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Demand/withdraw patterns in married couples: a test of the individual differences and social structure hypotheses

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Demand/withdraw patterns in married couples:
A test of the individual differences and social structure hypotheses

by

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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ABSTRACT

Demand/withdraw communication patterns have been linked with decreased marital satisfaction and increased likelihood of divorce. To help prevent these occurrences, researchers have looked for the cause(s) of this communication pattern. Two main hypotheses have been proposed: the individual differences hypothesis, which states that personality differences are the cause of this negative communication pattern, and the social structure hypothesis, which states that societal power differences are the cause of the negative communication pattern. While each has received support in extant literature, they have not been tested simultaneously, preventing researchers from directly understanding each hypothesis's relative contribution to demand/withdraw patterns. The current study sought to fill this gap. Thirty-five married couples completed a questionnaire that assessed factors linked to the individual differences hypothesis (i.e., personality characteristics), factors linked with the social structure hypothesis (i.e., power dynamics in the couple), and the couples' use of demand/withdraw patterns. Regression analyses showed that the certain personality characteristics (i.e., neuroticism and perceived stress) linked to the individual differences hypothesis significantly predicted certain demand/withdraw patterns, while the social structure hypothesis as measured by perceived marital power and marital satisfaction were not uniquely predictive of demand/withdraw patterns. In all, the findings support the importance of the individual differences hypothesis in understanding the occurrence of demand/withdraw behavior.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Divorce and marital distress is of growing concern in this country with there being one divorce for every two marriages in the United States in the 1990s (Hughes, 2001). One potential factor in whether or not a couple will stay together is the couple's ability to talk about and resolve conflicts (for reviews, see Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Weiss & Heyman, 1990). As such, problem-solving behaviors have become a central focus for researchers desiring to alleviate or prevent marital distress and dissolution (e.g. Baucom & Epstein, 1989). One of the most dysfunctional problems-solving strategy that has emerged out of this research has been called the demand/withdraw pattern (Christensen, 1987; 1988; Greenberg & Johnson, 1986; Sullaway & Christensen, 1983). Within this pattern, one partner exhibits demanding behavior (e.g., asking for changes in the relationship) while the other partner concurrently exhibits withdrawal behavior (e.g., attempting to avoid discussing the issue).

The following excerpt is an example of this dysfunctional communication pattern:

“Bret and Rachel don't agree about money. They both work full time and contribute their earnings to a joint account. They each draw freely from this account to pay for joint and individual expenses but one draws more freely than the other. Rachel wants to save as much as possible so they can purchase a home. While Bret agrees with this long-term goal, he wants to satisfy many immediate desires for items related to his 'high-tech' hobbies.

Rachel often proposes that they make up a budget or at least discuss the problem. Bret alternatively resists the suggestion or appeases Rachel with a vague reply, 'That might be a good idea.' But they never make up a budget or have a calm discussion of the problem. Instead, they argue about the problem, usually after Rachel becomes aware of a recent purchase by Bret. Rachel questions the need and use fro the purchase, criticizes Bret fro this lack of restraint, and attacks his loyalty to the long-term goal of a home. Bret defends the purchase, himself, and his loyalty, although he occasionally offers the feeble counterattack that Rachel doesn't support him and his interests.

Bret has tried to avoid open confrontations by disguising his purchases. He often hides the purchases from Rachel by paying for them in cash, by giving misleading

information about their usefulness in his work and the discounts he obtained, and by sneaking then into the house. Rachel has meanwhile become more suspicious of Bret, often interrogating him about his purchases and the large withdraws from the automatic teller, Occasionally she even examines his home office or the den for evidence of new acquisitions (Christensen, 1987 pp. 250-251).”

This pattern has been identified in intimate relationships as early as dating (Vogel, Wester, & Heesacker, 1999), but it seems to be especially prevalent in longer-term relationships in which individuals are struggling with low marital satisfaction and unresolved conflicts (e.g. Christensen, 1988; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995; Jacobson, 1989, Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Notarius & Markman, 1993; Weiss & Heyman, 1990). The presence of a demand/withdraw pattern also appears to predict declines in relationship satisfaction over time (e.g. Baucom & Adams, 1987; Gottman, 1994; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Levenson & Gottman, 1985; Smith, Vivian, & O’Leary, 1991) and has been linked with presence of other negative relationship behaviors such as negativity (Diagen & Holmes, 2000; Heavey et al., 1995), and violence (Berns, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1999a, 1999b; Feldman & Ridley, 2000; Ronfeldt, Kimerling, & Arias, 1998; Sargestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1999).

Another distinguishing feature of this demand/withdraw pattern is that there appear to be reliable sex differences in the roles wives and husbands assume during problem-solving discussions. Specifically, the literature has clearly shown that, when attempting to resolve a problem, wives are more likely to express demands and husbands are more likely to exhibit withdrawal (e.g. Blair, 1993; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Gottman & Levenson, 1988; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993; Vogel et al., 1999). Thus, a wife-demand/husband withdraw pattern is more frequently found than the reverse

(Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey et al., 1993).

This sex difference has led to several competing hypotheses as to how this dysfunctional interaction style develops. The two most frequently discussed hypotheses have been labeled the *individual differences* and *social structures* hypotheses. The individual difference hypothesis states that it is differences in the personal interaction styles of males and females that lead to the formation of demand/withdraw interactions (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; Christensen, 1987; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1998). For example, Christensen (1987; 1988) showed that personal preferences for the level of intimacy desired (i.e., closeness vs. autonomy) was positively correlated with demand/withdraw characteristics such that those who desired more closeness demanded more and those who desired more autonomy withdrew more. In addition, consistent with the findings of differences in males' and females' use of these behaviors, males tended to desire more autonomy and females tended to desire more closeness. More recently, Caughlin and Vangelisti (2000) confirmed this link between desire for closeness and demand/withdraw behaviors. In addition, they found that personality characteristics, as measured by the Big Five personality factors, also predicted demand/withdraw patterns. In all, these studies suggest the potential importance of personality factors on the presence of demand/withdraw patterns.

Alternatively, the social structure hypothesis states that it is society that dictates women's and men's roles in the demand/withdraw interaction. According to this hypothesis, the demand/withdraw pattern develops as a result of sex-based power and resource inequalities within contemporary life (e.g., Sagrestano et al., 1998; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van De Vliert, 2000). Such inequalities (i.e., housework or childcare duties) lead men to have

more power within the relationship and, therefore, to be more likely to withdraw from confrontations that seek to change the power structure (e.g., Kluwer, 1998; Kluwer, Hessink, & Van De Vliert, 1997; Kluwer et al., 2000). Women, given less power by society, seek to gain more power in the relationship by demanding changes from their partner (e.g., Diagen & Holmes, 2000; Kluwer, 1998; Kluwer et al., 1997; Kluwer et al., 2000; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1999). Therefore, because women are likely to desire change(s) in the relationship, they are more likely to be observed making demands and their husbands are more likely to be observed withdrawing. Christensen and colleagues (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, et al., 1993; Sagrestano et al., 1998) found this wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern during marital interactions, but the pattern emerged only during discussions of topics selected by wives. When couples were specifically requested to discuss a problem selected by the husband, the differences disappeared. Thus, only when the wife desired a change and a power imbalance was present in the relationship did this pattern emerge (Sagrestano, 1992), providing support for the social structure hypothesis.

Although, the existing literature supports both of these hypotheses it has been hard to determine which better explains the demand/withdraw pattern, as previous studies have tended to assess either the individual differences hypothesis (e.g., Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000, Christensen, 1987) or the social structure hypothesis (e.g., Sagrestano et al., 1998; Kluwer et al., 2000). Thus, it is unknown whether individual differences and social structures have equal impact on the presence of the demand/withdraw pattern or if one is more important (e.g., Christensen & Heavey, 1990). This confusion might be diminished, however, if demand/withdraws behaviors and their relationship to individual difference variables and power imbalance were directly assessed in a single study.

Furthermore, it might be easier to understand the impact of individual difference and social structure factors if studies directly measured aspects of these factors. Prior researchers have tended only indirectly to measure these factors. Power, for example, a major focus of the social structure hypothesis has only been directly measured once (see Sagrestano et al., 1999). Instead, power differences have been inferred from who chose the topic discussed within the experiment (e.g., Christensen & Heavey, 1990). In addition, in the one study that did directly measure relationship power (Sagrestano et al., 1999) no significant relationship between power and demand/withdraw behaviors was found. Additional research is needed that directly measures power (Sagrestano et al., 1999).

A similar pattern can be seen in research on personality characteristics. Few studies have directly measured the effects of personality characteristics on demand/withdraw behaviors. One study by Caughlin & Vangelisti (2000) measured the Big Five personality traits. They found that two of the five scales measured by the inventory were linked with demand/withdraw behavior. Specifically, a spouse's neuroticism score was positively correlated with his or her demand/withdraw while his or her agreeableness score was negatively correlated with their demand/withdraw. They concluded that those who were more neurotic (i.e., nervous or tense) exhibited higher levels of demand/withdraw, whereas those higher in agreeableness (i.e., soft-hearted or warm) showed lower levels of demand/withdraw behavior. Because only one study has examined the relationship between personality and demand/withdraw, future studies need to focus on this area.

In addition, other personality characteristics such as a person's ability to handle stress has been alluded to as an important factor in occurrence of demand/withdraw behaviors, but not measured in the extant literature. Stress can affect an individual's problem-solving

abilities by taxing her or his energy and overwhelming her or his coping skills and thus lead to more conflict and more difficulty handling problems. Markman et al. (1993), for example, alluded to the possible effects of stress when examining men and women in conflict situations by stating “in the face of everyday stress, couples may divide tasks along stereotypic lines,” (p. 109) and later hypothesized that “in the face of a poorly managed conflict, couples will fall back on their socialized gender roles” (p.123). This can be seen in the case of a couple with a young child. Both parents come home after working all day and then get into a fight over who should change the diapers first, and then over who does it more in general. However, despite the potential importance of this construct no studies have been conducted to test this hypothesis.

Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to directly assess strengths of the links between the individual differences and social structures hypotheses and of demand/withdraw patterns. We plan on directly measuring the social structure hypothesis by measuring the degree of power the person feels she/he have in the relationship and measuring her or his satisfaction with the roles she/he and her or his partner have in the relationship. We will measure the individual difference perspective by measuring how each partner tends to handle conflict conversations (i.e., do they tend to be more neurotic in their interactions) and their perceptions of stress in their life. Specifically, this study will examine three questions:

1. Do the demand/withdraw patterns (i.e., wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-withdraw) found to differ in previous studies hold true for this sample?
As most studies have found significantly higher rates of wife-demand/husband-withdraw than the reverse. A similar pattern is expected in this sample.

2. Are married couples' self-reports of power, satisfaction, neuroticism, agreeableness, and perceived stress associated with the couples' demand/withdraw behavior?

Examination of correlations between power, satisfaction, neuroticism, agreeableness, stress and the couples' demand withdraw behavior will allow a direct test of the individual difference and social structure hypotheses. Specifically, support for the individual difference hypotheses will be found through higher levels of neuroticism and stress and lower levels of agreeableness to be associated with higher levels of demand/withdraw. In turn, we suspect support for the social structure hypothesis with lower levels of power and satisfaction being associated with higher levels of demand/withdraw.

3. Do personality factors and power dynamics equally strongly predict demand/withdraw behavior? To directly assess the relative importance of the two sets of variables on the presence of demand/withdraw patterns we will conduct multi-level regression analyses using personality factors (neuroticism and stress) and power dynamics (power and satisfaction) as predictors of the couples' demand/withdraw behavior. If the individual differences hypothesis is true then the more neurotic the person is and the higher the person's stress perceptions, the higher the degree of demand/withdraw behavior the participant should report. Conversely, the lower the degree of neuroticism and stress perceptions the person reports then the lower the demand/withdraw interactions. If the social structure perspective is correct then those who report less power and less satisfaction should have greater use of demand behaviors in order to try and change their situation, whereas those who report more

power and more satisfaction should be more likely to withdraw in order to keep the status quo.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into three sections. The first section will summarize the history of the extant research in the area of demand/withdraw interactions. The second section will provide an overview of the two most prominent hypotheses to explain the formation of this communication pattern: individual differences and social structure. The final section will provide a summary of the area and identify important aspects of this destructive communication pattern that need to be further explored.

History of Demand/Withdraw Research

Past research into the demand/withdraw pattern have had three main foci: the link between demand/withdraw and marital distress (i.e., Christensen, 1987; 1988), sex differences in occurrence of demand/withdraw behaviors (i.e., Christensen and Heavey, 1990), and when the demand/withdraw pattern first occurs/develops in a relationship (i.e., Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, & Callan, 1994). The first section of the literature review will explore these three areas of the demand/withdraw research.

Demand/withdraw: The link with distress

The demand/withdraw communication pattern has been noticed in distressed couples as far back as research on marriage has been conducted (e.g., Terman et al., 1938). However, it was not until the 1980's that this pattern was specifically identified and research into its causes and consequences directly undertaken. In subsequent years, this demand/withdraw pattern emerged as a major focus of couple's research due to its significant link with lower satisfaction, higher levels of distress, and higher rates of divorce.

Christensen and colleague's (e.g., Christensen, 1987, 1988; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey et al., 1993; Sullaway & Christensen, 1983) work in this field was some of the

earliest to examine this communication pattern. In 1983, for example, Sullaway and Christensen first found a relationship between couples who were more divergent in their interactions (i.e. one becomes rational and the other emotional in an argument or one makes an aversive request for attention while the other withdraws) and the number of problems they reported. In 1987, Christensen first called this 'divergence' in couples' behavior the demand/withdraw communication pattern. In this 1987 study and then again in 1988, Christensen also identified that those couples who exhibited this demand/withdraw pattern had lower marital satisfaction scores than couples who did not.

This finding that the demand/withdraw pattern appears mostly in distressed couples has been consistently found. Around the same time as Christensen's early studies, Gottman and Krokoff (1989), for example, looked at couple's satisfaction over a span of three years in two different studies. They found that couples who showed a high rate of defensiveness (which included whining, excuse making, etc.), stubbornness, and/or withdraw showed decreases in marital satisfaction. Withdraw was a particularly significant predictor of marital satisfaction decline, especially when used by the husband.

Christensen and Shenk (1991) expanded this research by polling different types of couples. They included non-distressed couples, clinic couples (enrolled in couple's therapy), and divorcing couples. Christensen and Shenk showed that non-distressed couples scored lower than both clinic and divorcing couples, and that clinic couples scored lower than divorcing couples. That is, the more distressed the couple's relationship (non-distressed to clinic to divorcing), the higher the incidence of demand/withdraw interactions reported by that couple. Christensen and Shenk also showed that there were differences in type of demand/withdraw pattern exhibited by distressed couples. While no difference could be

found between clinic couples and divorcing couples in the wife-demand/husband withdraw interactions, there was a significant difference in their the presence of husband-demand/wife-withdraw interactions in the clinic and divorcing couples with the divorcing couples scoring higher, indicating that within divorcing couples husbands are more likely to be demanding.

Heavey et al. (1995) found that less satisfied couples engaged in more demand/withdraw interactions and that these interactions lead to declines in relationship satisfaction. Approximately two and a half years after collecting Time one demand/withdraw data, the participants were sent a questionnaire assessing relationship satisfaction. The authors found that “demandingness” was related with Time one and Time two satisfaction. In addition, as demanding scores increased, satisfaction scores decreased. Withdraw was also correlated with declines in satisfaction, but only for about half of the couples. This study not only supported the earlier findings of other researchers, but also provided solid evidence that these patterns are harmful to the long-term satisfaction of a relationship.

Gender differences

Some of the earliest work in this area examined sex differences and how much demand and withdraw behaviors are used. Christensen (1987; 1988), for example, found that men tended to desire more independence in the relationship relative to women and women tended to desire more closeness in the relationship relative to men. This difference in the level of intimacy/closeness desired by men and women was reflected in women tending to assume the more demanding role and men tending to assume the withdrawing role. These studies gave us the first indications about the roles assumed by men and women in conflicts.

In a follow-up to these studies, Christensen and Heavey (1990) had couples discuss topics concerning an issue that they would like to see changed and then observationally

coded demand and withdraw behaviors. These topics that the couples picked included one in which the wife wanted a change and another in which the husband wanted a change.

Consistent with the previous findings, Christensen and Heavey found that men were more withdrawn overall, that women were more demanding, and that couples were most likely to show a wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern. Three years later, Heavey and colleagues (1993) sought to expand upon their earlier findings. They asked couples to engage in a discussion of an issue that they wanted changed. An analysis of the data showed the same results as before. These studies provided insight into the demand/withdraw pattern and the differential roles that wives and husbands assume.

When demand/withdraw patterns first occur

Other researchers have examined when this pattern first occurs in a relationship. These studies have shown that these patterns are present in dating or pre-marital couples and extend into the marriage. Noller and colleagues (1994), for example, longitudinally examined couples who were initially engaged and then later married and found that there were no changes over time in their demand/withdraw patterns. Additionally, they found that the aforementioned sex differences were also present in these dating/engaged couples and carried into the marriage. Vogel and colleagues (1999) and Vogel, Wester, Heesacker, and Madon (2002) also found support for these earlier findings within dating couples. They found that even within dating couples men engaged in more withdrawing behavior and women engaged in more demand behavior during emotionally difficult discussions. However, these patterns were not as strong as those reported for in married couples. Similarly, Vogel and Karney (2002) examined newlyweds and found that this pattern was present but to a lesser degree than found in longer-term marriages, with most of the gender differences in newlyweds being

found on demand behavior and not withdraw behavior. As a whole, these studies provide evidence that the demand/withdraw pattern is present prior to the marriage, though, it may increase in strength over time.

Competing Hypotheses

In this section we will further explore the two most popular hypotheses to explain the emergence of demand/withdraw communication patterns in couples. The first is the *individual differences* hypothesis that states that the innate differences in the behavior of men and women are the cause. The second hypothesis is the *social structure* hypothesis that states that the social structure of society is to cause.

Individual differences

The individual difference hypothesis states that it is differences in the personal interaction styles of males and females that led to the formation of demand/withdraw interactions (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; Christensen, 1987; 1988; Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Levenson & Gottman, 1985). These studies have examined demand/withdraw patterns through the lens of innate biological tendencies as well as differences in learned or socialized behavioral styles.

In 1985, Gottman and Krokoff, for example, conducted two observational, longitudinal studies of couple interactions. They found that sex differences in how wives and husbands approach conflict led to demand/withdraw interactions. Specifically, wives tended to used confrontation and emotion while husbands tended to use conciliatory and factual explanations. These differences drive couples further apart in the discussions rather than bringing them to a middle ground where they could come to a mutually agreeable decision.

Similarly, and as previously mentioned, Christensen (1987; 1988) showed that personal preferences for the level of intimacy desired (i.e., closeness vs. independence) was positively correlated with demand/withdraw characteristics. These findings indicated that those that desired more closeness demanded more and those that desired more independence withdrew more. In addition, consistent with the findings of differences in males' and females' use of these behaviors, males tended to desire more independence and female tended to desire more closeness.

Building upon a biological model, Gottman and Levenson (1988) also proposed an escape-conditioning model to explain the presence of demand/withdraw patterns in couples. Within this model, one of the members of the couple experiences a stronger physical reaction than the other and withdraws from the conversation in order to lessen this aversive reaction. The other experiences less physical arousal and wants this conflict come to a resolution, thereby pushing the topic and assuming a demanding role. This pattern results in the demand/withdraw interaction seen within dissatisfied couples. Basing this idea on a review of the literature, which suggests that men experience greater physiological reactivity to stress than women, Gottman and Levenson further suggested that this explains why husbands tend to withdraw more than wives in the face of conflict.

More recently, support for the importance of personality factors has come from Caughlin and Vangelisti's (2000) study of demand /withdraw interactions. Their main finding was that personality characteristics, as measured by the Big Five personality dimensions, predicted demand/withdraw patterns. Neuroticism was correlated with ratings of both husband-demand/wife-withdraw and wife-demand/husband-withdraw; that is, as neuroticism increased so did demand/withdraw behaviors. A second characteristic,

agreeableness, was shown to have a negative correlation with demand/withdraw behaviors, with higher scores being associated with lower demand and withdraw behaviors reported by the couple. They concluded that agreeableness predicted relationships in which neither husband-demand/wife-withdraw nor wife-demand/husband-withdraw occurred frequently. The extroversion scale closely resembled the agreeableness scale, however the statistics were only approaching significance.

In all, these studies indicate that the individual difference hypothesis explains at least part of the presence of demand/withdraw patterns. While it is less clear if the pattern occurs because of personality traits that occur across sex (i.e., neuroticism) or whether pattern occurs because of specific male or female traits (i.e., desire for closeness), there is enough evidence to suggest that personality differences play a role in the formation of demand/withdraw interaction patterns.

Social structure

The social structure hypothesis states that it is society that dictates women's and men's roles in the demand/withdraw interaction. The demand/withdraw pattern develops as a result of gender-based power and resource inequalities within contemporary life (e.g. Kluwer et al., 1997; Kluwer, 1998; Kluwer et al., 2000; Noller, 1993; Sagrestano et al., 1998; Vogel & Karney, 2002). Such inequalities (i.e., more women having housework or childcare duties and men "not having" to do this) lead men to have more power within the relationship and, therefore, more likely to withdraw from confrontations that seek to change the power structure (i.e., arguments over domestic duties).

In some of the first studies to supporting this idea, Christensen and Heavey (1990) and Heavey et al. (1993) found that the wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern emerged

only during discussions of topics selected by wives. When couples were specifically requested to discuss a problem selected by the husband, the differences disappeared. They explained this finding as being based on women, due to inequities present in most relationships, desiring more change(s) in the relationship, and therefore being more likely to be observed making demands. Men who are more likely to be the beneficiary of any inequities are therefore less likely to be observed demanding. Thus, this pattern is much more likely to be seen when the couple is discussing an issue where the wife desires a change.

Noller (1993) further examined this idea in relation to withdraw behavior. Specifically, Noller was studied whether males withdraw because they have been socialized to resist pressure from others and to maintain their independence or whether it is the best way for the males to exert power within their relationships. Noller concluded that men withdraw from conversations because it is the best way to exert their power within the relationship indicating that power is the driving force behind demand/withdraw. This lends support to the social structure hypothesis as power is given socially and not inherited genetically or based on socialized desires to maintain independence.

Kluwer (1998) has also studied the division of labor between wives and husbands as it relates to power and demand/withdraw. Kluwer found that the wife-demand/husband-withdraw interaction was much more likely to occur when the wife was discontent with the division of labor. Demand/withdraw behavior was reported equally when the husband was discontent. Furthermore, Kluwer showed that those who are content (not desiring the change) are more successful at maintaining their current position. Withdrawing from the conflict is an effective way to exhibit power. In another study, Kluwer et al. (2000) re-visited this issue by assessing the extent to which spouses were able to reach their desired goals in the

relationship. Their results showed that defendants (withdrawers) were more likely to reach their goals than were complainants (demanders). They again concluded that withdrawing is a significant way to exert power in a relationship and has direct influences on the occurrence of demand/withdraw interactions.

Overall, these studies indicate that women, given less power by society, seek to gain more power in the relationship by demanding changes from their partner. Therefore, only when a wife desires a change in the relationship and a power imbalance is present in the relationship does this pattern emerge (i.e., Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey et al., 1993), providing support for the social structure hypothesis.

Summary

The research in this area has done a good job in identifying the prevalence of the demand/withdraw pattern, the difference roles that women and men often adopt, and the negative consequences of the pattern for a relationship. However, the extant research has been less definitive in identifying why this pattern occurs and subsequently how we can help couples change this dysfunctional pattern. While support for both the individual differences (i.e., Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000) and social structure (i.e., Sagrestano et al., 1998) hypotheses have been gathered, they have not been directly compared. Future research will need to directly assess and compare the variables of the competing hypotheses if researchers are better understand why this pattern occurs and why women and men tend to adopt different roles.

CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Table 1 contains means and standard deviations for the sample on all study variables. Table 2 contains the demographics characteristics for the sample. All participants were students or spouses of students at a large, Midwestern University. Seventy individuals (35 couples) were included in these analyses. The average age of the participants was 29.62 ($SD = 8.34$) for males and 29.26 ($SD = 8.23$) for females. The average length of the relationship was 8.91 ($SD = 7.56$) years. Sixty-two participants (88.6%) were Caucasian, 4 (5.7 %) were Hispanic, 1 (1.4 %) was Asian, 1 (1.4 %) identified other, and 2 (2.9 %) left the question blank. Three (4.29 %) were Sophomores, 4 (5.71 %) were Juniors, 11 (15.71 %) were Seniors, 34 (48.57 %) were Graduate Students, 8 (11.43 %) reported having graduated or not in school, and 10 (14.29 %) did not report any school standing. Twenty-three (32.9 %) were working toward a B.A./B.S. degree, 15 (21.4 %) were working toward a M.A./M.S. degree, 20 (28.6 %) were working toward their Ph D. degree, and 12 (17.1 %) left the question blank.

Instruments

Demand/withdraw communication behaviors

Demand/withdraw behaviors were measured with the Communication Patterns Questionnaire-Short Form (CPQSF; Christensen & Heavey, 1990). The CPQSF is a shortened version of the original CPQ developed by Christensen and Sullivan (Christensen, 1987). The CPQSF contains 8 questions, which are scored on a nine point Likert scale (1=very unlikely and 9=very likely). Example items are: "Both members avoid discussing the problem" and "Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises." This study is concerned with two types of demand/withdraw behavior can be calculated from the CPQSF

including: (1) the degree to which a couple engages in a wife-demand/husband withdraw pattern and (2) the degree to which a couple engages in a husband-demand/wife-withdraw pattern. Items are totaled such that higher scores reflect increased levels of the behavior. The range of attainable scores on the wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-withdraw is 3 – 27. Noller and White (1990) found that the demand/withdraw patterns, specifically, the wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern discriminated accurately between happy and unhappy couples. Further validity of the CPQSF has also been found as the subscales correlate significantly with observational measures of demand/withdraw (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey et al., 1993; Bodenmann, Kaiser, Hahlweg, and Fehm-Wolfsdorf, 1998; Hahlweg, Kaiser, Christensen, Wehm-Wolfsdorf, and Groth, 2000).

Christensen and Heavey (1990) reported reliability of the three patterns measured by CPQSF with Cronbach's alphas for wives' of .85 for wife-demand/husband-withdraw, .50 for husband-demand/wife-withdraw, .73 for the total demand/withdraw score. For the husband's data the alphas were: .71, .72, and .74, respectively. These reliabilities remain even when the measure has been used in other countries (Bodenmann et al., 1998; Hahlweg et al., 2000). In the current sample the husband-demand/wife-withdraw (HDWW) scale had an alpha of .72 (husbands) and .73 (wives); wife-demand/husband-withdraw had an alpha of .82 (husbands) and .63 (wives); total demand/withdraw had an alpha of .54 (husbands) and .63 (wives).

Neuroticism and agreeableness

Neuroticism and agreeableness were measured using the neuroticism and agreeableness subscales of the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae , 1992). The NEO-FFI has been shown to have high correlations with the parent scale, the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae , 1992) and both the NEO-FFI and the NEO-PI-R are widely used as personality assessments,

often to validate or build other personality measures (Tsauosis, 2002). The neuroticism and agreeableness subscales were chosen for this study because they were the only two subscales of the NEO-FFI found in previous research to be associated with the demand/withdraw communication pattern (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000). Respondents are asked to rate how true or “like them” a characteristic is in describing their personality. Sample items include “tense” for neuroticism and “sympathetic” for agreeableness. The items are scored on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all true of me to 5 = very true of me) with higher scores reflecting a higher level of the measured construct. Scores ranged from 5-25. The reliability analysis for this study showed alphas of .90 (husbands) and .70 (wives) for agreeableness and .86 (husbands) and .85 (wives) for neuroticism.

Stress

Stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). This scale consists of 14 questions measured on a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). Scores range from 0 to 56 with higher scores indicating a higher incidence of perceived stress. The measure tries to capture the respondent’s feelings about the stress in his or her life, not simply asking about the different events that are going on in his or her life and assuming that all individuals perceive the events the same way. Cohen et al. (1983) report an internal reliability of .84 to .86. Example items include “In the last month, how often have you felt nervous or ‘stressed’?” or “In the last month how often have you felt on top of things?” Reliability analysis for this study showed an alpha of .79 for husbands and .85 for wives. In addition, Cohen et al. (1983) reported good concurrent and predictive validity of the measure. The PSS correlates with other measures of stress (i.e., College Student Life-Event Scale; Levine & Perkins, 1980). Additionally, the PSS was shown to be a significant

predictor of health symptoms, utilization of health services, social anxiety, and smoking rates in a smoking cessation sample (Cohen et al., 1983).

Power

Power was assessed using the Perceived Marital Power questionnaire (PMP; Sagrestano et al., 1999). The PMP is a self-report measure developed by Sagrestano et al. to measure perceived power in a relationship. Sagrestano et al. report that the items were developed to try to capture potential to influence, including expectations and perceptions. It contains four items pertaining to potential to influence, confidence in ability to influence, likelihood of doing what the other is asking, and overall rating of who has the most influence in the relationship. Example items include “I have the power to influence my partner” and “I am likely to do what my partner wants.” It uses a 7-point Likert scale and the items are totaled such that a higher score reflects higher perceived power. The range of the attainable scores is 4-28. The measure has high face validity, but no tests of other types of validity were reported. Sagrestano et al., however, did find that perceived power was closely related to husband’s violence. Perceived power was also significantly related to husband’s verbal aggression. These findings led the researchers to connect perceived power to demand/withdraw behaviors given that previous research has shown that couples high in violence also show high degrees of demand/withdraw behavior (i.e., Berns, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1999a, 1999b). The PMP yields internal reliability coefficients of .60 for husbands and .67 for wives (Sagrestano et al., 1999). Reliability for the current sample showed an alpha of .38 for husbands and .61 for wives.

Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction was measured using the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendricks, 1988). The RAS is a global measure of relationship satisfaction. The measure includes 7 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale. The scores on the individual items are totaled to attain a total satisfaction score. The higher the score, the more satisfied the person is with his or her current relationship. The attainable scores range from 7-35.

Hendricks reports an internal consistency coefficient of $\alpha = .86$. Vaughan and Matyastick Baier (1999) computed zero-order correlations between the RAS and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) to test the validity of the RAS. The DAS is a well known, and well researched, multi-dimensional measure of relationship adjustment and satisfaction. The authors reported that the zero-order correlation between the RAS and DAS was $.84 (p < .01)$, indicating that the two measures were, in fact, assessing the same aspects of relationship satisfaction. The authors also found significant correlations with the affectional expression, consensus, and satisfaction subscales on the DAS. They concluded that the RAS does measure relationship satisfaction and it may be a useful measure of relationship satisfaction for researchers due to its short length. Example items include: "How well does your partner meet your needs?" and "How many problems are there in your relationship?" Reliability analyses for this study yielded an alpha of $.82$ for husbands and $.94$ for wives.

Procedures

Students enrolled at a large Midwestern University were solicited through mass mailings. A random list of students living in married housing was obtained from the registrar. Participants were sent a brief letter, survey, and envelope describing how their names were obtained and briefly outlining the study at hand. Participants were given an incentive to

participate in the study by being entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to the local mall. The study utilized a modified informed consent; consent was given if the questionnaire was returned to the investigators. Participants returned the questionnaire to the investigators using the provided envelopes. Of the 250 couples sampled, only 35 returned completed packets (14%), even though multiple mailings and e-mailed questionnaires were utilized to try to ensure a higher return rate. Data were then compiled using SPSS 10.1 for the descriptive and correlation statistics and SAS for the Proc Mixed procedure regression analyses.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations for the measures utilized in this study. On average, the sample reported low levels of husband-demand/wife-withdraw interactions ($M = 11.32$; on a scale from 3-27) and low wife-demand/husband-withdraw interactions ($M = 12.77$; on a scale from 3-27). On average the sample reported moderate to high agreeableness ($M = 19.97$; on a scale from 5-25) and low to moderate neuroticism ($M = 14.26$; on a scale from 5-25). On average, the sample also reported low stress ($M = 21.03$; on a scale from 0-56), extremely high satisfaction ($M = 31.64$; on a scale from 7-35), and moderate to high mean perceived-marital power ($M = 4.82$; on a scale from 1-7).

Replication of Previous Studies

Previous research has found that married couples exhibit a wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern more often than the reverse pattern of husband-demand/wife-withdraw (e.g., Christensen, 1987; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey et al., 1995). To determine if this effect was also found in the current study we conducted a paired samples t-test on the wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-withdraw patterns. We used a paired sample t-test to account for the dependency in responses between wives and husbands. The t-test, however, was non-significant ($t = -1.32, p = .19$), despite the fact that the difference between the wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-demand means for this study was 1.45 points and was comparable to what other studies using the same demand/withdraw questionnaire have found (i.e., a 1.5 point difference; Vogel et al., 1999). Further analysis showed that the d values for the current study were 1.96 for wife-demand/husband-withdraw and 1.83 for husband-demand/wife-withdraw. In the Vogel et al.

(1999) study the d values were 1.96 for wife-demand/husband-withdraw and 1.80 for husband-demand/wife-withdraw. Given, the mean differences and d values are virtually identical, it is reasonable to assume that the small N of the current study hurt the significance of the t-test (i.e., $N = 108$ in the Vogel et al., 1999) and not that these couples differ from previous samples. A power analysis supported this assertion, showing that the power for this study to detect a difference between husband-demand/wife-withdraw and wife-demand/husband-withdraw was small (.17, $p = .05$).

Therefore, to better understand the degree to which the current couples used these two types of demand/withdraw patterns, we followed the procedures used by Christensen and Heavey (1990) to generate the predominant type of demand/withdraw pattern that a couple tends to exhibit (i.e., wife-demand/husband-withdraw or husband-demand/wife-withdraw). The first step is to subtract the wife-demand/husband-withdraw score from the husband-demand/wife-withdraw score. The new scores are then dummy coded with 1 representing higher wife-demand/husband-withdraw scores, 0 representing equal wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-withdraw scores, and -1 representing higher husband-demand/wife-withdraw scores. Frequency analysis, conducted on the husbands and wives separately, showed that 15 (42.9 %) of the husbands and 8 (22.9%) of wives reported a predominant husband-demand/wife-withdraw pattern, 2 (5.7 %) of husbands and 5 (14.3%) of wives reported neutral pattern, 15 (42.9 %) of the husbands and 20 (57.1%) of the wives reported a predominant wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern, and 3 (8.6%) of husbands and 2 (5.7 %) of wives were missing scores necessary to complete this analysis. A Chi-Square test was then conducted on the husband and wives' scores to see if these proportions were significantly different. The results were mixed. For husbands the Chi-Square analysis,

$\chi^2 (2, 35) = 10.56, p < .005$, while significant showed that the difference was due to the husband-demand/wife-withdraw interaction occurring at a higher rate than the neutral condition. The same pattern was seen for the husband's reported wife-demand/husband-withdraw and neutral condition. However, the husband-demand/wife-withdraw and wife-demand/husband-withdraw, as reported by husbands, was actually occurring at the same rate. The Chi-Square analysis of wives was significant, $\chi^2 (2, 35) = 11.46, p < .003$. This pattern is similar to other studies, the interactions were in fact not equal and that the wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern, according to a Chi-Square analysis, was happening at a significantly higher rate than the husband-demand/wife-withdraw or neutral patterns for wives. In addition, when looking at the differences in couple's reports of demand/withdraw, Paired sample t-tests showed that husbands and wives did not significantly differ in their report of husband-demand/wife-withdraw ($t = 1.4, p < .2$). However there was a significant difference in the report of wife-demand/husband-withdraw ($t = 2.71, p < .05$) with wives reporting higher levels of demand/withdraw than their partners. These findings support the patterns reported by earlier studies (i.e., Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey et al., 1993).

Correlates of Problem-Solving Behaviors

The second question asked by this study is whether the factors, suggested by previous research are, in fact, linked with demand/withdraw behavior. To examine this, I conducted a series of correlations. Neuroticism, agreeableness, stress (PSS), satisfaction (RAS), and power (PMP) were correlated with the two types of demand/withdraw behavior (wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-withdraw). These correlations allowed me to directly test the individual difference and social structure hypotheses. Specifically, we expected support for the individual difference hypotheses through positive correlations

between neuroticism and stress and negative correlations with agreeableness being associated with higher levels of each of the demand/withdraw patterns. Additionally, we expect support for the social structure hypothesis would be evidenced through negative correlations between power and satisfaction and demand/withdraw patterns. For the correlation analyses, scores were averaged across the couples to help account for inter-relationship overlap in the reports of these variables. The correlations between variables can be seen in Table 4. However, none of the variables were correlated with wife-demand/husband-withdraw (WDHW) or husband-demand/wife-withdraw (HDWW). Neither the individual difference nor the social structure hypotheses were supported by these analyses. Possible reasons for these non-relationships are explored in the discussion.

Predictors of Problem-Solving Behaviors

Do the individual difference variables (personality factors) and social structures variables (power dynamics) equally predict demand/withdraw behavior? To directly assess the relative importance of the two sets of variables in the prediction of demand/withdraw patterns I conducted multi-level regression analyses using the SAS Proc Mixed procedure, to control for inter-partner correlations in the data. In these analyses, I used the personality factors (neuroticism and stress) and the power dynamics factors (power and satisfaction) as the predictor variables of the couples' demand/withdraw behavior. If the individual differences hypothesis is true then the more negative reactions a person has to conflict and stress the higher the degree of demand/withdraw behavior the participant should report. Conversely, the less negative the person is toward conflict and the lower the person's perceptions of stress are, the lower the incidence of demand/withdraw interactions. If the social structure perspective is correct then those who report less power and less satisfaction

should have greater use of demand behaviors, while those who report more power and more satisfaction should be more likely to withdraw in order to keep the status quo.

Due to the high inter-correlation of neuroticism and perceived stress (PSS) ($r = .53, p < .001$), the four variables (stress, neuroticism, power, and satisfaction) were factor analyzed to see if there was significant conceptual overlap. A principle components factor analysis yielded two factors with eigenvalues over 1 that accounted for 72.87% of the total variance: personality factors (43.17%) and power dynamics (29.7%). As expected, the personality factor was made up of the neuroticism and perceived stress scales. The power dynamics factor was made up of perceived power and satisfaction with the current relationship, a major part of which is satisfaction with the roles each partner has in the relationship. The author created these factor scales.

Proc Mixed procedure regression analyses were then conducted using the SAS statistical package to see if either of the two factor scores (personality factors and power dynamics) were significant predictors of the two demand/withdraw patterns measured by the CPQSF (wife-demand/husband-withdraw and husband-demand/wife-withdraw). Data for the three regression analyses are located in Tables 5 and 6.

Wife-demand/husband-withdraw (WDHW)

Overall, the variables were found to be significant predictors of this interaction style, $\chi^2(1, 35) = 5.73, p < .05$. The personality factor was the only significant predictor of WDHW, $t = 2.32, p < .05$. The power dynamics factor was not a significant predictor, $t = .39, p > .5$. These results support the idea that the individual differences hypothesis is related to this negative interaction style.

Husband-demand/wife-withdraw (HDWW)

Overall, the variables were highly significant predictors of this interaction style, $\chi^2(1, 35) = 14.44, p < .001$. However neither the personality factor ($t = .09, p > .9$) nor the power dynamics factor ($t = -.02, p > .9$) were individually significant predictors of this interaction style. These results suggest that neither the personality or power dynamics factors are uniquely able to predict this demand/withdraw style, but that there may be some common aspect between these two factors that is influencing the overall significance of the regression equation.

Discussion

The result of this study provided partial support for the individual differences hypothesis while providing no support for the social structure hypothesis. Specifically, personality factors as measured by neuroticism and perceived stress predicted couples' reported levels of wife-demand/husband-withdraw behavior, while the power dynamic factors as measured by perceived marital power and marital satisfaction were not uniquely predictive of any type of demand/withdraw behavior. These results, therefore, provide partial support for the importance of the individual differences hypothesis as a contributor to the occurrence of this destructive interaction pattern.

In turn, these results provided no support for the social structure hypothesis. This result, while unexpected, is not altogether surprising as the only other study to directly measure couples' self-reports of power also did not find a direct relationship between power and demand/withdraw behavior (Sagrestano et al., 1999). In addition, for married couples who report being largely satisfied, such as those in the present study, the link between demand/withdraw behavior and satisfaction tends to be lower (Vogel & Karney, 2002).

Therefore, while most studies have found support for the social structure hypothesis when power was inferred from the topic being discussed, the results of the current study suggest, that when power is directly assessed it seems to have a small non-significant effect.

These findings could indicate several things. First, it could be that power and satisfaction are not linked to the occurrence of this dysfunctional pattern. As this is one of the first studies to directly measure power and not infer it from a conflict discussion this is a possibility. However, a more plausible explanation is that individual differences fuel the start of this dysfunctional communication pattern and then as problems and power struggles in the relationship increase, the social structure factors begin to manifest their influence and the communication patterns becomes even more divergent. For example, partners' anxious and nervous behavior (i.e., neuroticism) and difficulty dealing with stress could lead to increased problems dealing with conflict and increases in the demand/withdraw behavior exhibited by a couple, initially. As the number of conflicts and demand/withdraw behavior increases, spouses' relationship satisfaction may degrade and power balances become more and more divergent which then lead to further conflict and demand/withdraw behavior. Thus, power imbalances and marital satisfaction may not participate as strongly in the formation of this communication pattern but may have a significant influence the maintenance of the pattern.

If this suggestion is true, then the reason that the current sample of married couples' demand/withdraw behavior was not linked with the social structure factors was because the couples were mostly satisfied, experiencing low conflict, and exhibiting low to moderate levels of demand/withdraw behavior. These couples had not reached a level of distress where social structure factors would have come into effect. This idea is consistent with fact that most studies suggesting the importance of the social structure hypothesis on

demand/withdraw (i.e., Christensen & Schenk, 1991) have focused on distressed couples. This level of distress has developed over time, taking years to become engrained in the relationship. While this sample was married about as long as other samples (about 9 years) a significant level of distress was not as present in this sample, making it difficult to detect a difference using the social structure hypothesis. Some support for this notion can also be gathered in the current study, as this sample of married couples exhibited less demand/withdraw than has been typically found in married couples and only exhibited about as much demand/withdraw behavior as a typical dating couple (Vogel et al., 1999). This hypothesis is somewhat speculative, however, and future studies will need to directly assess it.

Interestingly, while there was support for the individual differences perspective, the hypothesis that higher stress perceptions and neuroticism and lower agreeableness scores would be directly correlated with higher demand/withdraw interactions was not supported. The fact that the couples were largely happy and satisfied and reported low levels of demand/withdraw behaviors could have made it difficult for this study to assess the effects of these factors on demand/withdraw patterns. Future studies will be needed to further explore the relationship between these factors and husband-demand/wife-withdraw and wife-demand/husband-withdraw patterns.

Finally, it is important to note that only wife-demand/husband-withdraw was significantly predicted by any of the factors. Husband-demand/wife-withdraw was not uniquely predicted by any of the factors. This finding, while not hypothesized, does support some of the previous research, which has indicated that the wife-demand/husband withdraw pattern is more affected by these measured variables (i.e., Heavey et al., 1993). Previous

studies, for example, have found that the wife-demand behavior is first affected by these variables making the wife-demand/husband-withdraw pattern more reactive, at least for relatively happy couples (Vogel & Karney, 2002). Therefore, the results of this study support the notion that the demand/withdraw patterns exhibited by couples may be differentially predicted by individual and social structure factors. Future researchers may want to further explore possible reasons for why these factors influence wife-demand/husband-withdraw more so than husband-demand/wife-withdraw.

Limitations and future research

The main limitation to this study was the sample. Due to the small sample size any non-significant findings may have been due to the fact that too few couples were entered into the analyses. For example, power analyses for marital power, satisfaction, stress, neuroticism and agreeableness all showed that the present analyses had low statistical power (less than .20, at the $p = .05$ level) and, therefore, had a little power to detect significant correlations. Thus, the findings of the present study need to be taken with caution as the non-significant effects may be due to low power. As also mentioned, the sample was fairly homogenous in their responses to the measured variables, which reduced the likelihood that we would find significant differences. The satisfaction questionnaire showed a high report of satisfaction and the power survey indicated that people felt that they were in a position of power within the relationship. Additionally, our sample reported moderately-high to high agreeableness scores. Previous research has suggested that couples who are high on these measures report fewer disagreements than couples who are not (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; Vogel & Karney, 2002).

The homogeneity in the sample might have been due to self-selection as the return rate was low (14%). This self-selection also affects the generalizability of the findings, in particular, as the sample was predominantly white and in college. In addition, the sample reported being mostly agreeable, may have been a differentiating factor between those who completed the survey and those who did not. The sample also being pretty happy and satisfied in their relationship, is potentially consistent with characteristics we would expect of those choosing to complete a marital survey, as they would be less likely to be threatened by personal questions about their marriage. Future studies examining this topic need to be conducted with a more diverse sample to see if the results replicate in other populations. More extensive solicitation procedures are also recommended. Future studies might want to use a larger reward as a way to entice more participants. Additionally, experimenters may wish to solicit participants door-to-door or from college courses directly to increase response rates.

The second main limitation of this study was that some of the measures used, specifically the perceived marital power scale, had low reported validity and reliability (for men) estimates. The perceived marital power scale was the only direct measure of marital power that was found. It also had been used in a previous study of demand/withdraw behavior. However, while it seems to have face validity, concurrent or predictive validity have not been established. In addition, the internal reliability of this measure was low making it difficult to find a relationship between it and other measures. The non-significant findings regarding the relationship between the power measure and demand-withdraw behavior should be taken with caution. This caution also applies to other findings because the reliability for the wife-demand/husband-withdraw for wives (.63) was low. Future studies

should seek to use more reliable and better validated measures to try to capture these constructs more accurately. Specifically, the current measure of power, the Perceive Marital Power scale, needs to be modified and validated to provide an accurate measure of marital power or a new measure of power needs to be developed and validated.

A third limitation for this study was the fact that the social structure hypothesis, who's topic was being examined when completing the survey, was inferred rather than manipulated directly as in past studies (i.e., Christensen & Heavey, 1990, Heavey, et al., 1995; Vogel et al., 1999). This makes it impossible to know who was making the change for request as in past studies. This limitation could have affected the results of the study by over-representing one-sides' demands and under-representing the other sides' demands.

Researchers may also want to utilize an observational component to help counter the possible self-report biases that might be present in this study. One nice aspect of this study is that both partner responses were used which should have lessened the self-report bias, however couples may have been presenting themselves in a positive light. An observational component in future studies could offset this self-presentation problem. Future researchers might also want to directly assess couples' demand/withdraw behavior as they progress in their relationship, noting how the power may shift and any corresponding effects on the couples' communication patterns. This type of longitudinal study may allow a better understanding of couple interactions and how they might change over time. If the social structure factors effect the demand/withdraw communication pattern later in the relationship, longitudinal studies would be better suited to examine this change than would cross-sectional studies. A better model of demand-withdraw communication could be built if researchers were able to examine these factors over time.

Future studies might also want to conduct this study with a clinical sample to compare these results with more distressed couples. It is hypothesized that a clinical sample would show higher degrees of social structure influences than were present in this study. These couples, as compared to those in the current sample, would have been married longer and experienced significant declines in marital satisfaction. These factors would allow the power differential to take effect in their relationship and strengthen the demand/withdraw patterns present. This hypothesis is supported by previous research (i.e., Christensen & Schenk, 1991).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Despite the potential problems, the current results do coincide with previous research using self-report data. Specifically, wife-demand/husband-withdraw occurred at a higher level than husband-demand/wife-withdraw (i.e., Heavey et al., 1995). Additionally, the personality factors (individual differences hypothesis) were found to predict wife-demand/husband-withdraw while power dynamics (social structure hypothesis) was not. These differences were found despite the fact that many aspects of the sample (very satisfied, high power, and high agreeableness) and the sample size should have worked against finding any significant results. Thus, overall this study provides evidence for the importance of the individual differences hypothesis, at least for couples that are exhibiting low levels of demand/withdraw behavior.

These findings have implications for counselors and psychologists working with couples experiencing problems. First, counselors may want to teach couple's stress management techniques to help lower stress perceptions, which this study found was linked with demand/withdraw behaviors. Additionally, counselors and psychologists may want to educate couples on how to deal with neurotic personality tendencies such as anxiousness, tenseness, or nervousness which could lead to increased use of negative communication strategies. Techniques such as relaxation skills, anxiety management, self-talk, and "reality checking" might allow them to better manage their own feelings which in turn will allow the couple to communicate more effectively and buffer them against the formation of a demand/withdraw pattern.

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APPENDIX A: TABLES

Means and standard deviations for relationship length and age

	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Relationship Length	8.91	7.56	8.91	7.56
Age	29.62	8.34	29.26	8.23

Frequencies for ethnicity/race, degree, school standing

	Number	Percent
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	62	88.6
Hispanic	4	5.7
African-American	0	0.0
Asian	1	1.4
Other	1	1.4
Missing	2	2.9
Degree		
BA/BS	23	32.9
MA/MS	15	21.4
PhD	20	28.6
Missing	12	17.1
School Year		
Sophomore	3	4.29
Junior	4	5.71
Senior	11	15.71
Graduate School	34	48.57
Graduated/Not Attending	8	11.43
Missing	10	14.29

Descriptive statistics for the measures

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
CPQ		
HDWW	11.32	6.19
WDHW	12.77	6.26
TOTDW	24.11	8.74
NEO-FFI		
Agreeableness (BFA)	19.97	3.61
Neuroticism (BFN)	14.26	4.80
Perceived Stress (PSS)	21.03	6.97
Relationship Satisfaction (RAS)	31.64	4.09
Marital Power (PMP)	4.82	.82

Correlation matrix for measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Husband-demand/Wife-withdraw		.08	.26	-.11	.19	-.04	-.02
2. Wife-demand/Husband-withdraw			.18	.04	.16	-.24	-.22
3. Neuroticism (BFN)				.11	.53**	-.08	.12
4. Agreeableness (BFA)					-.26	.29	-.01
5. Stress (PSS)						-.44**	-.05
6. Satisfaction (RAS)							.24
7. Power (PMP)							

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Regression table wife-demand/husband-withdraw

	Standard Error	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Personality factors	.76	2.32	.03
Power dynamics	.77	.39	.70

Regression table husband-demand/wife-withdraw

	Standard Error	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Personality factors	.70	.09	.93
Power dynamics	.70	-.02	.99

APPENDIX B: MEASURES

Communication Patterns Questionnaire: Short Form

Please write what this issue is here: _____

We are interested in how you and your partner typically deal with this problem in your relationship. Please rate each item on a scale of 1 (= very unlikely) to 9 (= very likely).

- | | Very
Unlikely | | | | | | | | Very
Likely |
|---|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| A. WHEN THIS ISSUE OR PROBLEM ARISES, | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. <u>Mutual Avoidance</u> . Both members avoid discussing the problem. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 2. <u>Mutual Discussion</u> . Both members try to discuss the problem. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 3. <u>Discussion/Avoidance</u> .
Man tries to start a discussion while
Woman tries to avoid a discussion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Woman tries to start a discussion while
Man tries to avoid a discussion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| B. DURING A DISCUSSION OF THIS ISSUE OR PROBLEM, | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. <u>Mutual Expression</u> . Both members express their feelings to each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 5. <u>Mutual Blame</u> . Both members blame, accuse, and criticize each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 6. <u>Mutual Negotiation</u> . Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 7. <u>Demand/Withdraw</u> .
Man pressures, nags, or demands while
Woman withdraws, becomes silent, or
refuses to discuss the matter further. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Woman pressures, nags, or demands while
Man withdraws, becomes silent, or
refuses to discuss the matter further. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 8. <u>Criticize/Defend</u> .
Man criticizes while Woman
defends herself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Woman criticizes while Man
defends himself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

NEO-Five Factor Inventory

Indicate how true each of the following terms is in describing you:

1 = Not at all true of me; I am almost never this way

2 = Mostly not true of me; I am rarely this way

3 = Neither true nor untrue of me, or I can't decide

4 = Somewhat true of me; I am sometimes this way

5 = Very true of me; I am very often this way

1. _____ imaginative
2. _____ organized
3. _____ talkative
4. _____ sympathetic
5. _____ tense
6. _____ intelligent
7. _____ thorough
8. _____ assertive
9. _____ kind
10. _____ anxious
11. _____ original
12. _____ efficient
13. _____ active
14. _____ soft-hearted
15. _____ nervous
16. _____ insightful
17. _____ responsible
18. _____ energetic
19. _____ warm
20. _____ worrying
21. _____ clever
22. _____ practical
23. _____ outgoing
24. _____ generous
25. _____ self-pitying

Perceived Stress Scale

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way.

Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times that you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate. For each question choose from the following alternatives:

0=Never

1=Almost Never

2=Sometimes

3=Fairly Often

4=Very Often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because something happened unexpectedly? _____
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? _____
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous or stressed? _____
4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with life hassles? _____
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life? _____
6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? _____
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? _____
8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do? _____
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the irritations in your life? _____
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? _____
11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control? _____
12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish? _____
13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time? _____
14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? _____

Relationship Assessment Scale

Please reflect on your relationship with your current partner.

How well does your partner meet your needs?

1	2	3	4	5
Almost never				Almost always

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Almost never				Almost always

How good is your relationship compared with most?

1	2	3	4	5
Worse than most				Better than most

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Almost never				Almost always

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Completely

How much do you love your partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Unconditionally

How many problems are there in your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Almost none				A lot

Perceived Marital Power

Please respond to the answer the following questions using the following 7-point scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

1. I have the potential to influence my partner. _____
2. I am confident in my ability to influence my partner. _____
3. I am likely to do what my partner wants. _____
4. I have more potential to influence my partner than my partner does me. _____