

**The Relationship Between Sexual Satisfaction and
Relationship Satisfaction as Mediated by Partner Perceptions of Power**

by

Kathryn Elisabeth Blythe

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science

Auburn, Alabama
August 6, 2016

Key words: Sexual satisfaction, couple's therapy,
power dynamics, relationship satisfaction

Copyright 2016 by Kathryn E. Blythe

Approved by

Scott A. Ketring, Chair, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies
Thomas A. Smith, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies
Rachel Tambling, Associate Professor, University of Connecticut

Abstract

Using a sample of 34 clients from the Auburn University Marriage and Family Therapy Center, this study examined the relationship between sexual satisfaction, marital power and relationship satisfaction for males and females was explored. Likewise, the interaction between sexual satisfaction and marital power predicting relationship satisfaction at the intake of therapy treatment was analyzed. Sample data were collected from previous therapy clients at a marriage and family therapy clinic in a Southeastern university. Overall findings revealed no support for mediation, but did show that both dependent variables influence relationship satisfaction.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank Dr. Scott Ketring for helping me to complete a project I was excited about, and for challenging me not only as student but as a clinician. I would also like to thank Dr. Tommy Smith for his unceasing positivity, and for always providing laughter throughout the entire program (I will always be glad you constantly picked on me, “because you only mess with people you like”). I also thank Dr. Rachel Tambling for participating in this project from afar and being very excited about the topic.

I am especially thankful for my partner Sidney, who made the best days better and the hard days easier, and pushed me to finish this thesis (but promised that if I couldn't, we'd figure that out, too). I also thank my sweet little family unit. Mom, Dad and Coley: every embrace, whether physical or figurative, carried me through the stress and difficult times; your love and support has made me the person I am today.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	1
Relationship Satisfaction.....	5
Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction.....	5
Perception of Power and Relationship Satisfaction.....	6
Interaction of Sexual Satisfaction and marital power.....	7
Method.....	12
Participants.....	12
Procedure.....	12
Measures.....	13
Plan of Analysis.....	15
Results.....	17
Discussion.....	19
References.....	27
Tables.....	31

Appendices.....	39
Appendix A – Marital Power Scale.....	39
Appendix B – Couple Satisfaction Index.....	40
Appendix C – Female Sexual Function Index.....	41

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of participants in committed relationships from Auburn University clinic

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Table 3. Correlations of Study Variables

Table 4. Fit and Test Statistics for Linear Regression with Couple Satisfaction as Outcome

List of Figures

Figure 1. Graph of Mediation Model for Variables of Interest

Introduction

Couples tend to seek therapy when they experience a given level of dissatisfaction with their relationship. The clinician has the task of identifying and addressing the underlying issues in the couple's relationship. The difficulty that clinicians experience when working with couples is determining which relationship dynamic or symptom to address at the outset of services. In couples' therapy, a universal variable used to assess the couple functioning is relationship satisfaction (Funk and Rogge, 2007).

The factors and dynamics that compose an individual's satisfaction with their relationship are custom to each individual, which makes identifying them and studying them in any universal context difficult. Constructs such as the ability to resolve conflict and level of commitment impact the relationship, as does communication and acceptance (Gottman, Coan, Carrere & Swanson, 1998). It is important to have a general sense of what areas impact relationship satisfaction, especially for a clinician who hopes to improve the relationship satisfaction by improving relationship dynamics. The two relationship factors influencing couple satisfaction are sexuality and power dynamics (Yoo, 2013; Minuchin 1998; Whisman 1997).

Sexual satisfaction is consistently connected with relationship satisfaction (Yoo, 2013; Demaria, 1998; Sprecher & Cate, 2004; Sprecher, 2002). Yoo (2013) found that couples seeking treatment have lower levels of sexual intimacy and relationship satisfaction than non-treatment seeking couples. Henry and Miller (2004) found sexual issues to be among the three most common problems reported in relationships.

Perceived power is another factor related to relationship satisfaction (Gray-Little &

Burks, 1983). This construct addresses the degree to which an individual perceives that their partner is controlling and coercive. Therapy models, like Structural Family Therapy, directly address power dynamics in relationships (Minuchin and Nichols, 1998). Likewise, family researchers are espousing the relationship satisfaction benefits of egalitarian relationships, where both partners have equal influence (Lebaron, Miller, & Yorgason, 2014). When examining what issues brought couples to therapy, Whisman, Dixon, and Johnson (1997) found power struggles to be one of the most commonly reported problems by couples seeking couple's therapy.

An examination of the literature shows that clinicians typically address sexuality or power separately. A review of the literature did not reveal any studies that specifically examined sexual satisfaction and power dynamics and their possible impact on relationship satisfaction. However, it would make sense that these two areas would have an interaction. Sexuality and power dynamics are both constructs that are simultaneously subjective to individuals (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983) and systemic, affecting the partner (Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002). For example, individual experiences of sexuality within the relationship (such as intimacy and desire) are not created in isolation; rather they are impacted by the relationship interaction. Likewise, an individual's interaction with their partner likely affects intimacy and desire.

The current study contends that couple power dynamics may explain the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. The theories supporting this notion will be discussed. The study will also add to the body of couple's research which currently does not sufficiently explore the power and sexual interactions in relationships. The findings of the research may have clinical implications which would draw conclusions about what impacts

couple's satisfaction. Identifying the important factors debilitating a couple's relationship satisfaction would be a helpful indicator for which relationship dynamics a couples' therapist should target.

satisfaction would be a helpful indicator for which relationship dynamics a couples' therapist should target.

The current study examines the relationship between sexuality and relationship satisfaction. The research has established that relationship satisfaction is related to both sexual satisfaction and power dynamics (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). By determining the relationship between sexual satisfaction and power, we can address the question of whether a clinician should focus most of their efforts on sex therapy or relationship dynamics associated with power.

Theoretical Foundations

Three theories provide a reason to explore the connection between sexual satisfaction and relationship power. Social Exchange Theory suggests that the perception of power is important for relationship satisfaction and further, that it is not the "equality of power per se, but rather the perception of equity or proportional returns in the exchange of resources" (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Researchers suggest there are no permanent hierarchical power structures in marriage, and that the couple attempts to move towards a state of power balance (Beckman-Brindley & Tavormina, 1978; Emerson, 1962, 1976; Kelley, 1979). Gray-Little and Burks (1983) report that couples who perceive the power balance to be unequal will have lower relationship satisfaction. This theory supports the current study's hypothesis that partner perception of power is related to relationship satisfaction, and that those individuals who perceive less coercion and control by their partner will have greater relationship satisfaction.

The second theory is the Intersystem Approach, which was developed by Weeks (1997), and Hertlein et al. (2009) and is commonly applied in sex therapy. In this framework, psychological, biological, dyadic relationship, the family of origin and cultural aspects are considered when assessing sexual functioning in couples. Sexual functioning includes systemic aspects of relationships such as power dynamics. The amount of coercion, influence, and control an individual has on the relationship will impact sexual functioning (Weeks, 1997). This concept could further be applied to marital power as it refers to domestic duties, finances and parenting (Christenson, 2014). The theory supports the argument that power dynamics may mediate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction because systemic aspects of a relationship affect sexual functioning. The elaboration of this argument will be further explored within the current literature.

The third theory, The Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS), further suggests that power dynamics of a relationship affect sexual satisfaction, therefore accounting for the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (Lawrance and Byers, 1995). This model suggests four primary factors make up sexual contentment. The first and second are related to the balance and expectations of sexual costs and rewards. The third and fourth factors globally focus on couple power dynamics; with the third emphasizing perceived equality of sexual costs and rewards between partners, and the fourth focusing on the quality of non-sexual aspects of the relationship. This theory explains that power dynamics may influence sexual satisfaction, because, “when one partner in a marriage is unhappy with the equality or inequality of marital power, the cost of having a sexual relationship may outweigh benefits” (Christenson, pg. 3, 2014). If the costs do indeed outweigh the benefits, lack of equality in the sexual relationship may lead to lower sexual satisfaction for both partners.

Byers and Macneil (2006) and Yucel and Gassanov (2010) have also used this model in their research to evaluate the non-sexual aspects of the relationship linked to sexual satisfaction. This theory explains the connection between sexuality and power by arguing that non-sexual aspects of the relationship (such as power) are a component that impacts sexual satisfaction.

Power and sexuality in the relationship are two dynamics that both theory and research support as playing a role in relationship satisfaction. However, the research has not yet determined the direction of the interaction of those dynamics. Social exchange theory suggests that a balance of power between partners is ideal, and leads to greater relationship satisfaction. The Intersystem Approach and Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction further indicate that couple power dynamics contribute to factors that affect sexual fulfillment. If sexual satisfaction is related to relationship satisfaction (Yoo, 2013), and power dynamics influence sexual satisfaction (Weeks, 1997; Lawrance and Buyers, 1998), then couple power dynamics mediate the relationship between sexual and relationship satisfaction. These theories further suggest that perception of equal power will lead to greater sexual and relationship satisfaction for the couples.

Review of the Literature

This review explored the literature concerning factors affecting couple relationship satisfaction. Specifically, the relationship between sexual satisfaction, marital power, and relationship satisfaction was discussed. The research evaluating the characteristics of sexual satisfaction and marital power were explored, along with the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital power in connection with relationship satisfaction.

Relationship Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the index of success for many studies evaluating couple's relationship (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Clinicians use this measure to determine improvement or progress in therapy (Hendrick, 1998). High relationship satisfaction is related to other aspects of individual and relationship functioning, such as increased affection, acceptance, intimacy and ability to resolve conflict (Gottman et. al., 1998; Miller and Teddar, 2011; Delgleish et. al., 2015). It is essential to know what variables are most influential in improving satisfaction. One of the difficulties in determining what variables influence couple satisfaction is that measurements most often reflect individual perceptions, though Dean & Lucas (1978) suggest that either individual's or the couple's joint score will give the same information.

There is agreement that contributing aspects of relationships are not clear-cut (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983, pg. 516). Despite this, "relationship satisfaction has become a central construct in the field of relationship research and marital therapy literature, serving as a cornerstone for understanding how relationships and marriages work" (Funk and Rogge, pg. 572, 2007). A permeating message in the literature: relationship satisfaction is important to understand when

working with couples, and the factors which impact that satisfaction are complex, varied and individualized. However, contributing to research on relationship satisfaction will help to understand those factors better. There are many aspects, but the current study has a focus on two in particular: sexual satisfaction, power dynamics, and the interaction the two variables have on relationship satisfaction.

Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

Sexual satisfaction is a variable of interest because many studies empirically show that sexual aspects of romantic relationships are correlates of relationship satisfaction (Yoo et. al. 2014; Stephenson et. al. 2013; Sprecher, 2002; Russell, 1990; McCarthy, 2009; Hertlein, 2009). It is logical that sex would be closely related to relationship satisfaction as sex often solely occurs in the context of a romantic relationship.

Demaria (1998) investigated the reasons why 129 couples sought therapy. Reports of low levels of sexual satisfaction consistently surfaced. He also found that low levels of sexual satisfaction further predicted suppressed romantic feelings and commitment (Demaria, 1998). Higher levels of sexual satisfaction were related to greater relationship quality (Sprecher & Cate, 2004; Christenson, 2014; Russell, 1990), and distressed couples appeared to focus more on their sexual satisfaction than happy couples (McCarthy & McCarthy (2009). In a study conducted by Trudel (2002), couples reported one of the most important elements of marital happiness was sexual satisfaction.

Sprecher (2002) found an association between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction for both men and women. The change in sexual satisfaction between time one and time two was related to change in relationship satisfaction. Sexual satisfaction was more strongly related to relationship quality for men than women. In a different study, Byers (2002) studied

eighty-seven individuals in long-term relationships. They found evidence that change in relationship satisfaction leads to change in sexual satisfaction. Further, a factor-analytic study shows that sexuality is an important element of relationship quality (Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002).

It's important to note that the relationship between sexual and relationship satisfaction may exhibit a gendered effect. In a study of 335 married couples, Yoo and colleagues (2014) reported that wives' relationship satisfaction was not related to their husband's sexual satisfaction, though husbands reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction when their wives reported higher sexual satisfaction. The researchers drew conclusions that sexual satisfaction is a major component of relationship satisfaction and couple intimacy, though there are gender differences. Butzer and Campbell (2008) also found that sexually satisfied married individuals were also more satisfied in general with their marriage. They found further that if an individual was sexually satisfied within the relationship, the partner was more likely to be satisfied.

Perception of Power and Relationship Satisfaction

Power is the other variable of interest examined in the current study. Gray-Little and Burks (1983) study contributes to the literature discussing the relationship between power and relationship satisfaction. According to their research, the happiest couples tend to be egalitarian. As supported by the theory, the current study operationally defines egalitarian as a power dynamic in a relationship where both partners perceive equality in the relationship and shares the influence and rewards of the relationship. In this framework, an individual who perceives that their partner is coercive (defined here as using their influence to get their way in the relationship) would be the opposite of an egalitarian dynamic. The actual objective measure of coercion or equality does not matter: in this context, the important detail is whether an individual *perceives* their relationship to be equal or coercive.

Couples with differing roles and dynamics in the relationship may report the same level of egalitarianism. There are two commonly reported examples of equal dynamics: one describes a relationship pattern in which the male and female make decisions jointly and together. The other arrangement describes a relationship in which each partner has control over separate areas of the relationship. The message here is that there is no universal dynamic or set of roles that create the most equality in a relationship; rather, the important aspect is that both individuals perceive it to be equal.

The current study is based on this research and hypothesizes that relationship satisfaction will increase as power is seen as equal. Several studies have established that marital power distribution between partners has a significant effect on relationship functioning, (Breznyak & Whisman, 2004; Stafford & Canary, 2006; Whisman & Jacobson, 1990). For example, Gray-Little et. al. (1983) found coercion and marital dissatisfaction to be correlated.

Currently, the majority of American marriages are more “traditional” with husbands holding most relationship power (Ball, Cowan, & Cowan, 1995). However, in this case, the majority doesn’t necessarily rule. Feminist theorists indicate that traditional relationships put women in a subordinate role in marriage, represented by unequal control of family money, higher risk for interpersonal violence, and a double standard regarding sexual behavior,” (Jackson, 2014). However, in recent years, contemporary marriage (Sullivan, 2006) has flourished, as partners have gravitated towards increased egalitarianism, flexibility, and have been more equitable than traditional marriage (Christenson, 2014).

The percentage of wives who reported that they shared an equal part in decision making increased from 47% in 1980 to 64% in 2000 (Jackson, 2014). Those in egalitarian relationships have consistently reported the highest relationship satisfaction (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983).

They also demonstrated other benefits, such as the lower likelihood of experiencing depression (Byrne & Car, 2000), having greater physical health (Loving, Heffner, Kiecolt-Glaser, Glaser, & Malarkey, 2004), and better marital adjustment (Gray-Little, Baucom & Hamby, 1996). For the purpose of this study, it is significant that research has established a positive relationship between the perception of shared power in marriage and the reporting of higher marital satisfaction (Breznyak & Whisman, 1994; Sattford & Canary, 2006).

When examining 325 Mexican-American couples, the highest marital satisfaction reported was among those individuals in relationships who reported equality in decision-making (Bean, Curtis, and Marcum, 1977). Other studies from different countries provide more evidence that egalitarian couples are happiest. In a study of 550 French wives, the women were most satisfied with their relationship when decision-making was egalitarian (Michel, 1967), and amongst 1,370 Austrian wives, the higher reports of marital satisfaction were most likely to report shared decision making (Szinovacz, 1978). Most studies conclude that the most consistent finding is that relationships in which the wife is dominant are the most dissatisfied (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Other studies looked at other relationship factors such as marital intactness, rather than satisfaction, and found power equality to be related (Scanzoni, 1968).

Sexual Satisfaction and Perception of Power

Although the linking of sexual satisfaction and perception of power occurred in other studies, the interaction of these two variables was the primary focus of this study. The theoretical literature supported the hypothesized direction of power dynamics impacting the relationship between sexuality and relationship satisfaction. For the purpose of this study, the perception of power refers to an individuals' perception of whether they have an equal role in their relationship, and conversely whether their partner can use their influence over the relationship

and interactions. Christenson (2014) found that partner perceptions of marital power were positively related to respective spouse's sexual satisfaction. For example, couples with equal power have higher levels of sexual desire, which is a variable positively related to sexual satisfaction (Breznyak and Whisman, 2004).

There is evidence in the literature, which suggest that addressing couple dynamics and their impact on sexual functioning can be an effective form of treatment. In "New Sex Therapy", Kaplan's model (1974) included a couple of behavioral systems, which set the stage for considering couple relational dynamics and their impact on sexual functioning and satisfaction. Hertlein, Weeks and Gambescia (2009) more recently introduced a new paradigm to sex therapy, the "Intersystem Approach", which addressed nonsexual relationship dynamics as factors in sexual functioning and satisfaction. Hertlein, Weeks and Sendak (2009) also theorized that nonsexual aspects of a couples' relationship could act as a mediator for sexually dissatisfied couple's response to sex therapy. The current study also draws conclusions about which aspects of the relationship the clinician should address, by using couple intake assessments to determine if power dynamics in the relationship account for sexual satisfaction.

Hypotheses

The present study examined the role of couple power dynamics, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction. Based on past research and theory, our hypotheses are three-fold.

1. Higher sexual satisfaction will be positively related to higher relationship satisfaction.
2. Perceived equality of power will be positively related to greater sexual satisfaction.

3. Perceived equality of power will be related to higher relationship satisfaction when controlling for sexual satisfaction. In other words, if power is perceived to be equal among partners, this will be positively related to higher relationship satisfaction and simultaneously higher sexual satisfaction. Perception of power will mediate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore whether sexual satisfaction ratings, power dynamics ratings, and a Couple Satisfaction Index collected at intake could indicate whether a relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction was due to the interaction of power dynamics. This methods section introduces the mechanisms used to answer the research questions. It discusses the data collected, the sample, the measures used to assess and create the quantitative data, and whether power dynamics mediates the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.

Data for this study were collected and completed at the Auburn University Marriage and Family Therapy Center. The Auburn University Marriage and Family Therapy Center (AUMFTC) is an on-campus training center for the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) accredited Marriage and Family Therapy Master's program at Auburn University, providing services to residents of eastern Alabama. Therapy at the AUMFTC is conducted by Master's level student therapists in training and supervised primarily by Ph.D. level licensed marriage and family therapists who are AAMFT approved supervisors.

Participants

Participants for this study were clients who attended therapy at the AUMFTC. This sample consisted of individuals in committed partnerships. Clients sought treatment for many therapeutic reasons, including couple relationship counseling, behavior problems, anxiety and depression, infidelity and many other difficult challenges. During the sample time frame, 62

individuals in committed began therapy at the center. From the 59 individuals, three did not complete all assessments in the intake paperwork, eliminating them from the sample. In the end, 59 participants completed an intake session and completed all required paperwork (intake). In order to account for non-independence, either the male or female data from each couple-pair was chosen at random to include in the pooling. Data were re-analyzed with the other partner's data to check for bias. Results indicate that choice of partner did not lead to any meaningful changes in the pooled mean or standard deviation.

The age range for the 59 participants in this study were 19-66 years of age ($M = 33.37$). 31 participants were male, and 28 were female. Approximately 70% participants reported their race as White while 13.4% of participants were African American. See Table 1 for further demographic information about the sample.

This study included 12 Master's level therapists, all completing training at the Auburn University Marriage and Family Therapy program. There was also three full-time AAMFT Approved Supervisors and two supervisors-in-training who individually supervised the therapists during their training.

Procedure

Quantitative data were gathered using self-report assessments at intake. Measurement of power came from participant reports of their perceptions of their partner's level of power using the Miller Power Scale (Christenson, 2014). Relationship satisfaction was measured using the Couple Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007), Sexual satisfaction was measured using the Female Sexual Function Index (Rosen, Brown, Heiman, Leiblum, Meston, Shabsigh, Ferguson, & D'Agostino 2000). Male and female couples in committed relationships receiving therapy at AUMFTC between October 2015 and May 2016 completed assessments at intake for treatment.

These individuals provided consent to have their de-identified data used for research purposes. IRB approval was received to de-identify and analyze data.

The information acquired for this study came from self-reported questionnaires, which were administered by AUMFTC, intern therapists administered the questionnaires. Before the first session of therapy, clients at each respective clinic received the same intake packet, which contained the Miller Power Scale, Couple Satisfaction Index, and Female Sexual Function Index.

Measures

Miller Power Scales (MPS). Clients completed the MPS before the first session. This measure was designed to measure marital power by having each partner answer items according to their perception of their partner's level of power. The scale includes 15 questions using a Likert-type scale which ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For the purpose of this study, all items will be used. For example, "It often seems my partner can get away with things in our relationship that I can never get away with", and "I have no choice but to do what my partner wants," are a few of the items the clients answered. The higher the score for the individual questions, the more partners perceived the other as exerting power within the relationship; the item mean for each partner was used as their respective measure of partner marital power. The literature shows that the Cronbach's Alpha for this study is .92, though the current study found the internal consistency to be lower .76 with the current sample. The MPS was developed from other scales (i.e., Ball et al., 1995; Crosbie-Burnett, & GilesSims, 1991; Lindahl et al., 2004; Sagrestano et al., 1999).

Couple Satisfaction Index 16 (CSI). The CSI is a frequently used 16 item self-report scale (Funk & Rogge, 2007). This measure was designed to measure relationship satisfaction and detect change with greater power than other frequently used measures. For one item the ratings

range from 0 (extremely unhappy) to 6 (perfect). One item ranges from 5 (all the time) to 0 (never). Seven items range from 0 (not at all true) to 5 (completely true). Cronbach's Alpha reported in the literature for the full item version in this study is .98 (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The current sample demonstrated a .96 level of internal consistency. Levels of couple satisfaction are discussed as high (positive) and low (negative) as found above and below the mean. The CSI scales were designed to offer methods of assessing satisfaction relatively free from contaminating communication variance by rigorously screening and eliminating communication items from the item pool.

Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI). The FSFI is a frequently used 19 item self-report scale (Rosen, Brown, Heiman, Leiblum, Meston, Shabsigh, Ferguson, & D'Agostino 2000), with a 3 item subscale focusing on satisfaction. The 19 item measure was designed to measure sexual function for women, but the 3 item subscale is not gender specific, and can be used to measure sexual satisfaction for both men and women. Item answer choices range from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very dissatisfied). For example, "Over the past four weeks, how satisfied have you been with your sexual relationship with your partner," and "Over the previous four weeks, how satisfied have you been with your overall sexual life" are two of the items the clients answered. Literature shows the Cronbach's Alpha for this measure to be .82 and higher (Rosen, et. al., 2000), and for the current sample was reported to be .91. Levels of FSFI are discussed as low and high sexual satisfaction.

Plan of Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between sexual and relationship satisfaction as potentially mediated by marital power. More specifically, a regression model was fit with the hypothesis that marital power mediates the relationship between self-

reported sexual and relationship satisfaction. As with all mediation models, the independent variable is expected to correlate with the dependent variable. Then a mediating variable, which is should be related to both the predictor and the outcome, and when introduced, eliminates or significantly decreases the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Barron and Kenny, 1986).

Results

The association between relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction exists within the literature. Determining whether relationship power acts as a mediating variable, diminishing the association between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction has not been determined (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983).

Within this sample, individual reports of relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and relational power at intake are explored for 59 participants. To account for this non-independence of couples attending therapy conjointly (24 pairs), either the male or female data from each couple relationship was chosen at random to include in the pooling. Data were re-analyzed with the other partner's data to check for bias. Results indicate that choice of partner did not lead to any meaningful changes in the pooled mean or standard deviation.

Preliminary Analysis of Univariate and Descriptive Statistics

SPSS statistical software is used to examine descriptive statistics for the variables of interest: sexual satisfaction, relational power and relationship satisfaction (see Table 2). The three variables were inspected to ensure they met model assumptions. Relationship satisfaction and relational power appear to be slightly negatively skewed. The residual plots indicate homoscedasticity and normality were examined and were determined to not violate normality. For the current study, no transforms were performed; however, this may contribute to possible limitations and should be addressed in future research. No other assumptions appear to be violated. Additional descriptive statistics can be found in Table 2. Upon examination of the plots, no outliers are identified in the analysis of the univariate statistics, and the distribution is normal.

Thus no transformation are needed.

Linear Regression with Relationship Satisfaction as Outcome

Three models were fit to determine if there was mediation (see Table 4; see Figure 1). First, relationship satisfaction was regressed onto the predictor sexual satisfaction (Model 1, path C). Next, the mediator, relational power, was regressed onto the predictor sexual satisfaction (Model 2 = path A). Finally, relationship satisfaction was regressed onto both sexual satisfaction and relational power (Model 3 = path B and C'). See Figure 1.

The relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction was fit with and without the mediator, relational power, as seen in Figure 1. The results of the tests showed that sexual satisfaction was not statistically significantly related to relational power, $\beta = .079$, $t = .449$, $p > .05$, $R^2 = -.025$ (Model 2), though relational power was significantly related to relationship satisfaction, $\beta = .459$, $t = 3.17$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .312$ (Model 3). The direct effect of relationship satisfaction to sexual satisfaction, $\beta = .381$, $t = 2.33$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .118$ (Model 1), was reduced with relational power in the model, $\beta = .344$, $t = 2.38$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .118$ (Model 3). The data indicates no mediation, because Path A was non-significant (see Figure 1). Additional inferential statistics may be observed in Table 4.

Gender as Control Variable

A fourth model controlling for participant gender is included (see Table 4). Gender is chosen as previous findings indicated gender may indicate the degree to which the relationship power affects relationship satisfaction (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Results do not suggest gender as a predictor of relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

This study examines the relationships between relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and relational power. Sexual satisfaction is a common predictor of relationship satisfaction (Yoo, et. al, 2014). It was expected that sex and relationship satisfaction would show a robust relationship, though the current findings indicate that power was most strongly related to relationship satisfaction. This finding has interesting implications when considering the premise of this study is based on previous research linking sexual satisfaction and relationship power (Christenson, 2014) to draw conclusions that power demonstrates the most robust influence relationship satisfaction. This finding is particularly interesting given the sample size of 35 participants. Perception of power is an important aspect of overall relationship satisfaction (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983), and garners the majority of variance in the model evaluating both power and sexual satisfaction.

Analysis of the data demonstrates that mediation does not exist because sexual satisfaction is not related to the perception of power, an unexpected finding given the research and theoretical formulations (Lawrance and Byers,1995). According the the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction, sexual dynamics of the relationship should be impacted by the individual perception of power. Relational power for this sample does not mediate the relationship between sexual and relationship satisfaction. While relational power is significantly predictive of relationship satisfaction, it does not account for the predictive power of sexual satisfaction.

***Hypothesis 1** Higher sexual satisfaction will be positively related to higher relationship satisfaction*

Results indicate overall support for the impact of sexual satisfaction on relationship satisfaction. This finding is expected from and is supported by the literature. Relationship satisfaction, overall, is a widely studied topic, and there is a wealth of knowledge of the subject, but much of the research evaluates participants from the general population. The present study adds to the literature by providing evidence with a clinical sample of couples reporting to therapy. Because, relationship satisfaction is a key outcome in measuring the change in couple's therapy, there appears to be support for focusing some energy on sexual satisfaction. However, this relationship seems to be secondary to relationship power (Funk and Rogge, 2007).

The overwhelming consensus of the literature's assertion that sexual and relationship satisfaction are related, a more robust association would be expected, though there is no precedent in the literature asserting a threshold to the magnitude of the relationship. The sample size is a potential variable in questioning the accuracy of the relationship. Likewise, sampling couple pairs would add lots of information to our understanding that the current study is unable to demonstrate.

The strength of the current study is that this study adds to the literature by sampling from a clinical sample of couples. While sexual satisfaction is significantly related to relationship power within the general population, this is not the case with the current couples reporting for therapy (Lebow et. al., 2012). The difference might be because the participants in this study are dissatisfied with all three areas of their relationship (i.e., sex, power, and relationships satisfaction). Even though we know that greater reports of sexual satisfaction are related to better relationship quality (Sprecher & Cate, 2004), low relationship satisfaction is not well

evaluated. Relationship satisfaction is by default most often evaluated with the aim of keeping the satisfaction high, and therefore there is less research about low satisfaction.

It may be that couples in distress, experiencing low relationship satisfaction might be overwhelmed by power dynamics to focus really on sexual satisfaction. The power dynamics might engulf the relationship to a level that sexual pleasure diminishes in significance to relationship satisfaction and become non-related to power.

If a person reports higher levels of relationship satisfaction the increase in sexual pleasure also increases. However, with the decrease in relationship satisfaction, it is not uncommon for couples to maintain an active sex life, at least initially. While the current sample of couples reporting for therapy is distraught about relationship dynamics, the dissatisfaction would appear to be in the moderately dissatisfied range. Moderate dissatisfaction or short-term struggles might not impact sexual pleasure. Future research would need to evaluate the level of relationship distress using clinical cut-off data.

***Hypothesis 2** Perceived equality of power will be positively related to greater sexual satisfaction.*

The most relevant piece of this study is the relationship between power and sexual satisfaction. Our study contributes to the very minimal amount of research that discusses the interaction between sex and power dynamics.

The results did not provide support for Hypothesis 2. As indicated in Table 4, sexual satisfaction and power perception are not related. The study continued to fit the remainder of the model despite non-significant relationship of the predictor and mediator. Though this was not the hypothesized finding, it does contribute to research regarding these two factors. In fact, the findings indicate that sexual satisfaction and power dynamics are both significant predictors of

relationship satisfaction, and their striking non-link suggest that they are both important and independent in their influence to relationship satisfaction. In drawing clinical implications, these findings suggest that to improve relationship satisfaction, both sexual satisfaction and power dynamics must be improved, although it would appear that power is the variable of focus for therapists working with couples. Clinicians may want to consider models and frameworks that simultaneously address both facets in the relationship, but maintain a primary focus on power.

Although we did not find support for mediation, the data does indicate that an interaction exists. The regression was not significant, but when the correlations were run the two variables of interest were correlated with each other, indicating that there is some overlap in the two facets. Further methodological limitations are discussed in limitations section.

Two of the theoretical formulations of the study were evidence for the argument in Hypothesis 2. One of the theoretical formulations for the current study, the IEMSS, theorizes that power dynamics in relationship affect sexual satisfaction. Unfortunately, the current sample does not show support for this. It is important to note however that the current measures of sex, as is discussed in the limitations section, are short and it is likely that a more robust measure of sexuality would include an impact of systemic aspects of the relationship, such as power dynamics. The results also do not discredit the IEMSS, because systemic aspects of the relationship also include more than just power dynamics and their conjecture may still prove true if a different systemic moderator were used. Further, the Intersystem Approach (Weeks, 1997) also posited that many aspects of the relationship impact sexual satisfaction, such as an individual's perception of their partner being coercive. This was not found to be true in the current study, but again, the Intersystem Approach theory has not been disproved as they assert that many aspects, both individual and relational, impact sexual satisfaction. The lack of

association found here between sex and power do not provide support for this conjecture. Limits of the data and measures may contribute to this non-relationship, and is discussed in the limitations section.

Hypothesis 3 *Perceived equality of power will be related to higher relationship satisfaction when controlling for sexual satisfaction. In other words, if power is perceived to be equal among partners, this will be positively related to higher relationship satisfaction and simultaneously higher sexual satisfaction. Perception of power will mediate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.*

Because Hypothesis 2 was not supported, mediation is not possible. However, the results for Hypothesis 3 shows that there the two independent variables influence relationship satisfaction. Perception of power accounts for 31% of the variance in relationship satisfaction (see Table 4).

The results support the theoretical premise in the Interpersonal Exchange Model, that egalitarian relationships are related to greater relationship satisfaction, and is an important contribution to the literature. The literature indicated that recent research is beginning to reveal similar results (Gray-Little and Burks, 1983), though the contribution to this body of work is needed as “traditional” relationships are still the most common dynamics for partners. Increasing the literature and knowledge of the subject of egalitarian relationships has implications for clinical and non-clinical work. It is especially significant when research supports non-conforming social norms, especially in the context of relationships. These results add to the feminist literature supporting theories that individuals in egalitarian relationships are more satisfied.

There was limited data from relationships with large variability in relationship power because participants report mostly having egalitarian relationships. It is also important to note that the measure of power is an indication of individual perceptions of partner power in the relationship. Even without mediation, the model findings are significant and support the overall argument that power is a vital link to relationship satisfaction.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite that the study resulted in several significant and exciting findings regarding relationship satisfaction, power, and sex, the interpretation of these results is qualified by some limitations.

Cross-Sectional Data. The data is cross-sectional and collected before treatment begins.

Gathering data over the course of therapy would indicate more about how to address change for relationship satisfaction.

Sample. The second concern is that the current study draws conclusions for therapeutic services. The sample of the present study likely explains the lack of significant relationship between the predictor and mediator. Because the current study uses participants who are reporting to therapy to improve their relationship, it is assumed that underlying problems exist in some area already. These issues may not necessarily affect every facet of the relationship, thus showing a non-relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. Because the sample is clinical, generalizations may not necessarily be able to be drawn to the population. The current sample is expected to have higher levels of dissatisfaction in areas of their romantic relationship because they are seeking therapy for that very reason.

The literature also suggested that in some cultures, egalitarian power in a relationship is not ideal. If participants of the current study follow this logic, then it would follow that having

equal power would not be related to increased sexual satisfaction. However, because power was so substantially related to the outcome, relationship satisfaction, it is important to consider than sex (being a more physical aspect of the relationship) may not be affected by more purely emotionally intimate aspects, such as power dynamics or relationship satisfaction.

Assessments. Several concerns exist regarding the assessments used in the study. The power scale had a low reliability, which may contribute to the lack of mediation results. Further, the measure for sex may not truly indicate overall sexual functioning. The fact that the FSFI is a three item assessment is a red flag that possibly indicates that more information is needed to measure sexual satisfaction. Although self-report is a widely accepted method to collect data, there is a risk of error for results. Because the items examined in the current study are of a highly personal and intimate nature, a participant may be embarrassed to answer truthfully at intake, because they would be reporting an issue in their life for another person to examine. Of course, the current study highlights the importance of the measures being a partner's perception, rather than an objective standard.

Confounding Variables. It is important to note that demographic information is not controlled in these analyses. Age may be an important aspect of this potential relationship. Other individual factors may also impact the results such as relationship length, differences in power evaluations provided by each couple, and the income status of couples. Additional variables, such as adult attachment style have also been linked with sexual satisfaction (Butzer and Campbell, 2008). Future studies should consider measuring, and controlling for, insecure attachment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the overall results reveal that perception of power reported at intake is a significant predictor relationship satisfaction. Relational power explains Twenty-six percent of

the variance of relationship satisfaction. The headline news is that power impacts couple relationship satisfaction; however, it may not account for sexual facets of the relationship as argued by the theories. Though the current study hypothesized that a mediating connection exists between power and sex, the results still give information regarding relationship satisfaction. Because power dynamics and sexuality are so unique to individuals, a healthy relationship seen throughout a sample may not appear. Limitations of the study also may have contributed to non-findings or qualify the existing results. Power being important has clinical implications, important to the premise of the study. Though it was expected that focusing on power would encompass issues related to sex, the results here still indicate important of focusing on power, even if unrelated to sex. The results support the research that argues individuals in egalitarian relationships experience higher relationship satisfaction. And of course, the moderately strong relationship between sex and relationship satisfaction is supported.

The current studied evaluates power as a mediator between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. However, since power and sexual satisfaciton are not correlated, the relationship might be better evaluated through moderation. Both variables and their interaction might impact relationship satisfaction more than each variable measured separately.

The study intended to add to the discussion of what aspects of a relationship have an impact on satisfaction. In understanding the results, it is indicated the relational power is important to relationship satisfaction. The current study has important clinical implications. Clinicians should consider the-the present study when assessing couple overall functioning, and focus on couple power as well as sexuality. Working with the couple to increase their perception of equality in the relationship should improve the relationship satisfaction.

References

- Ball, J. F., Cowan, P., & Cowan, C.P. (1995). Who's got the power? Gender differences in partner's perceptions of influence during marital problem-solving discussions. *Family Process, 34*, 303-321. Doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.1995.00303.x
- Bean, F. D., Curtis, R. L., Jr., & Marcum, J. P. Familism and marital satisfaction among Mexican Americans: The effects of family size, wife's labor force participation, and conjugal power. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 1977, 39*, 759-767.
- Beckman-Brindley, S., & Tavormine, J. Power relationships in families: A social exchange perspective. *Family Process, 1978, 17*. 423- 436.
- Bernard, J. (1972). *The future of marriage*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Breznysak, M., & Whisman, M. A. (2004). Sexual desire and relationship functioning: The effects of marital satisfaction and power. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 30(3)*, 199-217.
- Briere, J., & Runtz, M. (1996). Trauma Symptom Checklist 33 and 40 (TSC-33 and TSC-40). *Unpublished text adapted from Briere, J.*
- Briere, J., & Runtz, M. (1989). The Trauma Symptom Checklist (TSC-33): Early data on a new scale. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 4*, 151-163.
- Butzer, B., & Campbell, L. (2008). Adult attachment, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction: A study of married couples. *Personal relationships, 15(1)*, 141-154.

Byers, E. S. (2005). Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction: A longitudinal study of individuals in long-term relationships. *Journal of sex research*, 42(2), 113-118.

- Byrne, M., & Carr, A. (2000). Depression and power in marriage. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 22, 408-427. doi:10.1111/1467-6427.00161
- Crosbie-Burnett, M., & Giles-Sims, J. (1991). Marital power in stepfather families: A test of normative-resource theory. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 4(4), 484-496. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.4.4.484
- Croyle, K. L., & Waltz, J. (2002). Emotional awareness and couples' relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 28(4), 435-444.
- Dalgleish, T., Johnson, S., Burgess-Moser, M., Lafontaine, M., Wiebe, S., & Tasca, G. (2015). Predicting change in marital satisfaction throughout emotionally focused couple therapy. *Journal of marital and family therapy*, 41(3), 276-291.
- Dean, D. D., & Lucas, W. L. Whose marital adjustment – Hers, his or theirs? *Psychological Reports*, 1978, 40, 35-47.
- Demaria, R. M. (1998, November). A national survey of married couples who participate in marriage enrichment: Satisfaction, couple type, divorce potential, conflict styles, attachment patterns, and romantic and sexual satisfaction of married couples who participated in pairs. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A*, 59.
- Edwards, J. N., & Booth, A. (1994). Sexuality, marriage and well-being: The middle years. In A. S. Rossie (Ed.), *Sexuality across the life course* (pp. 233-259). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual review of sociology*, 335-362.
- Fincham, F. D., & Bradbury, T. N. (1987). The assessment of marital quality: A reevaluation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 797-809.

- Fox, G., & Blanton, P. (1995). Noncustodial fathers following divorce. *Marriage & Family Review*, 20(1-2), 257-282. doi:10.1300/J002v20n01_12
- Funk, J. L., & Rogge, R. D. (2007). Testing the ruler with item response theory: increasing precision of measurement for relationship satisfaction with the Couples Satisfaction Index. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21(4), 572.
- Gottman, J. M., Coan, J., Carrere, S., & Swanson, C. (1998). Predicting marital happiness and stability from newlywed interactions. *Journal of Marriage and The Family*, 60(1), 5—22. Doi:10.2307/353438
- Gottman, J., Notarius, C., Markman, H., Bank, S., & Yoppi, B. Behavior exchange theory, and marital decision making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1976, 34, 14-23
- Gray-Little, B., Marital quality and power processes among black couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 1982, 44, 633-646
- Gray-Little, B., Baucom, D. H., & Hamby, S. L. (1996) Marital power, marital adjustment and therapy outcome. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 10, 292-303.
- Gray-Little, B., & Burks, N. (1983). Power and satisfaction in marriage: A review and critique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 93(3), 513-538. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.93.3.513
- Hallenbeck, P. N. An analysis of power dynamics in marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1966, 28, 200-203.
- Hassenbrauck, M., & Fehr, B. (2002). Dimensions of relationship quality. *Personal Relationships*, (, 253-270.
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 93-98.

- Hertlein, K. M., Weeks, G. R., & Gambescia, N. (2009). *Systemic sex therapy*. New York, NY
US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group
- Hertlein, K. M., Weeks, G. R., & Sendak, S. K. (Eds.). (2009). A clinician's guide to systemic
sex therapy. Routledge.
- Jackson, J. B., Miller, R. B., Oka, M., & Henry, R. G. (2014). Gender differences in marital
satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 76(1),
105-129.
- Kamp Dush, C. M., Taylor, M. G., & Kroeger, R.A. (2008). Marital happiness and psychological
wellbeing across the life course. *Family Relations*, 57, 211-226. Doi: 10.1111/j.1741-
3729.2008.00495.x
- Kelley, H. H. *Personal relationships: their structure and process*. New York: Halstead, 1979.
- Kolb, M., & Straus, M. Marital power and marital happiness in relation to problem-solving
ability. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1974, 36, 756-766.
- Komter, A. (1989). Hidden power in marriage. *Gender and Society*, 3(2), 187-216.
doi:10.1177/089124389003002003
- Lawrance, K., & Byers, E. (1995). Sexual satisfaction in long-term heterosexual relationships:
The interpersonal exchange model of sexual satisfaction. *Personal relationships*, 2(4),
267-285. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6811.1995.tb00092.x
- LeBaron, C. D., Miller, R. B., & Yorgason, J. B. (2014). A Longitudinal Examination of
Women's Perceptions of Marital Power and Marital Happiness in Midlife
Marriages. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 13(2), 93-113.
- Lebow, J. L., Chambers, A. L., Christensen, A., & Johnson, S. M. (2012). Research on the
treatment of couple distress. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38(1), 145-168.

- Lewis, R. A., & Spanier, G. B. Theorizing about the quality and stability of marriage. In W. R. Burr, R. Hill, F. I. Nye, & I. L. Reiss (Eds.), *Contemporary theories about the family* (Vol. 1). New York: Free Press, 1979.
- Lindahl, K. M., & Malik, N. M., Kaczynski, K., & Simon, J. S. (2004). Couple power model in a multiethnic sample. *Development and Psychopathology*, 16, 609-630.
doi:10.1017/S0954579404004699
- Loving, T. J., Heffner, K. L., Kiegolt-Glaser, J. K., Glaser, R., & Malarkey, W. B. (2004). Stress hormone changes and marital conflict: spouses relative power makes a difference. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 595-612. doi:10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00040.x
- McCarthy, B. W., & McCarthy, E. (2009). *Discovering your couple sexual style: Sharing desire, pleasure, and satisfaction. CRC Press.*
- Michel, A., Comparative data concerning the interaction in French and American families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1967, 29, 227-244.
- Mikulincer, M., Florian, V., Cowan, P. A., & Cowan, C. P. (2002). Attachment security in couple relationships: A systemic model and its implications for family dynamics. *Family process*, 41(3), 405-434.
- Minuchin, Salvador; Nichols, Michael P. Dattilio, Frank M. (Ed), (1998). Case studies in couple and family therapy: Systemic and cognitive perspectives. The Guilford family therapy series., (pp. 108-131). New York, NY, US: Guilford Press, xxv, 486 pp.
- Myers, S. M., & Booth, A. (1999). Marital strains and marital quality: The role high and low locus of control. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 61, 423-436. Doi: 10.2107/353759
- Rosen, C. Brown, J. Heiman, S. Leiblum, C. Meston, R. Shabsigh, D. Ferguson, R. D'Agostino, R. (2000). The Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI): a multidimensional self-report

- instrument for the assessment of female sexual function. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 26(2), 191-208.
- Russell, L. (1990). Sex and couples therapy: A method of treatment to enhance physical and emotional intimacy. *Journal of sex & marital therapy*, 16(2), 111-120.
- Safilios-Rothschild, C. A comparison of power structure and marital satisfaction in urban Greek and French families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 1967, 29, 345-352.
- Scanzoni, J. A social system analysis of dissolved and existing marriages. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1968, 30, 452-461
- Snyder, D. K., Multidimensional assessment of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy*., 1979, 41, 813-213.
- Snyder, D. K., Wills, R. M., & Keiser, T. W. Empirical validation of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory: An actuarial approach. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 1981, 49, 262-268
- Sprecher, S. (2002). Sexual satisfaction in premarital relationships: Associations with satisfaction, love, commitment, and stability. *Journal of sex research*, 39(3), 190-196.
- Sprenkle, D. H. and Olson, D. H. L. (1978), Circumplex Model of Marital Systems: An Empirical Study of Clinic and Non-clinic Couples. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 4: 59–74. doi: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.1978.tb00513.x
- Sullivan, O. (2006). Changing gender relations, changing families: Tracing the pace of change over time. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Stephenson, K. R., Rellini, A. H., & Meston, C. M. (2013). Relationship satisfaction as a predictor of treatment response during cognitive-behavioral sex therapy. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 42(1), 143-152. doi:10.1007/s10508-012-9961-3

- Stevenson, B., & Wolfers, J. (2009). *The paradox of declining female happiness*. Working Paper 14969, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14969>
- Szinovacz, M. E. Another look at normative resource theory: Contribution from Austrian data – A search note. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1978, 40, 413-421.
- Weeks, G. & Cross. (2004). The Intersystem Model of Psychotherapy: An integrated treatment approach. *Guidance and Counseling*, 19, 57-64.
- Whisman, M. A., & Jacobson, N. S. (1989). Depression, Marital Satisfaction, and Marital and Personality Measures of Sex Roles. *Journal of marital and family therapy*, 15(2), 177-186.
- Yoo, H., Bartle-Haring, S., Day, R. D., & Gangamma, R. (2014). Couple communication, emotional and sexual intimacy, and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of sex & marital therapy*, 40(4), 275-293.

Table 1

Demographics of males and females in committed relationships from Auburn University clinic (N= 59)

Demographics (% chose not to provide)	N	Percent
Gender (0%)	31	46.3
Male	31	46.3
Female	28	41.8
Age Group (0%)		
18-29	21	35.6
30-39	24	40.6
40-49	11	18.6
50 or above	3	5.1
Racial Group (0%)		
White	47	70.1
African American	9	13.4
Hispanic/Non-White	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1.5
Income (.5%)		
Less than \$11,999	8	13.6
\$12,000 to \$29,999	10	23.1
\$30,000 to \$59,999	16	27.1
\$60,000 to \$99,999	17	28.8
100,000 or above	5	8.5
Education (0%)		
GED/High School	19	32.2
Vocational/Associates	8	13.6
Bachelor's Degree	19	32.2
Graduate/Professional Degree	12	20.3
Other	1	1.7

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

	<u>N</u>	<u>M(SD)</u>	<u>Skew(SE)</u>
sex_sum	34	9.4(3.7)	*-.064(.49)
csi_sum	34	43.26(17.14)	*-.084(2.23)
rpow_sum	34	46.31 (9.05)	*-.205(1.18)

Note: sex_sum: Sexual Satisfaction; csi_sum: Couple Satisfaction

Index; rpow_sum: Perception of power; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation;

SE: Standard Error

Table 3

Correlations of study variables

	1	2	3
1. Sex Satisfaction	1	0.079	.381*
2. Perceived Power	0.079	1	.515**
3. Couple Satisfaction	.381*	.515**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed); *Correlation is significant at .05 level

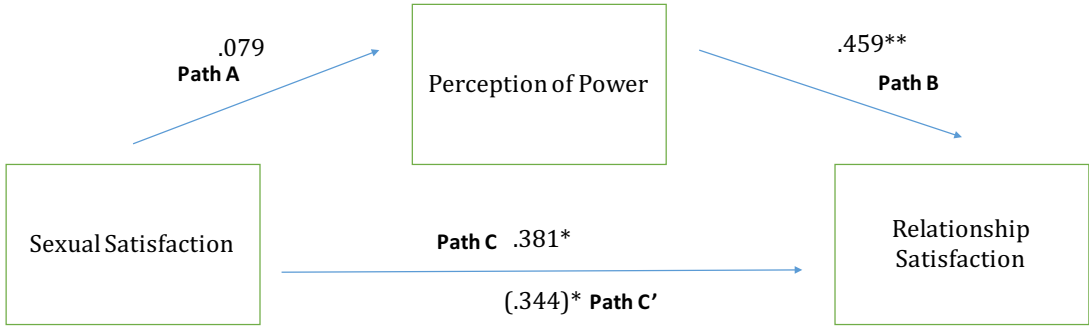
Table 4

Fit and Test Statistics for Linear Regression with Couple Satisfaction as Outcome

	<i>N</i>	Intercept (se)	Predictors β (se)		R^2	ΔR^2
			Sexual Satisfaction	Perception of Power		
Model 1	34	24.158 (8.253)	.381(.805)*		0.118	
Model 2	34	43.559 (4.501)	.079 (.439)		*-.025	0.006
Model 3	34	*-15.321 (14.444)	.344 (.714)*	.459 (.286)**	0.312	0.209
Model 4	34	*-22.649 (17.836)	.327 (.728)*	.485 (.298)**	0.364	0.219

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < 0.001$, in Model 2 the outcome is the mediator rpow_sum

Figure 1. Standardized Effects of Sexual Satisfaction and Perception of Power on Relationship Satisfaction, with Total Effects Shown in Parenthesis (N = 34)



Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Appendix A

Marital Power Scale

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Undecided	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
1. My partner tends to discount my opinion	1	2	3	4	5
2. My partner does not listen to me	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I want to talk about a problem in our relationship, my partner often refuses to talk with me	1	2	3	4	5
4. My partner tends to dominate our conversations	1	2	3	4	5
5. When we do not agree on an issue, my partner gives me the cold shoulder	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel free to express my opinion about issues in our relationship	1	2	3	4	5
7. My partner makes decisions that affect our family without talking to me first	1	2	3	4	5
8. My partner and I talk about problems until we both agree on a solution	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel like my partner tries to control me	1	2	3	4	5
10. When it comes to money, my partner's opinion usually wins out	1	2	3	4	5
11. When it comes to children, my partner's opinion usually wins out	1	2	3	4	5
12. It often seems my partner can get away with things in our relationship that I can never get away with	1	2	3	4	5
13. I have no choice but to do what my partner wants	1	2	3	4	5
14. My partner has more influence in our relationship than I do	1	2	3	4	5
15. When disagreements arise in our relationship, my partner's opinion usually wins out.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B Couples Satisfaction Index:

Couples Satisfaction Index: Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy 0	Fairly unhappy 1	A little unhappy 2	Happy 3	Very Happy 4	Extremely Happy 5	Perfect 6
---------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------	------------	--------------------	-------------------------	--------------

Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item.

	All the Time	Most of the time	More often Than not	Occas- ionally	Rarely	Never
1. In general, how often do you think things between you and your partner are going well?	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Not at All true	A little true	Some- what true	Mostly true	Almost Comple- tely true	Comple- tely true
3. Our relationship is strong	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. My relationship with my partner Makes me happy	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have a warm and comfortable Relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at All	A little true	Some- what true	Mostly true	Almost Compl- etely	Compl- etely
6. How rewarding is your Relationship with your partner?	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. How well does your partner meet your needs?	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes *how you feel about your relationship*. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about them.

10. Interesting	5	4	3	2	1	0	Boring
11. Bad	0	1	2	3	4	5	Good
12. Full	5	4	3	2	1	0	Empty
13. Sturdy	5	4	3	2	1	0	Fragile
14. Discouraging	0	1	2	3	4	5	Hopeful
15. Enjoyable	5	4	3	2	1	0	Miserable

Appendix C

Female Sexual Function Index

Over the past four weeks, how satisfied have you been with the amount of emotional closeness during sexual activity between you and your partner?

Over the past four weeks, how satisfied have you been with your sexual relationship with your partner?

Over the previous four weeks, how satisfied have you been with your overall sexual life?

The scale is:

- 1- Very satisfied
- 2- Moderately satisfied
- 3- About equally satisfied and dissatisfied
- 4- Moderately dissatisfied
- 5- Very dissatisfied