 46). Homans (1961) himself moves more in the direction of viewing exchanges across a relationship with his formulation of "distributive justice," a notion which says that people try to keep rewards and investments from exchanges with others relatively proportional across time. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) support these conceptions with their "outcome" matrix of rewards minus costs. Exchange theory had developed to a point where "dependence" came to be perceived as a phenomenon arising in the context of a relationship, not solely as a characteristic of an individual encounter.

Emerson (1961) further defines a relationship "in terms of ties of mutual dependence" (p. 32). Dependence on the outcomes of the other is the cohesive, binding element in the relationship. Mutual reinforcement explains why the relationship is formed and maintained, but one person may be more dependent than a partner on the relationship. This difference is based on present outcomes and alternative outcomes between partners. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) define outcomes in terms of the difference between relationship rewards and costs. A reward is seen to be "the provision of a means whereby a drive is reduced or a need is fulfilled" (p. 9). Costs are "factors that operate to inhibit or deter
behavior" (p. 9). People tend to consider both rewards and costs simultaneously when describing the value of a relationship (p. 10).

The outcomes of an alternative relationship, denoted by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) as "CLalt" (comparison level for alternatives) are calibrated in a similar way. A person may imagine certain rewards in alternative relationships or situations, but these are moderated by the costs involved in leaving a present relationship and the risks involved in forming and maintaining a new one. The importance of alternatives for "relative dependence" stems from people's "exchange orientation" toward the present relationship. Present outcomes are measured "in light of possible alternatives." Principles from classical economics such as utility (the usefulness of the commodity for the purchaser) and scarcity (the transituational availability of the commodity) are seen to apply here. In other words, a highly valued outcome (e.g., love) which is readily available through many exchanges may not be valued as highly as a more moderately valued reward (e.g., riding in a popular sports car) which can only be obtained through one's relationship with a specific partner.

The differences between present outcomes and alternative outcomes are seen by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) to be quantifiable, at least in general terms. They state, "The further assumption is made that the degree to which (a person's) attained positions exceed his CLalt determines how greatly he 'depends' on the dyad for favorable outcomes" (p. 21). Assessing relative dependence thus involves the differential comparison of each partner's present relationship outcomes (O) with his or her CLalt (comparison level for alternatives). Outcomes are
measured in reference to "what the person feels he or she 'deserves,'" (p. 21). Alternative outcomes (CLalt) are outcomes which are available in alternative situations, and are depicted as "the standard the member uses in deciding whether to remain in or to leave the relationship" (p. 21). Thibaut and Kelley (1959) admit that the "scaling operation" involved here represents "a very ambitious enterprise and would present a number of technical difficulties" (p. 12). Perhaps this is why so few studies have employed Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) conception of relative dependency to study established relationships. Instead, studies often employ experimental designs based on their exchange matrix of interaction outcomes for studying bargaining strategies (Deutsh & Krauss, 1960; Kelley, 1965; Smith & Leginski, 1970) and the development of contractual norms (Murdoch, 1967; Thibaut, 1968; Thibaut & Faucheux, 1965). The present research assumes that the technical difficulties of measuring dependency and power may be appropriately addressed through careful consideration of the properties of these variables and the ways in which they might be measured.

Power

The dependent variable in the present study is power, and gender and relative dependency are assumed to variously influence the balance of power between partners in intimate relationships. Power, however, is a multi-dimensional construct with many empirical referents, and it is correspondingly difficult to measure (Cromwell and Olson, 1975; Mooney, 1984). One source of the confusion, undoubtedly, is that power is a pervasive feature of social life and has been studied from a variety of
perspectives, including social psychology, family sociology, child development and structural systems theory (Cromwell and Olson, 1975). Within social psychology, other alleged problems involved in measuring power probably stem from differing conceptions of what power is and how it operates.

Most laboratory research on power, for instance, treats only observed behavior in the isolated case (Michaels, 1984; Mooney, 1984). Exchange theory, by contrast, sees power as a property of the extended relationship (Emerson, 1960). Homans (1961) mentions that power differences are present in relationships in "the exchanges taken as a whole" (p. 23). Huston (1983) regards power as "applied or actual influence over a wide range of activities or domains" (p. 182). Power is also seen to involve each partner's assessments of "potential" influence in the present or future circumstances as well as observations of actual behavior (Emerson, 1962). While exchange formulations of power do not necessarily exclude laboratory research as a technique for investigating interpersonal power, they do imply that information concerning power within ongoing relationships must be gathered on entire relationships and not be limited to single exchanges. They also imply that one should consider actors' "perceptions" and not just independent observations, of both actual behavior and potential (Mooney, 1984). Power is also seen not as an attribute of individual actors, but as a property of relationships (Emerson, 1960).

There are, however, differences of opinion and interest concerning the definition of power within the exchange tradition. These differences relate to conceptions of power as coercion or as a more moderate type of
interpersonal "influence." Blau (1964) represents the former view, arguing for the Weberian notion of power as "the ability to carry out one's will despite resistance" (p. 115). This coercion is seen to be supported by sanctions and rewards. Emerson (1962) argues a similar position, "Power is the level of potential cost A can induce B to accept" (p. 32). Homans (1961), by contrast, argues that power is any type of interpersonal influence, supported by "the ability to control outcomes or payoffs for another." Power may also be the ability to persuade a partner to conform his or her preferences to your own. Power often determines whose preferences are to be given priority, for in many cases partners will have conflicting interests (Rodman, 1969). Thus power behavior in settings of interpersonal negotiation may not always be coercive. Sometimes it may be persuasive and influential.

Another dispute centers on whether power is a uni-dimensional or a multi-dimensional construct. Early studies on power often treated power simply in terms of decision-making (Heer, 1963; Leplae, 1968; Levinger, 1964). Power was typically measured in terms of which spouse exerted unilateral influence in specific areas of decision-making outlined by the researcher, with pre-determined weights of importance (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960). These procedures have been criticized (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970) as overly simplistic notions of power behavior.

French and Raven (1959), by contrast, categorized various types of interpersonal power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power and expert power. In the same tradition, others have examined power in terms of open and manipulatory types of influence (Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Lindskold, 1973), and various dimensions of
directness, competency, and resources (Johnson, 1976). Although some exchange theorists have discussed the resource-specific or situation-specific nature of power (Emerson, 1962), the general thrust of their arguments seems to be that various types of power combine to form a power balance or imbalance in the overall relationship which fundamentally rests on relative dependency (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1960; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). For the major focus of the present study, power is measured as an attribute of the entire relationship, taking into account the overall balance of power between partners. A secondary focus is to explore the various dimensions of power through a factor analysis.

Gender

Gender is an important variable to consider in any study of heterosexual relationships. Thus numerous studies have examined the role of gender on interpersonal power, frequently reporting that males have more power than females in enduring relationships (Brehm, 1985; Michaels et al., 1984; Molm, 1985; Peplau & Gordon, 1985; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970). Some laboratory research, however, found that gender had few significant effects on either actual power use or on evaluations of the powerful person (Wiley & Eskilson, 1983). This discrepancy in findings might be due to a difference of focus. The Wiley and Eskilson study (1983) focuses on power behavior in the single, temporary exchange situation designed and controlled by the researcher. The former studies focus on an overall power imbalance in pre-existing relationships.

Empirical research on how gender affects interpersonal power, however, has been virtually non-existent (Molm, 1985). Molm examined the
differential effects of structural position and participant attributions on interpersonal power. Others have studied the gender-specific strategies of power behavior (Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Gottman, 1979; Raven, Centers, & Rodrigues, 1975). The present study supplements these efforts by examining the influence of gender on power while controlling for relative dependence. Specifying the effects of relative dependence on power is important since gender effects on power noted by previous studies may have operated through inequities of relative dependence. Although not defined explicitly in terms of the exchange notion of "relative dependence," some researchers have argued from their findings that females are more dependent than males (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). The present research examines the possibility that the greater alleged power of males (Molm, 1985) is somewhat attributable to higher dependence among females.

The influence of gender on power may, however, be a composite of many factors. Some theorists have suggested that males are accorded higher status and authority through social convention (Bernard, 1972) and because of the role of the husband as breadwinner (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Through cross-cultural studies, Rodman (1972) has developed a four-stage normative model (encompassing patriarchal through egalitarian societies) which places the United States in the third stage of "transitional egalitarianism." In this stage, power is not granted strictly on the basis of gender but according to resources. Men, however, usually have greater socioeconomic resources than women, and therefore have greater power (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Rodman, 1972). This is moderated by the fact that partners in heterosexual relationships are
usually similar in social characteristics (Leslie, 1976), but when differences occur it is usually the husband or boyfriend who is older and has greater financial, educational and occupational status (Bernard, 1972; Leslie, 1976; Rubin, 1968). Furthermore, men are more frequently conservative in their attitudes towards relations between the sexes (Astin, King & Richardson, 1980; Osmond & Martin, 1975; Parelman, 1983), perhaps influencing relationships towards a patriarchal model.

There are other possible factors involved with gender's influence on power, such as egalitarian attitudes (Parelman, 1983), employment (Heer, 1958), power strategies (Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Kaplan, 1975; Raven et al., 1975) and goal-orientation (Peplau, 1984). Peplau, for instance, found that when females expressed higher career goals they reported greater power in their relationships. Relative dependency may be another gender-related factor, and the present study is designed to examine both the effects of relative dependency on power and the independent effects of gender.

The Michaels, Acock & Edwards' Study

Since the present study is a revision and extension of the Michaels, Acock, and Edwards' study (1984), it is important to review their methods and procedures. As in the present study, the chief objective of the Michaels' et al. study was to test the influence of relative dependency on power, as formulated by Thibaut and Kelley (1959), among heterosexual dating couples. Their questionnaire requested information concerning type of relationship (married, dating, engaged, etc.) but an analysis was only conducted in terms of the overall sample.
Individual subgroups were not examined.

In a manner analogous to Thibaut and Kelley's formulations, three of the four measures of relative dependency employed in the Michaels' et al. (1984) study were based on the present outcomes (O) minus alternative outcomes (CLalt) formulation as a difference measure between partners:

$$RD = (rO - rCLalt) - (pO - pCLalt),$$

where RD = relative dependency, r = respondent, p = partner, O = present outcomes, and CLalt = comparison level for alternative outcomes. Thus, as required by Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) formulations, relative dependence is made "relative" because one person's dependence is relative to the dependence of his or her partner. A fourth measure of relative dependence was included in their study which was not explicitly based on outcomes minus CLalt; rather, it simply asked about how dependent the person is on the partner. In effect, this "direct" measure of relative dependence is a measure of perceived or subjective dependence.

The results of the Michaels' et al. (1984) study were inconsistent and raise many questions. Although their finding that males have somewhat more power than females is consistent with past research, their results for relative dependency were puzzling. Firstly, their four measures of relative dependency were not highly correlated with each other (range: .03 to .44). Secondly, only their measure of "direct" dependence, which had the least in common with the exchange formula of outcomes, was inversely related to power as predicted (beta: -.23). Two of the three measures of relative dependency which were based on the formula of outcomes minus CLalt were positively related to power, refuting theoretical predictions (betas: .14, .25). The path of the other
measure was not significant. In effect, then, the results of their study at least partially refute the predictions of exchange theory and left much to speculation. For an explanation of their results they suggest that, "the social exchange formulation has received its verification primarily (if not entirely) from laboratory studies of temporary exchange relationships. Perhaps the social exchange explanation of dominance applies more to same-gender temporary relationships than it does to cross-gender intimate relationships" (p. 15).

While the explanation that exchange formulations may not apply to intimate relationships may have a certain plausibility, it may be also true that certain methodological issues and procedures involved in the Michaels' (et al., 1984) study contributed to the inconsistency of their results. Before dismissing exchange propositions as not applicable, the present study highlights certain of these issues and procedures and revises them correspondingly in the present research. The issues pertaining to the Michael's et al. study include:

1. Only responses from one partner of each relationship were obtained, yet these responses were assumed to represent the perceptions and assessments pertaining to both partners.

2. The first three measures of relative dependency and the fourth measure are actually assessing two very different phenomena, one representing a type of calculation imposed by the researcher and the other a subjective assessment by the respondent. These are not differentiated, however, in their analysis.

3. Some of the key variables were not operationalized in ways which were clearly understood by the respondents.
In regard to the first issue, it is questionable that a person can accurately assess a partner's present outcomes from a relationship (which are largely perceptual and may not be fully disclosed to a partner), not to mention his or her alternatives (which have even a greater likelihood of being kept secret from one's partner). Correspondingly, the balance of power may be perceived differently by each partner.

In regard to the second issue, there are actually two separate dimensions of relative dependence implied by the Michaels' et al. measures. The first three measures may be conceptualized as "objective" measures of relative dependency because they are based on the exchange theory formula of each partner's relational outcomes minus one's alternative outcomes. The fourth measure, on the other hand, could be labelled as "subjective" relative dependence, since it assesses directly how dependent a person feels on his or her partner with no mention of actual outcomes or alternative outcomes. If a conceptual distinction can be made between these two measures of dependence, then the separate effects on power of each type of dependence may be investigated.

In regard to the third issue, pretesting in the present study revealed that students often had difficulty in interpreting some of the Michaels et al. (1984) major indicators. They especially reported a lack of understanding concerning what was meant by "outcomes" and "alternative outcomes." Because of this, the accuracy of measurement in the Michaels' et al. (1984) study was probably diminished.

Considered together, the preceding methodological issues raise important questions concerning the validity of the Michaels' et al. (1984) measures and the reliability of their conclusions. Largely
in reaction to these issues, and in hopes of exploring the central exchange hypothesis within various subgroups, the present study derives its design.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Respondents

Half of the respondents were regularly dating, engaged, cohabiting, or married students recruited from four Sociology classes and two Communication classes at a Midwest university. The other half of the participants were the heterosexual partners of these students. Since most of these classes were lower-level, daytime classes, the ages of the students (and partners) typically ranged from 18 to 25, although about 5% reported being in their 30's or 40's. This population was presumably similar to that of the Michaels' et al. (1984) study except for the geographical area and for the fact that married students were not included in the Michaels' et al. research.

The present study population is not a random sample in any sense, although many different types of students are probably represented in the classes. Thus some exploratory comparisons can be made along with suggestions for further research. Since similarities between the study population and other university students are likely, then, the present study group may be thought of as a "convenience sample" of university students. The respondents in this investigation are therefore referred to as the "study population" or as the "present sample."

Responding to the questionnaire was voluntary. Completed questionnaires were received by 99 heterosexual couples from a pool
of about 300 students. Of this group of 198 respondents, 136 listed themselves as dating, 26 as engaged, 16 as cohabiting, and 18 as married.

Data Collection

All students attending the six classes were given two identical questionnaires and were given the following verbal instructions. First, they were asked to each complete one questionnaire immediately, and to take the other one within the next two or three days to their partners. Each student was instructed to remain absent while his or her partner was completing the questionnaire, and not to discuss the questionnaire with the partner until both surveys had been completed and returned. It was pointed out to the respondents that both questionnaires had identical numbers stamped on the front page for the sole purpose of matching responses for statistical analysis; the anonymity of their responses was guaranteed. After 15 to 20 minutes, all student questionnaires were collected. The partners were given identical instructions in a cover letter stapled to the front page of the research instrument, and were also supplied with a postage-paid envelope for facilitating the returning of their questionnaires. They also had the option of simply sealing the envelope with their enclosed questionnaires and giving it back to their partners for returning by way of the classroom.

Path Analysis

Path analysis begins with drawing a model of the theoretical relationships between variables in a system. Placement of the variables
indicates the suspected causal ordering, with exogenous variables being placed to the far left, intervening variables to the center, and the dependent variable to the far right. The basic direction of influence (positive or negative) is stated whenever a theoretical prediction is applicable. Proceeding incrementally, from left to right, regression procedures are used to determine the paths and standardized paths.

One key benefit of path analysis is that it allows for exploring the relationships between particular variables within complete systems of variables. When examining the relationship between gender and power, for instance, path analysis procedures effectively hold constant the effects of the other specified variables, giving the unique contribution or influence of gender to power within that variable system. The causal ordering of the variables, however, may not be investigated through path analysis. Causality is only derived from theory, through knowledge of time ordering, or sometimes, through blind assumption. One weakness of this procedure, then, is that it may sometimes give the impression that causal relationships are proven facts when, in reality, there may be only assumptions. Another weakness is that the strength of any path reflects the unique influences of the system of variables of which it is a part.

If the dispersion or measurement of any of the variables changes from sample to sample, or if extraneous variables influence system variables more prominently in some cases than in others, comparison of paths is correspondingly difficult. If, however, these factors are minimal, then path analysis provides a powerful tool for examining specific relationships within systems of variables.
The Model and Hypotheses

Following the procedures of path analysis, the present research tests the exchange hypothesis that relative dependence and interpersonal power are inversely related by examining the standardized paths of these variables within the total sample population and within appropriate subgroups (e.g. dating, engaged, cohabiting, and married couples) according to the following causal model.

Figure 1. Causal Model for the Present Study

The prediction is that gender (maleness) will have a direct positive link to power, and an unspecified indirect link to power through forms of relative dependence. It is expected that "subjective" and "objective" forms of relative dependence are somewhat related and therefore have a similar impact on relative power. Although not explicitly stated in exchange theory, "objective dependence" should influence "subjective dependence." In other words, one's relative outcomes minus alternatives should influence how dependent one "feels" in the relationship. Thus, there should be a direct causal link between
objective and subjective relative dependence, and the inverse relationship predicted by exchange theory between dependency and power should exist for both objective and subjective measures of relative dependence.

Methodological Revisions

The methodological and conceptual issues raised earlier concerning the Michaels' (et al., 1984) research are addressed in this study through the following procedures.

1. Using responses from both partners of the dyad.

2. Reconceptualizing the Michaels' et al. indicators to include separates measures of "objective" relative dependence and one measure of "subjective" relative dependence.

3. Revising the survey items relating to power and relative dependence in order to make them more understandable to the respondents, and to increase the validity of the variables in light of the relevant literature.

In regard to obtaining the responses of both partners, research has shown that perceptions of partners in marriage relationships often differ significantly (Cromwell & Olson, 1975; Hill, Peplau, & Rubin, 1981; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970). Because assessments of outcomes, alternatives, and dependence might easily be kept private from one's partner, obtaining "firsthand" information from each partner should result in more accurate measurement for these variables. For example, obtaining both partner's assessments of the balance of interpersonal power is desirable, since Turk and Bell (1972) suggest that each person tends to overestimate the partner's power, being aware of the other's
power through observation but relatively unaware one's own power. Since the measure of "relative" power assesses how much "more" power one partner has than the other, an average of each partner's power score is used to moderate the differences in perception between the two partners in regards to their relative power.

In regard to revising the Michaels' et al. (1984) measures, the separation of "objective" from "subjective" relative dependence is needed because two very different things are being measured. Objective relative dependence is a function of a person's score on two separate questionnaire items (one of which assesses relationship "outcomes" and the other which assesses "alternative outcomes"). This variable is called "objective" because it relates to structural properties of the relationship (and alternative relationships), not because perception is uninvolved in its assessment. This objective relative dependency corresponds the closest to the Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) formulation of dependence. "Subjective" relative dependence, however, is a function of each individual reporting directly how "dependent" he or she considers himself or herself to be in relation to an estimate of partner dependence. There is no mention of outcomes or alternative outcomes. The procedural differences in obtaining scores for these two types of dependence (and the different dimensions of dependence which are consequently implied) may explain why Michaels et al. did not find high correlations between them.

The word "relative" is used in referring to each type of dependence because scores represent a difference measure between partners. Each person's raw dependence score, then, for both types of dependence,
is subtracted from the partner's score in order to ascertain which partner is "more" dependent. In the case of objective relative dependence, a person's dependence score is compared directly to the score given by the partner. In the case of subjective relative dependence, the person's dependence score is compared with the same person's estimate of the partner's dependence. These procedures give "relative dependence" scores where each person's score is considered "relative" to the score of the partner.

Most of the other revisions in survey items are outcomes of pretesting in two settings. One of these settings was a sociology methods class, the other was an informal group of students meeting with the researcher. One of the results of these sessions was to measure relative "power" or "say" as the principle measure of power rather than relying exclusively on the Michaels' et al. measure of "dominance." Pretested respondents often interpreted the Michaels' et al. (1984) measure of "dominance" as having "heavy," "coercive," and "negative" connotations. They were therefore inclined to avoid responses expressing either self-dominance or partner-dominance, even if they indicated that one partner had more "say" in the relationship in specific areas of exchange (such as decision-making, conversation, and intimacy). Another result was the slight rewording of the Michaels' et al. indicators of outcomes, CLalt, and relative dependence based on respondents' suggestions for improving clarity of expression.
As described earlier, power is conceptualized as asymmetrical influence by exchange theorists (Emerson, 1962; Huston, 1983). Consequently, an interpersonal power measure assesses which partner has "more" influence in the relationship. "Relative power" is the power of one person compared to the power of his or her partner.

Power is measured in three ways in the present study. The first measure is used primarily for replication, the second for a factor analysis of power, and the third for the various path analyses.

Firstly, to compare results with the Michaels' (et al., 1984) study, power is measured by employing the Michaels' et al. question on dominance:

INDICATE BELOW HOW MUCH YOU THINK YOU OR YOUR PARTNER DOMINATE (RULE, CALL THE SHOTS, ETC.) IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

Secondly, to explore the dimensionality of power in intimate relationships, a question first used by Peplau & Gordon (1984) about "who has more say" in the overall relationship is revised to apply to various dimensions of heterosexual exchange where power behavior might be exercised. The basic question reads,

WHO HAS MORE "SAY" IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP — YOU OR YOUR PARTNER?

This question is followed by a listing of the following areas:

- WHERE WE GO AND WHAT WE DO TOGETHER
- SETTING THE "BASIC TERMS" OF OUR RELATIONSHIP
- "FINAL SAY" IN DECISION-MAKING
- CONVERSATION
- SPENDING MONEY
- DEGREE OF PHYSICAL AFFECTION/SEXUALITY
- ARGUMENTS/DISAGREEMENTS
- WHETHER OR NOT TO CONTINUE OUR RELATIONSHIP

For each area, respondents may rank their responses from 0...
(partner does) to 10 (I do) on an eleven-point scale. Responses are then averaged across all categories.

Thirdly, power is measured with a single item focusing on the respondent's overall assessment of power in the relationship:

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, WHO DO YOU THINK HAS MORE POWER (CONTROL) IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP - YOU OR YOUR PARTNER?

This one-item global measure of power is deliberately placed following the "say" question involving different areas of social exchange (conversation, decision-making, sexuality, etc.). This procedure was employed because pretested respondents mentioned that outlining specific areas in which "power" might be exercised would help them to respond with greater understanding and appropriateness to an overall measure of relative power. The response choices for this item range from 0 (partner has much more power) to 10 (I have much more power).

This one-item global assessment of power is exclusively selected for use in the path analysis for the following reasons. First, from the beginning it was considered to be the best measure -- because of its generality (allowing the respondent to apply it to the uniqueness of his or her own situation) and its clear representation of Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) conceptualization of power as asymmetrical influence. The other two measures are included for other purposes. The dominance measure of Michaels et al., for instance, is included primarily for the purposes of replication and comparison. It is not a viable candidate for inclusion in the analysis for reasons which surfaced in pretesting as described earlier (e.g. being interpreted as heavy or forceful coercion). In support of this judgment, the dominance measure is only weakly correlated with the one-item power measure ($r = .37$) and even
less correlated with the multi-categorical measure of "say" \( (r = .27) \).

The multi-dimensional "say" measure, on the other hand, would be a better candidate use in the analysis, but the very categories which guide the imagination of the respondent towards an appropriate assessment of power can also be counterproductive if the categories given do not happen to fit the particular relationship. Nor is there any way of knowing if some of the areas of influence listed are more important or salient to partners in assessing overall power, and thus should be given a higher weighting than others. For instance, an extreme score given for "whether or not to continue our relationship" could almost completely determine a person's perception about who has the most overall power in the relationship, while only slightly affecting the mathematical average across categories. Such situations, however, would be assessed by the more general one-item measure which allows the respondents to think of the peculiar aspects of their own situations in assessing the overall power balance.

The categorical and the one-item measures of power would appear to be closely related in most cases, however, as indicated by a relatively high correlation \( (r = .69) \). Thus, it appears that using only the overall power measure for analysis achieves the intended result of reflecting power (or influence) experienced by partners over a "wide range of activities or domains" of social exchange (Huston, 1983) while not limiting such assessments to pre-conceived categories.

Power scores are then calculated by a process which considers the perspectives of both respondents. For instance, if both partners mark a "7" (I have more power) it would not indicate responses which
are comparable since when the male answers, the "7" would mean higher male power; when the female answers, a "7" would mean higher female power. Rather, a "3" from the female and a "7" from the male, for instance, would be regarded as identical responses since both scores indicate that the male has relatively more power.

Therefore, female estimates are converted (by subtracting their scores from 10) so that their responses correspond to those of their male counterparts. Male responses are left unaltered. Thus, the new scores for both partners in a relationship can be interpreted as one scale where scores over 5 mean higher male power and scores below 5 indicate higher female power. An average is then calculated. This average is used unaltered for males, and the average is converted back for females (by subtracting the new average from 10). The resulting power scores for both male and female, respectively, signifies a power "average" where higher numbers mean higher power for the respondent. In the case where both partners consider themselves slightly more powerless (or powerful) than the other, this averaging procedure results in an "equal power" score for each partner. Where both partners agree that one or the other holds more power in the relationship, scores for both partners are obtained which appropriately reflect this power imbalance.

Measurement of Objective Relative Dependence

The reader is referred to the previous section on methodological revisions for a description of the reasons for separating "objective" and "subjective" relative dependence measures and for a description of each. Here one is advised to remember that only objective relative
dependence is based upon Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) conceptualization of outcomes minus alternative outcomes. Thus the following formula first used by Michaels et al. (1984) is employed: \( RD = (rO - rCLalt) - (pO - pCLalt) \), where \( RD \) = relative dependency, \( r \) = respondent, \( p \) = partner, \( O \) = present outcomes, and \( CLalt \) = comparison level for alternative outcomes. This formula measures relative dependency as present outcomes \((O)\) minus alternative outcomes \((CLalt)\) as a difference measure between partners.

As with the measurement of power, three separate measures are used for "objective relative dependence" (primarily for replication). Only one of these, however, is selected for use in the analysis. All three of these measures are similar to the dependence measures used in Michaels et al. (1984) study except that, (a) partners' actual responses are used in place of estimates for the objective measures, (b) a different method of calculation is used in obtaining the score for the subjective measure, and (c) the wording of the questions is revised somewhat for clarity. A general comparison of the three measures will first be given, followed by detailed descriptions of each measure, and a rationale is presented for the exclusive selection of the first measure (and omission of the other two) for use in the analysis.

The first two of these measures use one survey item to measure relationship outcomes and another item to measure alternative outcomes. The separate scores obtained are then combined according to the given formula to obtain the overall score for objective relative dependence. The third measure uses the same formula but uses only one survey item to measure both outcomes and alternatives; the respondents are asked to
consider outcomes from their present relationship and to compare them with outcomes from alternative relationships all within the same question.

The first measure of objective relative dependence measures outcomes with the following question:

ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING WHAT YOU GET OUT OF IT, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR PARTNER ON A SCALE FROM 0 (LOWEST) TO 10 (HIGHEST)?

Response choices for this question on "outcomes" are recorded on an eleven-point scale, with subtext ranging from "not at all positive" (0) to "extremely positive" (10). The question itself represents a revision of the Michaels' et al. (1984) measure, for which pretested respondents indicated difficulty in understanding the term "outcomes." Outcomes is thus measured by the phrase "considering what you get out of it." The concept of CL, comparison level for alternatives, is reflected by the phrase "rate your overall relationship" in a way which seems consistent with the intent of Thibaut and Kelley (1959, p. 12). The pretested respondents indicated that the measure was easy to understand, and that outcomes relative to their expectations guided their responses.

For the second measure of objective relative dependence, outcome scores are based on a "summation" of outcomes in eight dimensions, representing a replication and revision of the Michaels' et al. "outcome summation" measure, which in turn is based on Foa and Foa's (1974) theory of exchangeable resources. The revised question for determining "summated" outcomes thus reads:
ON A SCALE FROM "0" (LOW) TO "10" (HIGH), HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR PARTNER ON PROVIDING FOR YOU THE FOLLOWING THINGS?
(please write in a number from 0 - 10 for each)

- LOVE (affection, warmth, caring, etc.).
- SELF-WORTH (respecting me as a person - my abilities & opinions).
- STATUS (helping me gain prestige or approval with family, friends, or others).
- MONEY (spending money on you, buying & providing things for you).
- COMPANIONSHIP (willingness to spend time with you, being a good companion).
- PERSONAL SPACE (time to yourself, freedom to be yourself and by yourself when you need it).
- PHYSICAL AFFECTION (pleasing you sexually and/or with types of physical affection).
- FAVORS (doing things for you, being helpful, giving favors).

Responses are averaged for each partner and placed into the formula (described earlier in this section) to determine each person's score for this second measure of objective relative dependence.

For each of these first two measures, a separate measure of CLalt (alternative outcomes) is required to complete the formula. In the measurement of alternative outcomes, the difficulties reported by pre-tested subjects in understanding the Michaels' et al. (1984) wording of "alternative outcomes" (and even, in some cases, with imagining "alternatives") is considered. The question for alternative outcomes is thus preceded with a question concerning "alternatives salience" which reads:

NOW THINK FOR A MOMENT ABOUT YOUR ALTERNATIVES TO YOUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP. THESE MIGHT INCLUDE DATING (BEING MARRIED TO) SOMEONE ELSE, OR JUST BEING BY YOURSELF. SOME PEOPLE MAY SELDOM CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO THEIR RELATIONSHIP UNLESS IT SUDDENLY BREAKS UP. OTHERS MAY OFTEN "SHOP THE FIELD" AND CONSIDER OTHER ALTERNATIVES EVEN WHILE INVOLVED WITH THEIR PARTNERS. "HOW MUCH" DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK ABOUT/CONSIDER "ALTERNATIVES" TO YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

Responses on the eleven-point scale include 0 (never) to 2-3 (seldom) to 5 (sometimes) to 7-8 (often) to 10 (always). This question precedes not only the measure of alternative outcomes (follow-
ing) but also the third measure of objective relative dependence described earlier which incorporates the concept of alternatives into its construction.

Still keeping in mind the respondents' reported need to visualize possibilities, the question measuring alternative outcomes (which followed the "alternatives salience" question) is worded as follows:

NOW DECIDE WHAT YOUR NEXT BEST ALTERNATIVE TO YOUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP REALLY IS. THIS MIGHT MEAN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE ELSE OR JUST BEING BY YOURSELF. JUST LIKE YOU RATED YOUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR PARTNER, NOW "RATE" YOUR "NEXT BEST ALTERNATIVE" TO IT ON A SCALE FROM 0 (LOW) TO 10 (HIGHEST).

As with the single-item measure of outcomes, responses for alternative outcomes are recorded on an eleven-point scale from 0 (not at all positive) to 10 (extremely positive).

The third measure of objective relative dependence is similar to the Michaels et al. (1984) "single item" measure, and is based upon the question:

NOW RATE HOW MUCH YOUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP IS ABOVE OR BELOW WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT FROM YOUR NEXT BEST ALTERNATIVE.

Response choices ranged on an eleven-point scale from 0 (much below alternative) to 10 (much above alternative). Since the concept of CLalt, or alternative outcomes, has already been incorporated into this question, each person's response in this case is simply subtracted from the partner's score to determine the degree of relative dependence.

The last dependence measure presented (which attempts to measure outcomes and alternatives all within the same question) is included for the purpose of replication only. The operation of assessing outcomes and alternatives simultaneously may be exceedingly difficult for
many respondents. This measure is thus judged not to be the best one to use in the analysis. The outcome question with eight categories is also not used for analysis purposes. Its chief function is to help respondents intuitively imagine the outcomes from their own relationship before they respond to the one-item question of overall outcomes. Many respondents, for instance, wrote remarks on the survey in regards to the "status" category such as "this does not apply at all to our relationship," giving the impression that the given categories did not fit well for some relationships. Nevertheless, the dependence scores based on the first and second measures of outcomes (the "overall outcomes" and the "categorical outcomes" measures) were highly correlated ($r = .93$). These two measures, however, were only moderately correlated with the third "single-item measure" ($r = .34$ and $.30$, respectively). Because these correlations imply that the "overall outcomes" measure did reflect salient categories of outcomes (while not being bound by them), and because of the low correlations of these two with the third measure, the first "overall" measure of objective relative dependence was exclusively chosen for use in the analysis.

Measurement of Subjective Relative Dependence

Pretest discussions indicated that respondents had difficulty understanding dependency as given by the "direct" Michaels' et al. measure, or interpreted it in a way far different from the tradition of exchange theory. Many respondents, for instance, interpreted "dependence" in terms of financial support for school, basic life support, or other, more general matters. The exchange concept of
dependence, however, is meant to be specifically related to the resources or outcomes received in the context of a specified social relationship (Thibaut and Kelly, 1959; Emerson, 1960). It also, of course, is meant to include notions of utility or salience of outcomes received as well as an awareness of alternatives. The following description of the meaning of dependence according to the exchange tradition thus preceded the measure of subjective relative dependence:

IMPORTANT! Keep the following definition of "dependency" in mind as you answer questions 46 and 47 below.

How much YOU DEPEND on your partner is a matter of three things:
1) how much you get out of your relationship to your partner
2) how important the relationship is to you, and
3) how good your alternatives are.

The following two questions were then included to measure subjective relative dependence.

Q46 CONSIDERING YOUR ALTERNATIVES, HOW "DEPENDENT" WOULD YOU SAY YOU ARE ON YOUR PARTNER TO SATISFY YOUR WANTS AND NEEDS IN A DATING/MARITAL RELATIONSHIP?

Q47 CONSIDERING HIS OR HER ALTERNATIVES, HOW "DEPENDENT" WOULD YOU SAY YOUR PARTNER IS ON YOU TO SATISFY HIS OR HER WANTS AND NEEDS IN A DATING/MARITAL RELATIONSHIP?

In examining subject responses to these two questions, it became apparent that partners often had similar impressions about who was the "more dependent" when questions 46 and 47 (shown above) were considered together, but their scaling procedures (where they marked their responses on the eleven-point scale) were often different by a few points. For instance, both the male and the female would often agree that the female was more dependent by a point or two, but the male's responses would be marked at, say, 9 and 10, and the female's responses at 8 and 7. When considering question 46 only, it would initially appear that the male
scored "9" on dependence and the female "8," thus making her less dependent than her male counterpart. In actuality, however, when considering questions 46 and 47 as a set, it is apparent that both partners marked the female a point more dependent than the male.

In determining the individual scores for subjective relative dependence, then, the response to question 47 is subtracted from the response to question 46, giving each person's impression of self-dependence relative to perception of partner-dependence. This measure is strictly "subjective" in the sense that it measures each person's impression of personal dependence relative to perceived partner dependence independently of what the partner may think. Subjectivity also is involved in the sense that it measures a person's direct report of dependence without considering such objective conditions as outcomes or alternative outcomes. The measure may still be considered "relative" in the sense that perceived partner dependence is considered as a standard of comparison for assessing one's own dependence. The resulting score represents an individual's assessment of who is more dependent in the relationship, and to what degree.

Design and Measurement for Couple Data

Individual data taken from dyadic relationships is not really independent, especially when partner scores are combined and manipulated into averages. The sample itself is not independent if the desired unit of analysis is the individual, since the selection process proceeded by pairing. The counterargument is that such formalities apply primarily to the logic of inference, and that since the data are dependent only by
pairs (the dyads being independent of one another), most of the cautions applicable to this study's findings serve only to proportionately reduce the powers of generalization. This, however, is of minor consequence since the sample is not random. The design of the study, therefore, does not allow for generalizing in a technical sense, but for exploring various possibilities for future research.

As an exploratory study, then, the design of the present research and analysis procedures would seem appropriate. Although behavior in a dyadic relationship is interdependent, such behavior is individual in origin. Correspondingly, at least one of the key variables in the study, gender, cannot be examined at the level of the dyad, and the intuitive strength of the concept of subjective relative dependence would also be greatly reduced. The dyad then, in one sense, functions not as the unit of analysis but as the design for more accurate measurement of variables operating within relationships but interpreted at the individual level. Nevertheless, the argument for considering the dyad as the true unit of analysis must be taken seriously for reasons given, and the present study includes an analysis of dyadic data. Gender, of course, cannot be considered in the analysis, but the remaining variables are examined according to the following model (see page 42).

The procedure used is a path analysis, but the measurement of the variables is slightly revised. Since male and female scores for both objective relative dependence and power are calculated jointly and represent inversions of each other (e.g. if male power = 3, female power = -3), male scores are used for both of these variables. For subjective relative dependence, the independent scores of each individual
Figure 2. Causal Model for the Dyadic Sample

were integrated according to the following formula: \((M_{46} - M_{47}) - (F_{46} - F_{47})\), where \(M_{46}\) and \(M_{47}\) equals the male response to questions 46 and 47 (given in an earlier section, see page 38) and \(F_{46}\) and \(F_{47}\) are equated with the female responses to the same questions. In other words, the female score for subjective relative dependence is subtracted from the corresponding male score. All positive scores thus represent greater male dependence and all negative scores represent greater female dependence.

Factor Analysis of Power

The factor analysis of power utilizes the adapted version of Peplau and Gordon's (1984) measure of who has more "say", revised to address eight dimensions of power behavior: joint activities, basic terms of the relationship, final say in decision-making, conversation, spending money, physical affection/sexuality, arguments/disagreements, and relationship continuance. This procedure is designed to explore dimensions of power which emerge from responses of participants on the
basis of these categories. Preliminary correlations are made between the central variables and three dimensions of power constructed through examining the results of the factor analysis procedure.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The Overall Population

The path models which follow test the hypotheses that gender is directly related to power, that both forms of dependence are inversely related to power, and the objective relative dependence is directly related to subjective relative dependence. Figure 3 below presents the significant relationships for the entire study population.

![Path Diagram](image)

Figure 3. Path Results for the Overall Population

* Numbers above are standardized slopes or paths and are represented in the following discussion with "B," the Greek letter beta. All path scores are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

** NS, denotes non-significant paths at the $p < .05$ level.
For the overall population, gender is positively related to power (B = .25). Gender was not, however, related to either objective or subjective relative dependence. Interaction results between gender and each form of relative dependence analyzed through dummy variable regression also proved insignificant. Objective relative dependence does not impact power directly, but is slightly related to subjective relative dependence (B = .19) with a resulting indirect path to power (B = -.06). Subjective relative dependence had the largest influence on power (B = -.31), influencing power even more strongly than did gender.

Subgroups

Four subgroups were similarly examined utilizing path analysis: those partners who were dating, engaged, cohabiting, or married. Only paths significant at the p < .05 level are included in the following diagrams, although several paths which approached significance and which represent interesting trends in the data are subsequently presented for exploratory purposes in the discussion.

Dating Partners

Figure 4 on the next page (see page 45) presents the significant relationships for dating partners using the previously presented model. For the dating partners in this study (n = 138), gender is directly related to power (B = .19), and objective relative dependence is directly related to subjective relative dependence (B = .21). Subjective relative dependence is negatively related to power (B = -.33).
Engaged Partners

Figure 5 below presents the significant relationship found for the engaged partners with the study model.

For the engaged partners (n = 26), the only significant relationship found at the .05 level was a direct path from gender to objective relative dependence (B = -.43). Other paths found to power from gender
and both forms of dependence which are almost significant at the p < .05 level are introduced below and explored further in the discussion.

Cohabiting Partners

Figure 6 below presents the significant relationship found for the cohabiting subgroup with the study model.

For the cohabiting partners in our study (n = 16), the only significant relationship found was a direct path from subjective relative dependence to power (B = -.52). An inverse relationship between gender and subjective relative dependence (p < .06) is given in the discussion.

Married Partners

Figure 7 which follows (see page 47) presents the significant relationships for the married subgroup with the study model.

For the married partners in our samples (n = 18), gender is directly related to power (B = .48), and objective relative dependence is also directly related to power (B = .66). An inverse relationship found...
between subjective relative dependence and power ($p < .10$) is examined in the discussion.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 7. Path Results for Married Partners

The Dyadic Model

Figure 8 below presents the significant relationships for data treated by couples with the study model.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 8. Path Results for Couple Data

When the data are analyzed by couple, gender is not part of the analysis. Thus the above results represent the operation of the
variables within each dyad, and the responses of each individual combine to portray a picture of dyadic behavior and responses. Objective relative dependence is directly related to power ($B = .16$) as with the previous models, and subjective relative dependence is negatively related to power ($B = -.43$). Objective relative dependence is directly related to subjective relative dependence ($B = .25$).

**Factor Analysis of Power Dimensionality**

Using a varimax rotation procedure, three factors emerged by the fourth and final iteration of factoring. Table 1 below presents the rotated factor matrix with associated factor loadings.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>.62300</td>
<td>.15008</td>
<td>.13503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>.23495</td>
<td>* .64081</td>
<td>.35847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>.72595</td>
<td>-.01102</td>
<td>.25004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>.21917</td>
<td>-.18473</td>
<td>* .55219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>.61828</td>
<td>-.12262</td>
<td>-.43150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>.01928</td>
<td>.23537</td>
<td>* .63605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>.34818</td>
<td>* .57051</td>
<td>-.36398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>-.19068</td>
<td>* .77688</td>
<td>.01834</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* designates the highest factor loadings per category

Three composite power factors were constructed using the tabled values above to give each of the eight power items proportionate weight. The items yielding the highest factor loadings were used to characterize and label each power variable as presented in Table 2 (see page 49).
Table 2

Labels and Composition of Power Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POWFAC 1</th>
<th>POWFAC 2</th>
<th>POWFAC 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Decision-making&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Boundaries&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Intimacy&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23 Joint Activities</td>
<td>Q24 Basic terms</td>
<td>Q26 Conversat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25 Final Say/Decis.</td>
<td>Q29 Arguments</td>
<td>Q28 Physical Affec/Sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27 Spending Money</td>
<td>Q30 Continuation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Path analysis procedures using each power factor consecutively as the dependent variable are employed with the standard path model given in previous sections. All eight items of the power matrix were used with their proportionate weights to create the three power factors.

The only significant path to "decision-making" was a direct path from gender \((B = .35, p < .000)\).

![Figure 9. Path Results for Power as Decision-Making](image)

A similar procedure for "boundaries" produced no significant paths at the \(p < .05\) level. Correlations were similarly non-significant. A
path analysis for "intimacy" (see Figure 10 below) produced a significant path only for subjective relative dependence ($B = -.15, p < .05$).

![Path diagram](image)

Figure 10. Path Results for Power as Intimacy

Some General Findings and Averages

The research questionnaire covers various topics not required for the path analysis procedures, areas such as satisfaction, commitment, educational and career goals, conservatism and liberalism about the social roles of men and women, alternatives salience, and personality dominance. One of the most general observations which could be made from an examination of Table 3 (see page 51) is that males and females answer almost identically in every area. A list of some of the averages obtained for different items are presented for the entire sample.

An examination of this table (following) might lead one to the conclusion that many of the findings of this study are based on rather minute differences in responses. This is not necessarily true, for power, dependency, outcomes and other variables may vary more widely.
Table 3
Average Responses for Selected Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>7.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Power</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner's Attractiveness</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td>8.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>8.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives Salience</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Outcomes</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction to Alternative</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>8.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Importance</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>7.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-dependency</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Aspiration</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Aspiration</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>7.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-image</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>7.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Dominance</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>6.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism of Gender Roles</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>6.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

within dyadic relationships than is apparent in considering global averages. Still, the similarities of overall response patterns are noteworthy. Some of these global averages which vary somewhat by gender include relative power, education and career aspiration, and conservatism of gender roles. Certain patterns of response, especially those for "outcomes" and "alternative outcomes," are discussed in the following section as possible reasons for not obtaining the predicted inverse relationship between objective relative dependence and power.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

An Overview

To facilitate points of discussion, the results of path analysis procedures with the total sample and with various subgroups have been placed into a table (see Table 4, page 53), illustrating standardized slopes and corresponding significance levels.

Table 4 may be examined by row or by column. In other words, the effects of particular variables within columns (such as that of gender on power) may be traced across subgroups, or systems of variables by row may be examined for each subgroup. Remarkable differences for the paths of various subgroups are revealed through this type of examination, and the present discussion makes frequent reference to these figures.

Some paths which are not significant at the p < .05 level but which highlight trends in the data are included in Table 4 for exploratory purposes. This practice was undertaken since the small sample sizes of various subgroups may (in some cases) lead to a non-significant path, even if the results are representative of the larger universe to which the sample corresponds. In other words, a beta with p < .20 still has favorable odds of representing a true difference from the null hypothesis (of no relationship). Holding to a "safer" critical value (e.g., p < .05) helps guard against Type I errors (finding relationships where there are none), but it also increases the chance of committing a
### Table 4
Path Analysis Results for Overall Sample, Dyadic Sample and Subgroups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group/Sample</th>
<th>G to P</th>
<th>SRD to P</th>
<th>ORD to P</th>
<th>ORD to SRD</th>
<th>G to ORD</th>
<th>G to SRD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>** .25</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*(198)</td>
<td>*** (.00)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>(.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyadic</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(99)</td>
<td>applicable</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(138)</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(26)</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td>(.20)</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(.01)</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY:**
- G = Gender (maleness)
- SRD = Subjective Relative Dependence
- P = Power
- ORD = Objective Relative Dependence

* Number of respondents (or dyads with dyadic sample)
** Numbers on top are paths or standardized slopes
*** Numbers contained in parentheses are significance levels

Type II error (preventing us from considering a result which may, in fact, still be representative of the larger population). Thus, since the odds are still in our favor, and since the betas (p < .20) are consistent with trends in the data (e.g. with significant results, p < .05, from other subgroups) this unorthodox practice has been adopted in the present instance for the exploratory purposes of this study. Any conclusions based on this procedure are, of course, tentative and should...
not be generalized beyond the present sample without further study.

If, however, the tabled figures are truly representative, some interesting relationships may be observed. The remaining discussion focuses on these observed relationships in reference to the major objectives of this study. These objectives are, (1) the testing of the exchange hypothesis that relative dependency and power are inversely related (for all subgroups), (2) examining the effects of gender on power and dependency, (3) exploring the separable dimensions of power, and (4) observing the effects of two types of relative dependency.

The Effects of Two Types of Relative Dependency

The four major findings of this study concerning relative dependence can be reviewed as follows:

1. It seems appropriate to separate "objective" dependence as a construct of exchange theory (based on outcomes and alternatives) from "subjective" dependence as a direct assessment of individual dependence (or "felt" dependence reported by the respondent).

2. Each type of dependency has its own separate relationship to power, with objective dependence being directly related to power and subjective dependence having an inverse relationship.

3. Objective relative dependence may lead to an increase of subjective relative dependence, at least in some cases.

4. Females may be more dependent than males within certain types of relationships.

There are two reasons why it makes sense to speak of two separate types of dependency which operate in intimate relationships. First,
two very different things are being measured by objective dependence and
by subjective dependence measures. Objective relative dependence assess-
es relationship "outcomes" and "alternative outcomes," subtracting
alternatives from present outcomes in a manner not dissimilar to how
an economist might calculate the reliance (dependence) of a manufacturer
on any one supplier of raw materials. Subjective relative dependence, on
the other hand, is based on a direct report of the respondent concerning
his or her dependence on the partner. To the extent that partners in
relationships do not conceptualize their own dependence as present out-
comes compared to alternative outcomes (which is the present formulation
of objective relative dependence), this measure may not truly represent
"dependence" on one's partner, at least not the same type of dependence
as "subjective" relative dependence. In other words, objective relative
dependence is a construct of the researcher and may not correspond to how
partners intuitively measure their own dependence. The obvious differ-
ences between the content of these two measures makes its imperative that
they be treated differently. Second, as the findings of both the
Michael's et al. study and the present research have indicated, these
two types of relative dependence are not highly correlated (r = .16) and
have almost opposite effects on interpersonal power. These observations
make it clear that objective and subjective relative dependency should
be considered as separate variables.

The present findings are supported by Michael's et al. (1984)
apparent refutation of exchange theory's prediction concerning relative
dependency; in both studies relative dependency is not inversely related
to power. In the present study, with the entire sample, the dyadic
sample, and at least two of the subgroups, objective relative dependence is found to be positively related with power. For married partners, the direct effect of objective dependence on power is most striking (B = .66), more than doubling the path for engaged partners (B = .29), and increasing by a factor of 5 the explained variance in power (44% to 8%). For dating and cohabiting partners, the effect of objective dependence on power is also direct but is not significant at the p < .20 level (for cohabiting couples for instance, B = .29 where p < .22). The results of the total sample (B = .12) and the dyadic sample (B = .16) also support the finding that objective relative dependence is directly related to power.

It should be remembered that objective dependency in the present study is explicitly based on the propositions and formulas implied by Thibaut and Kelley (1959; see also Michaels et al., 1984). They propose that as the dependency of one partner increases, his or her power is diminished. In the present study, the reverse situation seems to hold; as a person grows more "objectively" dependent on the partner, power increases. This might be explained by an examination of the two components of objective relative dependency, (1) present relationship outcomes, and (2) alternative outcomes. In general, respondents rated "alternatives" fairly low (4.02 was the average response, located on the "not at all positive" side of the continuum). The average response for "present relationship outcomes," however, was fairly high (8.08 was the average response, located on the "extremely positive" side of the continuum). Some people even put a "0" for "alternatives," meaning that for them "objective relative dependence" was entirely a matter of out-
comes. Thus, for most of the respondents, when outcomes are high, objective dependence is also high. A "direct relationship" between objective relative dependence and power generally means, then, that as the level of outcomes received from the present relationship increases over available alternatives, relative power increases.

There are two possible explanations for the direct link between objective dependence and power. One is that the causal ordering of the model is backwards, that greater relative power should lead to increased outcomes. The greater power of one partner, then, might be what enables this person to maintain outcomes superior to those of his or her companion. Another possible explanation might be that in some relationships one partner is sometimes considered more good-looking, talented, worthy, or deserving than the other; in short, he or she might be considered as a more "valuable" companion than the partner. In this case, the other partner may, out of gratitude to the first for participating in the relationship, grant both greater outcomes (which is what objective relative dependence primarily measures) and more power to the partner.

Subjective dependence, on the other hand, consistently displayed the inverse relationship with power attributed by exchange theory to objective relative dependence. The effect of subjective relative dependence on power appears to be relatively constant for traditional partners (range of betas: -.28 to -.33), but was markedly higher for cohabiting partners ($B = -.52$). Thus for both sexes, an increase in "felt" dependence results in less power, but the magnitude of this effect appears to be the greatest with cohabiting partners.

Thus, subjective dependence is inversely related to power (see
also Michaels et al., 1984) while objective dependence is directly related to power. How dependent a person "feels" on one's partner does appear to diminish power, but relative dependence as conceptualized by exchange theory appears to increase power. This casts doubt on the exchange formulation of dependence, perhaps suggesting that objective relative dependence should be labelled as "relative outcomes" (since objective relative dependence only considers outcomes and alternative outcomes in its calculation, and the values of alternative outcomes are generally small). Subjective dependence, on the other hand, appears to be consistently related to decreased power.

The positive path from objective to subjective relative dependence noted for the entire study population (B = .19) was only confirmed by significance level for the dating subgroup (B = .21). However, the paths for the other three subgroups were also positive (engaged: B = .26, cohabiting: B = .24, married: B = .04), but these paths were not significant. These findings suggest, at least in some cases, that greater relative outcomes may lead to increased subjective feelings of dependence. As this study indicates, however, the degree of relative dependence (and of power) may also be a function of gender. The greater subjective dependence of females in some situations will thus be discussed in the following section on gender.

The Effects of Gender

Table 4 (see page 53) highlights a progressive gender effect across groups. The effect of gender (maleness) on power appears to steadily increase with the permanence of the relationship. Dating
males have more power than dating females ($B = .19$), but less power than engaged males ($B = .33$), who in turn have less power than married males ($B = .48$). The gender-to-power path for cohabiting partners was also positive ($B = .27$), but was not significant.

The increasing influence noted for gender on power with relationship "permanence" stimulates speculation. Gender paths to power appear to range on a continuum from dating couples (where relationship ties are usually more casual, $B = .19$) to marriage (where relationship bonds are the most permanent, $B = .48$). Does this imply that a male intentionally plays the role of a gentleman until he "catches" his mate? Or, perhaps, norms of male leadership operate at all levels of heterosexual relationships, but most acutely where acquaintance and intimacy are the greatest.

Another possibility is that subgroups are not truly comparable to each other. Most of the dating respondents are younger in age than their married counterparts. It might be that there are differences between the dating and married respondents in our sample that extend beyond marital status. Students who come back to school after marriage may be more likely to be involved in traditional (male dominant) relationships than the majority of university students. Given the small sample of married students in this study (only nine couples) and a lack of demographic information, it is probably inappropriate to generalize the present finding (of an increasing gender effect with relationship permanence) beyond the present sample. The more general finding of a direct effect of gender on power appears, however, to be well substantiated (Brehm, 1985; Peplau & Gordon, 1985; Molm, 1985; Michaels
Gender also influences relative dependency in certain situations. Females appear to be more objectively dependent in engaged relationships ($B = -0.43$) and more subjectively dependent in cohabiting relationships ($B = -0.50$). Since objective relative dependence primarily measures present relationship outcomes, the first observation would mean that females tend to have greater outcomes (over alternatives) in engaged relationships than would males. Perhaps this would be true if males begin to feel more "trapped" than females do as the ceremony approaches (and that "keeping options open" is more important to males than to females), or if females tend to anticipate the actual wedding event more keenly than do males (and thus derive greater subjective outcomes from their relationship during the engagement period).

The second observation, that females tend to be more subjectively dependent within cohabiting relationships, might result from the possibility that such relationships lack the typical norms and expectations which more traditional relationships hold in regards to male responsibility. In marriage, for instance, a male may be bound to his wife through a sense of duty. In cohabiting relationships, perhaps females are somewhat more apprehensive that their male companions will leave for more attractive alternatives. If females tend to develop emotional bonds to one particular sexual partner, perhaps the possibility of losing one's partner could lead to a greater sense of dependency for females in cohabiting relationships. This finding suggests that living arrangements may have profound effects on interpersonal variables of interaction, and leads to the following discussion of subgroups.
Differences Between Subgroups

**Dating Partners**

For the dating partners in our overall sample (n = 138), males have more power than females (B = .19), but only slightly. Gender explains only 4% of the variance in power. There is a direct relationship from objective dependence to subjective dependence (B = .21), and an inverse relationship from subjective dependence to power (B = -.33). Thus it appears that those who receive relatively more from dating relationships tend to feel more dependent on their partners, and those who are subjectively dependent tend to have less power.

One interpretation of the slight influence of gender on power in this instance is that males may permit egalitarian norms to prevail through courtship in order to "win" their partner's commitment and allegiance, after which males would tend to exercise more power. The other interpretation is that egalitarian norms are maybe more prevalent among younger couples than they might have been in the past, and males and females who are dating both tend to view relationships in terms of interaction between equals.

The finding that dating respondents with relatively greater outcomes tend to be more subjectively dependent may reflect Waller and Hill's (1951) Principle of Least Interest. A person who reports greater relative outcomes than the partner may have more interest in maintaining the relationship, thus leading to a greater degree of subjective dependence. The fact that this finding seems applicable only in the dating subgroup may reflect the more casual, tenuous nature of dating relationships.
Without the support of social norms to solidify commitment in the relationship, those persons who would be most interested in continuing the relationship might feel the most dependent upon their partners.

Engaged Partners

For the engaged partners in our sample (26), reported power is slightly more pronounced \( (B = .33) \) for males over females (than with males who are simply dating), yet only 10% of the variance in the power variable is explained. The strongest path in this model is from gender to objective relative dependence \( (B = -.43) \), an effect not noticeable with other subgroups. Thus, for engaged females, reported relationship outcomes appear to be relatively higher over alternatives than is true with the males. As with the overall sample, objective relative dependence for engaged partners is directly related to power \( (B = .29) \), and subjective relative dependence is negatively related to power \( (B = -.30) \).

The only unique finding for engaged couples seems to be that females tend to be more objectively dependent (having greater outcomes, or having less desirable alternatives, \( B = -.43 \)) than their partners. As mentioned earlier, this may represent the greater anticipation that females may have for the wedding event itself, or it may also reflect that engaged females mark their alternatives lower. Breaking off an engagement may be seen as more of a disgrace by females than by males, who might then be disinterested in other alternatives.
Cohabiting Partners

The results for cohabiting partners (n = 16) include some of the most interesting observations made in this study, not only because of the magnitude of the paths, but because of the paths which dropped out. There is no direct effect from gender to power as with all other subgroups, yet a strong indirect relationship from gender to power exists through subjective relative dependence (B = .26). Females appear to be more subjectively dependent in cohabiting relationships than males (B = -.50), and those who feel more dependent in the relationship are likely to have less power (B = -.52). Objective relative dependency has dropped out of the model. The only examined influences on power in this model appear to be a negative path from subjective relative dependence, and an indirect path originating with gender. Gender appears to have no independent effect on power. Whatever effect gender does have is mediated by how dependent a person feels, and females report feeling more relatively dependent than males.

The implication that males do not have greater relative power in cohabiting relationships may reflect the egalitarian norms which might operate in the relatively non-committal structure of such relationships. The finding that those who are subjectively dependent on their partners frequently report having less power (B = -.52) may also reflect the lack of explicit commitment. Without formal ties of commitment, those in cohabiting relationships who feel dependent (and who are often females, B = -.50) may relinquish more control to one's partner in order to maintain the relationship through concession where, ordinarily, stability may have been supported through social norms.
Married Partners

The model for married partners (n = 18) presents a picture consistent with some of the trends in previous models. The strongest relationship between gender and power is apparently existent for married males; men have much more relative power in marital relationships than women (B = .48), explaining 23% of the variance of the power variable. However, gender appears not to influence either type of relative dependence. Married men and women in this study report relatively equal dependence in their relationships with each other. As with the total sample, subjective relative dependence is related inversely to power (B = -.28). As married partners feel more dependent in their relationships, their relative power is decreased.

Objective relative dependence displays the highest relationship with power to be observed in this model (B = .66), with a direct path which explains 44% of the variance in power. In other words, as outcomes over alternatives goes up for married partners, their relative power increases. Or, as mentioned earlier, the causal influence may really flow the other direction. Perhaps greater power in the relationship leads to greater outcomes for the powerful person. Since in this study married men appear to have the greater power, this may well signify that men tend to derive greater marital outcomes than women because of men's their ability to structure circumstances to their advantage. Perhaps, as has been the case in other periods in history, the women still do the chores and the men reap the benefits.
The Dyadic Sample

In the model for dyadic units (99), paths between all variables (except for gender, which is necessarily omitted) support the findings of the general model with the total sample. Objective relative dependence is directly related to power ($B = .16$), and subjective relative dependence is negatively related to power ($B = -.43$). Objective relative dependence is directly related to subjective relative dependence ($B = .25$). Thus the functioning of these variables within the dyad appears to operate in an analogous way to when partners are considered separately as the unit of analysis. The results represent the operation of these variables per dyad or per relationship, generally supporting the conclusions reached under a discussion of the total sample.

Reflections on Exchange Theory

One possible interpretation for objective relative dependency's effect on power in the present study involves social exchange theory's somewhat "marketplace" interpretation of human nature. It is possible that the dynamics of economic exchange do not operate as strongly (and indeed may be partly reversed) within intimate heterosexual relationships as they do in other spheres of social interaction. Perhaps Clark and Mills (1979) classification of "exchange" versus "communal" relationships might be employed to examine the social conditions where exchange principles do and do not operate. It is conceivable, for instance, that exchange relations may be operative in one's interactions with a store clerk but not with one's intimate partner. Perhaps factors such as
reciprocity, commitment or social norms are more important within intimate relationships than they are in more casual exchanges. Such views of the limited applicability of exchange principles have been previously raised when examining equity (Traupmann, Peterson, Utne, & Hatfield, 1981; Michaels et al., 1984), exchange versus non-exchange social exchanges (Murstein, 1979), and attraction and love (Fromm, 1956).

The questions these findings raise concern the proposed universality of exchange propositions (Homans, 1961; Emerson, 1960, 1962; Blau, 1964). To the extent that exchange principles can be demonstrated, do they operate with functional consistency over a broad range of relationship arrangements? The answer is probably not. The subgroups examined in this study exhibited significant differences in the strengths (if not always the directions) of variable influences. Gender, for instance, does not affect subjective dependence for most groups, but for cohabiting partners the effect is strong ($B = -0.50$). Furthermore, cohabiting partners experience a much greater loss of power when subjective dependency is high than do other groups ($B = -0.52$).

Certain principles of equity might explain some of the variations noted between subgroups. If standards of fair exchange relate to the specific contexts in which they originate, one would expect to find corresponding differences between dating, engaged, cohabiting and married couples. What is considered to be fair behavior between cohabiting partners, for instance, may be regarded differently by dating couples or married couples. The varied structural circumstances surrounding different types of intimate relationships and the implicit
understandings between partners may lead to different standards of fairness. Given this plausible interpretation, it may be that exchange principles do indeed operate in intimate relationships, but only as moderated through situational-specific principles of equity.

It appears from the results of the factor analysis that there are separable dimensions of power within intimate heterosexual relationships, and that these dimensions of power relate differently to gender and to relative dependence. The specific implications of the factor analysis procedures undertaken are that (a) the relatively greater power of males operates largely in the realm of decision-making, (b) power in setting the boundaries for and negotiating the continuation of the relationship (and in working out disputes) is relatively equal, and (3) greater subjective dependency on one's partner leads to a greater loss of power in the realm of intimacy than with other dimensions. However, given the situation-specific nature of many of this study's findings, the implications derived from the factor analysis should be investigated with a larger sample size and with various subgroups. It may be that these effects vary in intensity according to different categories of partners and living arrangements.

Directions for Future Research

There are at least two new directions for future research which might be suggested from the results of this study. The first is to reverse the causal ordering of power and outcomes in the model, exploring the role that power may play in determining differential outcomes. This, of course, would involve transforming "objective" dependency used in the
The present study into "outcomes" by omitting the consideration of alternatives. The addition of the variable of "interpersonal resources" (which might include education, etc.) might provide additional insight into the determinants of power in relationships.

Figure 11. New Model for Power and Outcomes

The second possibility is to develop a new model which incorporates some new variables. Controlling for type of relationship, a new model might be developed which focuses on the various factors which lead to the greatest satisfaction in intimate relationships.

Figure 12. New Model for Relationship Satisfaction

Mostly importantly, perhaps, these new models should control for different types of relationships, allowing for an examination of how various settings influence other variables of interaction. Standards of equity or fairness, for instance, might be determined largely by the type
of relationship. Standards of equity together with interpersonal resources might influence feelings of subjective dependency, and these in turn might affect how satisfied people are in their relationships. Models with other variables (such as commitment, reciprocity, conservatism of gender roles, etc.) could easily be developed, but it appears that taking the various types of relationships into account (and the norms and standards which accompany them) would lead to the greatest insights in the study of intimate heterosexual relationships.

Conclusions

This study supports the Michaels' et al. (1984) general conclusions that objective relative dependence (as formulated by Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) does not have the predicted inverse relationship to interpersonal power. Subjective dependence, on the other hand, consistently displays the inverse relationship with power attributed by exchange theory to objective relative dependence. This raises an interesting question about the exchange formulation of the Law of Personal Exploitation and the Principle of Least Interest. Is the emphasis on the perception of outcomes above alternatives as important as each partner's feelings of dependence? Apparently not in some cases, but perhaps so in other cases. For the overall sample and subgroups of dating and cohabiting partners, subjective dependence had a greater influence on power relationships than did objective dependence. For engaged and married partners, however, objective dependence appears to influence power more strongly than does subjective dependence. Females appear to be more objectively dependent in engaged relationships ($B = -.43$) and more subjectively
dependent in cohabiting relationships \( (B = -0.50) \). The question of magnitude aside however, perhaps the most striking finding of the present study is that objective dependence is apparently related positively to interpersonal power, contrary to theoretical predictions.

These data are only exploratory and though interesting should not be considered as conclusive. Pretesting and discussion with students suggests that measuring outcomes and \( CL_{alt} \) may not be as straightforward as considered here and in the Michaels et al. (1984) study. Some students said they had difficulty in assessing the outcomes of the present relationship, not to mention hypothetical outcomes of alternative relationships. Of course, low salience of alternatives might also be used to cast doubt upon Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) overall outcome matrix, at least as applied to problems of heterosexual dependency. However, many students said that they were comfortable with the questionnaire and interpreted questions as intended.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the results of this study as delineated by subgroup should be considered cautiously in light of small numbers of cases in each group. However, the results are interesting and seem to indicate that exchange principles operate quite differently within differently structured relationships. The results applicable to the entire sample are somewhat more reliable, indicating that exchange principles of outcomes and perceived alternatives do not operate as predicted by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). Partners who receive relatively more outcomes above alternatives appear to yield more power in relationships, perhaps because of principles of equity which operate in such relationships. The other interpretation which has been advanced is that
the causal ordering should be reversed. Greater power may lead to greater relationship outcomes, a possibility which may be explored in future research. Subjective relative dependence does, however, appear to be inversely related to power as would be intuitively reasonable. As most partners feel more dependent in their relationships, relative power over the behavior of their partners correspondingly declines.

Thus, while general notions of subjective dependency and power appear to be substantiated, more specific exchange propositions concerning relationship outcomes minus alternatives as a measure of objective relative dependency are not supported. This suggests the need for more study in the diverse circumstances which seem to differentially structure intimate heterosexual relationships, perhaps incorporating principles of equity and interpersonal resources into the analysis, and suggests the need for a corresponding revision of the exchange theory paradigm.
Appendix A

Cover Letter of Instructions
HI!

THANK-YOU for helping us with this survey on relationships! The friend who gave this to you is in one of several classes at Western Michigan University carefully selected for this study. He/she has already taken this questionnaire, and it is essential that we have your response as well. This study is part of our ongoing research about relationships, and helping us obtain a response from "a partner in a relationship" is also a class project/assignment for your friend. Your participation in this study is much appreciated by your friend (and by us too!) since obtaining responses from both partners in a relationship is part of our research.

Please feel free to answer all questions in complete honesty since the information you provide will be strictly anonymous. The number provided at the top of your survey is for statistical purposes only - to match your responses with your partners' responses with no names involved. In addition, we have provided a postage-paid envelope to insure the confidentiality of your responses even from your partner. Please use it if you feel more comfortable in doing so. Or if you can (to save us money and you the time of finding a mailbox), fold your completed survey into the provided envelope, seal it (and tape it too if you wish), and give it to your partner to return to class (and to the Center for Social Research.) Thanks again for your generous cooperation!

PAUL WIENIR - Senior Professor   GREG SANDERS - Graduate Student
Appendix B

Couples Questionnaire
RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

NOTE: Please seal the envelope carefully after you complete this questionnaire — your partner will never see your responses. The number on the top of your survey is only for the purpose of matching partners' responses — no names will ever be associated with any numbers. All data will be treated anonymously with the strictest confidence, so please . . .

- Complete this survey within 24 hours of receiving it
- Leave the number attached for statistical purposes
- Answer all questions carefully & honestly
- Enclose your completed survey in the postage-paid return envelope
- Seal/tape your envelope carefully and mail within 1-2 days (please!)

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated! THANK-YOU!

1. Gender: _______ Male ___ Female

2. Age: ________

3. Race/Ethnicity: White/Caucasian ___ Hispanic ___ Black ___ Other ______

4. Type of relationship now involved in: (check all that apply)
   (1) ___ Not dating anyone regularly
   (2) ___ Dating several people
   (3) ___ Casually dating one person in particular
   (4) ___ Seriously dating one person in particular
   (5) ___ Engaged
   (6) ___ Living with "partner" of opposite sex
   (7) ___ Living with "partner" of same sex
   (8) ___ Married

NOTE: The rest of this survey should be filled out only by those who marked responses 2-8 in question 4 above. If you are not dating/married to anyone currently, you may stop here. If you marked (2) above and feel particularly close to one person you are dating, you should complete the survey with this person in mind.

5. If the category you checked above in question 4 does not represent the person who received/will receive your matched questionnaire, please state his or her relationship to you . . . (for instance, if you are engaged or married but plan to give the questionnaire to someone else you are dating, etc.)

6. Is the person you are now dating (married to) who will receive this survey
   ___ of same sex as myself
   ___ of opposite sex as myself

7. My partner and I have been dating (married) for ___ months (or if applicable ___ years)

8. Please rate your relationship in terms of SERIOUSNESS — how casual or serious it is right now.

   [Very Casual, mostly "just friends" <- V | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Very Serious, involved with each other]
9. Please rate your relationship in terms of its **stability** (how secure it is right now)

```
  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
Not At All Stable -------> Very Stable
(ready to break up)        Steady & Secure
```

10. In general, how **satisfied** are you with your overall relationship right now?

```
  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
Not At All Satisfied -------> Very Satisfied
```

11. How satisfied do you think your partner is with your overall relationship right now?

```
  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
Not At All Satisfied -------> Very Satisfied
```

12. All things considered, how would you rate **your outcomes** from your relationship?

```
  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
Not At All Positive -------> Very Positive
```

13. All things considered, how **dependent** would you say you are on your partner?

```
  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
Not At All Dependent -------> Very Dependent
```

14-21. On a scale from "0" (low) to "10" (high), how would you rate your partner on providing for you the following things? (please write in a number from 0 - 10 for each)

14. ____ **Love** (affection, warmth, caring, etc.)
15. ____ **Self-Worth** (respecting me as a person - my abilities and opinions)
16. ____ **Status** (helping me gain prestige or approval with family, friends, and others)
17. ____ **Money** (spending money on you, buying or providing things for you)
18. ____ **Companionship** (willingness to spend time with you, being a good companion)
19. ____ **Personal Space** (time to yourself, freedom to be yourself & by yourself when you need it)
20. ____ **Physical Affection** (pleasing you sexually and/or with types of physical affection)
21. ____ **Favors** (doing things for you, being helpful, giving favors)

22. Indicate below how much you think you or your partner **dominate** (rule, call the shots, etc.) in your relationship.

```
  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominates</td>
<td>Dominates</td>
<td>Dominates</td>
<td>Dominate</td>
<td>Dominate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 23-30. Who has more "say" in the following areas of your relationship - you or your partner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Equal</th>
<th>I do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Where we go &amp; what we do together</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Both</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Equal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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<td>24. Setting the &quot;basic terms&quot; of our relationship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Both</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Equal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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<td>25. &quot;Final say&quot; in decision-making</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Both</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Equal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Both</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Equal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Spending Money</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Both</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Equal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Degree of Physical Affection/Sexuality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Equal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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<td>29. Arguments/Disagreements</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Equal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Whether or not to continue our relationship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I do</strong></td>
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### 31. All things considered, who do you think has more power (control) in your relationship - you or your partner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Equal</th>
<th>I have</th>
<th>I have</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>more power</td>
<td>has much</td>
<td>has somewhat</td>
<td>have somewhat</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more power</td>
<td>more power</td>
<td>equal power</td>
<td>more power</td>
<td>power</td>
<td>power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32-35. On a scale from 0 (low) to 10 (high), how would you rate your partner in the following areas?

32. ____ Good Looks/Physical Attractiveness
33. ____ Talent, skills and abilities
34. ____ Having a good personality, overall appeal to others
35. ____ Overall appeal or desirability to you

36. Especially considering what YOU get out of it, how would you rate your overall relationship to your partner on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest)?

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<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Extremely Positive</td>
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37. In the same way, how do you think your partner would rate your overall relationship?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Extremely Positive</td>
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38. Now think for a moment about your alternatives to your present relationship. These might include dating (being married to) someone else, or just being by yourself. Some people may seldom consider alternatives to their relationship unless it suddenly breaks up. Others may often "shop the field" and consider other alternatives even while involved with their partners. HOW MUCH do you seriously think about/consider ALTERNATIVES to your relationship?

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<th>10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
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39. How decide what your next best alternative to your present relationship really is. This might mean a relationship with someone else or just being by yourself. Just like you rated your present relationship to your partner, now RATE your next best alternative to it on a scale from 0 (low) to 10 (highest.)

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<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Extremely Positive</td>
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40. How do you think your partner might rate his or her next best alternative to your relationship?

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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Extremely Positive</td>
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</table>

41. Now RATE how much your present relationship is ABOVE or BELOW what you would expect from your next best alternative.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>0</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much Below</td>
<td>Same as</td>
<td>Much Above</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Alternative | Alternative | Alternative |
42. It's possible that some people may place a high numerical value on their next best alternative, but not really be that interested in pursuing it. How interested would you say you are to your next best alternative to your present relationship with your partner?

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<tr>
<th>0</th>
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43. How committed are YOU to your partner?

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44. How committed would you say your partner is to you?

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45. Rate how important having an intimate relationship is for you to be happy and fulfilled as a person.

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46-47. IMPORTANT! Keep the following definition of “dependency” in mind as you answer questions 46 and 47 below.

How much YOU DEPEND on your partner is a matter of three things: 1) how much you get out of your relationship to your partner, 2) how important the relationship is to you, and 3) how good your alternatives are.

46. Considering your alternatives, how dependent would you say YOU are on your partner to satisfy your wants and needs in a dating/marriage relationship?

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47. Considering his or her alternatives, how dependent would you say your partner is on you to satisfy his or her wants and needs in a dating/marriage relationship?

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48. What is the highest level of education that you plan to complete?

- attend college, but maybe not finish
- finish college, obtain bachelor's degree
- obtain Master's Degree
- obtain PhD, MD, or equivalent

49. How strongly are you committed to pursuing a career in light of your relationship to your partner (or another like it) and possible present/future family involvements?

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50. Overall, how would you rate your **SELF-IMAGE** (how you feel about yourself)?

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51. How dominant/assertive would you say YOU are?

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52. How dominant/assertive would you say your partner is?

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53. Check the item(s) which best represent(s) your childhood/teenage home background.

- lived primarily with both parents who were happy with each other
- lived primarily with both parents who fought
- lived primarily with mother only
- lived primarily with father only
- alternated equally between living with mother and father
- lived primarily with a guardian or adoptive family
- lived primarily in a public foster home setting
- other

54. Rate the quality of love you felt from your parent(s) or guardian(s) during your growing-up years.

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55. In terms of my opinions about the social roles of men and women, I would say that I am . .

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THANK-YOU! AND HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP!
BIBLIOGRAPHY


