Two Cultures: A Gendered Approach to Commitment and Relational Repair in Marriage

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Abstract

This study presents the construct of relational repair in marriage grounded in accommodation theory, including an instrument developed to measure repair. The instrument has four factors derived from a sample of married people: assurances, openness, time, and punishments. Based on the connection between sex differences and the use of relational maintenance strategies, the study also assesses the role of sex differences in repair factors. Because women have been found to be more accommodative than men, it asks a research question regarding the connection between levels of commitment and sex. The hypothesis that there are important sex differences in the use of relational repair strategies was supported, with women using each type of repair significantly more than men. No connection was found between sex differences and levels of commitment. The results are interpreted within the larger framework of the "two cultures" theory of sex differences, wherein males and females are regarded as co-cultures.

Sex Differences, Commitment, and the Repair of Marital Relationships

Since living "happily ever after" is only true in fairy tales and romances, it is axiomatic that real partners in enduring marriages must engage regularly in relational repair of some sort. In the words of Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991), "all partners in close relationships eventually behave badly" (p. 53). Presumably, such behavior calls for corrective action. In terms of research, however, repair has been relegated to the wings, while relational maintenance has taken center stage, and only a few studies of it have been made (Emmers-Sommer, 2003). Dindia and Canary (1993) included the goal of keeping the relationship in repair among their four definitions of maintenance. Dindia (1994) defined repair as "corrective maintenance" (p. 100). While research on relational maintenance has burgeoned since the late 1980's, the concept of repair has been generally neglected, except for the research of Dindia and Baxter (1987) and the recent contribution of Emmers-Sommer (2003).

In a recent study (Brandau-Brown & Ragsdale, 2003), we have provided a theoretical framework for considering the concept of relational repair, developed a taxonomy of repair behaviors, and determined which types of marital commitment predicted their use. We grounded relational repair in the combination of variables associated with the interdependence theory originally articulated by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). Specifically, we

utilized the extension of this theory by Rusbult and her associates (Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette, 1994; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986), especially with respect to accommodation processes (Rusbult et al., 1991; Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, & Hannon, 2001). We identified repair as fitting the type of accommodation known as *voice*. Distress in a relationship triggers accommodation provided that the partners are committed both to each other and the relationship.

There are other research variables that also appear to be in play, the most obvious of which is probably that of sex. Sex differences, for example, have been noted in a number of studies of relational maintenance strategies (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Dindia, 1989; Ragsdale, 1996; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986; Stafford & Canary, 1991; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999a, 1999b). In general, one may safely conclude from these studies that women are more inclined than men to engage in relational maintenance and are likely to use more of each of the strategies than men. Other research (Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2004) found variations in relational maintenance factors based on sex, with men and women differing in terms of which factors were actually relevant for them. The findings of yet another study, however, suggest that it may be one's gender role, rather than sex, which is the more salient variable (Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000). Johnson et al. (1999) found some variation in the strength of the correlations between each type of commitment and its sub-components for male and female respondents. Rusbult et al. (1991) found women to be more accommodative than men in three out of four cases.

Women's greater tendency toward accommodation could be explained, at least in part, by different socialization and gender roles. Women are taught to be affiliative and communal, whereas men are taught to be competitive and assertive (Tannen, 1994; Wood, 2001; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Lakoff, 1975). The socialization for divergent masculine and feminine communication strategies begins in childhood, and these preferences are carried over into adulthood (Wood, 2001; Maltz & Borker, 1982). In fact, these two distinct communication styles have been likened to cross-cultural communication (Lakoff,1975). The "two cultures" hypothesis proposes that miscommunication is a result of men and women learning two different language styles (Maltz & Borker, 1982). Similarly, Tannen's genderlect theory explores these cross-cultural communication differences in both personal and professional relational contexts. Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001) defined culture as a "social system that reinforces behavioral expectations for group members, whether they are national, ethnic, or gender groups" (p. 122). Men and women exist as two cultures that follow different conversational rules. Hence, these conversational styles are important because they reflect different attitudes about interactional goals and priorities.

It is our purpose here, first, to review the theoretical foundation for understanding the concept of relational repair. Second, we wish to summarize our factor analytic findings regarding the components of relational repair in marriage and their constituent items. Last, we will examine the differences between our male and female respondents in terms of their use of relational repair strategies and their levels of personal, moral, and structural commitment.

Theoretical Structure

With respect to relational maintenance, Ragsdale (1996) reported that, in a two-week period, marital partners engaged in several types of maintenance behavior on many occasions every day. While relational repair might not occur so frequently as maintenance, it surely must be a recurring necessity. After all, many marriages do endure in spite of relational

transgressions (Metts, 1994). However, it is equally obvious that some marital partners must choose not to engage in repair, even when it is called for, otherwise marital relationships would not so easily decline or fail. Rather than engage in repair, partners could leave the relationship (exit), wait patiently for the other to "come around" (loyalty), or simply "blow off" the partner (neglect) (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). What, then, are the dynamics or motivations which would explain why partners choose "corrective maintenance" when they do? We believe that factors associated with accommodation processes have direct implications for the choice to engage in relationship repair and offer a clear explanation for the process.

"Accommodation refers to an individual's willingness, when a partner has engaged in a potentially destructive behavior, to (a) inhibit tendencies to react destructively in turn and (b) instead engage in constructive reactions" (Rusbult et al., 1991, p. 53). As Rusbult and her colleagues explain, accommodation theory arose from the "exit–voice–loyalty–neglect typology of responses to dissatisfaction in close relationships" (p. 53; Rusbult et al., 1982). This typology posits that a dissatisfied partner has four options: leaving (exit), metacommunicating (voice), waiting and hoping for improvement (loyalty), and neglect. These four options also describe two underlying continua: "constructiveness versus destructiveness and activity versus passivity" (p. 54). Relationship repair is clearly a constructive and active behavior, therefore our principal concern in this discussion is with the option called "voice."

If we would understand why people choose to engage in repair, we must follow accommodation theory further to discover the mechanisms underlying the choice to engage in constructive, active behavior in close relationships. As Rusbult et al. (1991) note, the path of least resistance for most people is to respond in kind to a partner's destructive behavior. What seems to make the difference for those who choose instead to act constructively, and in our case to engage in relationship repair, is a low level of distress between the partners. In turn, the most crucial variable which mediates low levels of distress is commitment. "Commitment is the central construct in understanding the longevity and stability of relationships," and "accommodation will be largely mediated by the extent to which people feel committed to their relationships" (p. 57). Causal modeling results affirmed that commitment is indeed "the immediate mediator of accommodation," predicting accommodation 90% of the time (p. 65). Since we are concerned with marital partners, it is important to note here that Rusbult and her colleagues found that "in three of four cases, women accommodated more than men," as predicted (p. 63). By extension, then, commitment would seem to be the obvious target variable to examine for understanding relationship repair.

Broadly defined, commitment refers to an individual's feelings of attachment and desire to stay in a relationship. Rusbult et al. (1994) extended interdependence theory by proposing an investment model to explain relational commitment. According to the investment model, three factors influence one's level of commitment to a relationship. First, satisfaction level indicates how well an individual's standards or expectations are met. Second, the quality of alternatives available outside the primary relationship is evaluated Third, the investment made in the relationship through time, effort, joint friendships, and so on, is assessed. These three factors determine one's level of global commitment to the relationship. In turn, commitment mediates between these factors and such variables as relational maintenance and has been found to be correlated with maintenance in several reports (Duffy & Rusbult, 1986; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Rusbult et al., 1994; Rusbult et al., 1986; Rusbult et al.,

1991). Accommodation is positively correlated with both satisfaction level and investment size and negatively correlated with quality of alternatives (Rusbult et al., 2001).

Rusbult et al. (1994) suggest that highly committed individuals are likely to be more dependent on their relationships, feel more connected to their partners, and have a long-term perspective, hence they would be likely to stay in the relationship and engage in a wide variety of relational maintenance behaviors. In addition to the Rusbult team's positive findings, Stafford and Canary (1991; Canary & Stafford, 1992) found commitment to be positively correlated with specific relational maintenance strategies.

Rusbult et al. (1991) used a simple global measure of commitment. More recently, however, Johnson (1991, 1999) and his colleagues (Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston, 1999) have advanced the notion that global measures of commitment may not fully describe all of the motivations one might have for being committed and have argued that commitment is of three major types: personal, moral, and structural. *Personal commitment* comes from one's desire to stay in a relationship, which desire can be affected by attraction to one's partner, attraction to the relationship itself (marital satisfaction), and commitment to couple identity. Each of these components is experienced internally as a function of one's attitudes or values. *Moral commitment* is also experienced internally as the feeling that one should stay married and also has three sub-components: (im)morality of dissolving a relationship, a sense of personal obligation, and general consistency values. *Structural commitment* is experienced *externally* and is "a function of the perception of constraints that make it costly for an individual to leave the relationship" (Johnson et al., 1999, p.161). This type of commitment has four sub-components: alternatives, social pressure, termination procedures, and irretrievable investments.

Johnson and colleagues (1999) asserted that each of these three types of commitment are distinct experiences not captured by global or general commitment scales. Rather, existing commitment scales actually only tap one type, and that is personal commitment. They also noted each of the three types of commitment are only moderately correlated with one another. However, they did find that each type of commitment was correlated with each of its sub-components. Hence, the "tripartite nature of commitment dictates that researchers who want to understand why couples stay together move beyond anchoring their analysis in personal commitment and focus, instead, on understanding the origins of all three types of commitment, how they affect the way couples function as a unit and whether their relationship endures over time" (p. 174). Our interest here has to do with the second of these focuses. Relationship repair would seem to be central to the way couples function as a unit.

Underlying Components of Relationship Repair

Contemporary interest in relational maintenance strategies has focused primarily on the strategies used by romantic partners "to keep a relationship in a specified state or condition" (Dindia & Canary, 1993, p. 164). However, it is important to note that the types of romantic relationships studied have varied widely. Stafford and Canary (1991), for example, examined dating, seriously dating, engaged, and married couples in the same sample population. In spite of the differences in the sample population, this study has produced the *de facto* standard of five factors that much subsequent research has used to study maintenance strategies. This factor structure includes the following items: positivity, openness, assurances, networks, and task sharing. Positivity involves creating a pleasant climate for relational communication. Openness refers to regular self-disclosure. Assurances are statements

designed to reassure one's partner about the well-being of the relationship. Network refers to the amount of involvement of family and friends in the relationship. Finally, task sharing addresses the daily work related to the family.

Our present interest in relational repair has grown out of examining studies which have used this typology or related ones. We believe that relational repair is a natural extension of this research. Relational repair can be defined as actions which individuals use to return their relationships to previous, desirable states. A number of circumstances may call for repair. However, two obvious situations requiring the use of relational repair strategies would be after a negative exchange in a relationship and after the realization that a relationship has declined. Our goal at this stage was to develop a set of scales that could be used to identify different relational repair strategies and to uncover their underlying factors.

Since the concepts of relational maintenance and relational repair are related, we used items from previous maintenance scales, in addition to items generated inductively, to develop an 85-item instrument to measure repair. Respondents were specifically asked to identify items they used to restore their relationship after a period of decline or a negative event. A series of factor analyses produced a 19-item measure with four clear factors: assurances, openness, gifts, and punishments. The relational repair and relational maintenance factor structures share two factors: assurances and openness.

As we have noted, assurances and openness also appear in the relational maintenance literature (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Stafford et al., 2000). Although the factors are similar in structure to maintenance strategies, they are used with a different intent. In the case of relational repair, the individual is attempting to undo some type of relational damage. The assurances factor appears to be the most powerful such strategy. It accounts for 66 percent of the overall variance, and it is predicted by all three types of commitment. Hence, assurances appear to be the most connected to commitment. Similarly, openness was predicted by all three types of commitment. Assurances and openness together account for 80 percent of the variance among the relational repair factors.

Time was also predicted by all three types of commitment, and it is novel for not having appeared previously as a relational maintenance strategy. This factor consists of the intangible gift of shared time. In spite of the fact that shared time has not emerged in previous research, everyday experience confirms that it is a commonly used means of repair. Shared time is also often portrayed on television and in movies as a repair strategy.

The only negative factor produced by the factor analysis was punishments. We believe this factor is important precisely because it is negative, but it is also theoretically problematic. Relational maintenance factor structures include only prosocial factors (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Stafford, et al., 2000). Unfortunately, not all communicative strategies are prosocial, and it would appear that marriage is a context in which one must allow for some antisocial actions.

Additionally, this study demonstrated that treating marital commitment as a multidimensional variable produced illuminating findings. Personal, moral, and structural commitment are separate experiences that are not captured when treating commitment as a unitary variable. Johnson et al. (1999) stated that a global commitment measure actually taps only the personal commitment component. Supporting the assertion that commitment is a multidimensional variable is the finding that the three types of commitment are only moderately correlated with one another.

Our own investigation of the tripartite marital commitment construct using

confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses yielded somewhat different results from those of Johnson et al. (1999), primarily in that our data showed personal and moral commitment each to be essentially unidimensional. Love/couple identity represented personal commitment, and consistency values represented moral commitment. However, our data certainly affirmed the tripartite nature of the construct, and our two factor solution, using Johnson et al.'s items, contained items with very high factor loadings.

The tripartite nature of commitment is further demonstrated by the finding that each of the four relational repair factors is associated with somewhat different configurations of commitment. Hence, the tripartite approach to commitment provides a more detailed explanation of which aspects of commitment result in the selection of specific relational repair strategies. Simply put, whether an individual wants to, feels obligated to, or has to stay married predicts the use of different relational repair strategies.

In addition to the studies noted earlier that found sex differences in the use of relational maintenance strategies and in accommodation, there are other, more fundamental, findings supporting the expectation that there are sex differences in relational repair strategy use and in levels of commitment. Generally speaking, women spend more time thinking about their relationships than men, and they feel freer to talk about relationship topics than men (Burnett, 1987). Acitelli (1992) found that women actually do spend more time talking about relationships and attributed this and similar differences to role expectations for wives.

In this context, we note that women tend to be more pragmatic about their relationships than men (Frazier & Esterly, 1990; Huston & Ashmore, 1986; Peplau & Gordon, 1985). The reasons for greater pragmatism on the part of wives include the explanation that our society conditions women to be so, since they are often choosing a financial provider. Second, for women, marriage is more significant socially than it is for men, who are often more concerned with their careers. Finally, women have greater sensitivity to social cues in general than men and are, therefore, probably more aware of the quality of their relationships (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Frazier & Esterly, 1990). Although rigid sex differences reflecting gender role distinctions are changing, the findings still show that important sex differences persist.

As children, individuals learn gender specific rules and roles that guide their interactions. The masculine and feminine styles are reinforced in childhood and carried over into adult interactions. Men and women may have the same vocabulary, but they use it in very different ways (Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001). Women are more likely than men to concentrate on interpersonal issues of closeness and disclosure than men. "Miscommunications may also occur because of different, culturally based interpretations of given linguistic behavior" (p. 122). The two cultures approach is grounded in the notion that through cultured experiences men and women learn to use different language strategies and prioritize communication strategies differently. This approach to variations in language usage is contrary, but not contradictory, to the language-as-power approach. The language-as-power approach is favored by critical theorists, who have argued that men use language strategies that reinforce their dominant social position as well as reinforce female subordination. However, Tannen (1994) argued that the two cultures approach and the language-as-power approach are inextricably linked, because preference for one gender-linked style may work to disadvantage speakers using another style. In addition to reinforcing power differences, the stylistic preferences of the two cultures approach could create misunderstandings between men and women, because each group is following a disparate set of learned, culturally

prescribed rules that impose a dissimilar set of interactional rules and goals.

Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001) summarized four key intercultural differences between men's and women's speaking styles. First, is the preference for direct versus indirect styles. Low context cultures favor a direct style in which the statements are clear, explicit, and straightforward, whereas high context cultures prefer the indirect style that is more equivocal and concerned with harmony between the individuals in the interaction. Lakoff (1975) proposed that women use more polite forms, qualifiers, tag questions, and hedges. Men follow H. P. Grice's principle of manner, that stipulates one should be succinct and unambiguous. Maltz and Borker (1982) stated that little girls are inculcated to be attentive to relationships and avoid overt conflict. Conversely, little boys grow up in a social hierarchy where posturing and verbal one-upsmanship is a way of achieving and asserting social position.

The second intercultural difference is in the preference for a succinct versus an elaborate style. Mulac et al. (2001) stated that the succinct style is relatively terse, plain spoken, and straight forward and is preferred by low context cultures. The elaborated style, preferred by high context cultures, is embellished, circumlocutious, and has complex linguistic forms. Again, these differences are reflected in the speech styles of men and women. Following Grice's principles, men value brevity–"say only as much, and just as much, as is necessary" (Lakoff, 1975, p. 71). Conversely, women use more complex linguistic constructions to minimize conflict and maximize harmony.

Another intercultural difference is the preference for a personal versus a contextual style. "The personal style stresses equality, whereas the contextual style stresses speaker and hearer positions within a hierarchy" (Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001, p. 127). Personalism is a characteristic of low context cultures, while contextualism is associated with high context cultures. Women are more likely to use a personal style that stresses individuals, feelings, and relationships. Conversely, in the male social hierarchy, the contextual style is more appropriate, because it stresses status and dominance.

Finally, there is an intercultural difference in the use of an instrumental versus an affective style. The instrumental style is oriented toward achieving the sender's goal and consistent with a low context culture. The affective style is interpersonally focused and receiver centered and is consistent with high context cultures. Maltz and Borker (1982) stated that girls must be adept at reading the motives of others and adjusting to the moods of others. This disposition is reflected in women's interactions. They "orient themselves to the person they are talking to and expect such an orientation in return" (p. 209). The instrumental style is more suited to male interactions, where asserting one's position through "posturing and counterposturing" is common (p. 207). Boys use communication to assert themselves and take control of the talk stage, and this type of communication is seen in adult interactions, where the ability to maintain the floor through story telling, joke telling, and argument are valued.

Clearly, there are marked differences between boys'/men's and girls'/women's language strategies, and these differences are inculcated from an early age. Individuals break the rules at their peril. Failure to conform can result in social isolation. Hence, it is easy to see how children's different language styles develop into the different linguistic patterns of adults. Therefore, adult interactions must transcend ingrained cultural preferences or risk misunderstandings and miscommunication. It is also clear that there is a difference in the way the male and female cultures value relational maintenance. In discussing Fishman's (1978) work, Maltz and Borker claim that women are responsible for "doing more of the routine

'shitwork' involved in maintaining routine social interaction, doing more to facilitate the flow of conversation" (p. 197). They also claim that women are more likely to encourage responses from others to insure that others are more actively involved in the interactions. Women value connection and rapport, therefore they are more likely to engage in behaviors that create and maintain connection (Tannen, 1994).

It is still the case that women are more likely than men to express their affection verbally (Dindia, 1989). When they encounter them, women are less likely to postpone confronting minor relational difficulties than men, and they are more likely to use direct communication to do so (Rusbult et al., 1986). Given these findings and the ones mentioned earlier regarding the greater use of relational maintenance strategies by women, and wives in particular, we offer the following hypothesis:

H_1: Women will use more relational repair strategies than men in a marital context.

While Rusbult et al. (1991) reported that women are more likely than men to accommodate in three out of four cases, we are unsure that one could correctly conclude that the use of voice as an accommodation would also exhibit such a pattern. It is, after all, only one of four possible means of accommodation. Since commitment has been found to be the trigger for accommodation, we propose the following research question:

RQ_1: Will there be sex differences in levels of commitment between wives and husbands?

Method

Similar to previous research (Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Dainton, 2000; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Ragsdale, 1996), communication students at a southern university recruited married persons using a network sampling technique. We asked our students to recruit those who had been married for nine or more years. The median length of marriage in the U. S. was 7.2 years in the last reported census data, while the mean was 9.8 years (NCHS, 1995). We wanted to ensure that our sample contained persons who had been married long enough to be experienced in relationship repair. The students emphasized that the volunteers were to complete the surveys individually and were not to discuss them with anyone. These requirements were repeated in the questionnaire instructions. The respondents were assured that all responses were voluntary and confidential. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 239 were returned.

The dataset consisted of 137 females, 100 males and two of unidentified sex. The average length of marriage was 21.8 years with a standard deviation of 9.9 years. The mean age of respondents was 46 with a standard deviation of 10 years. The mean number of children was 2.55 with a standard deviation of 1.5. The mean for educational level was 14 years with a standard deviation of 3.4.

The questionnaire consisted of items to measure relational repair and tripartite marital commitment. First, the item sets of Dindia and Baxter (1987), Stafford and Canary (1991), Dainton and Stafford (1993), Messman, Canary, & Hause (2000), and Stafford, Dainton, and Haas (2000) were used to develop a 115-item set for relational repair. Redundant items were excluded. Additionally, items that did not have face validity were excluded. This resulted in an 85-item questionnaire.

We set the context within which we wanted our participants to respond with the following directions: *"Even happily married couples occasionally experience interactions which leave them dissatisfied with the status of their relationship. Examples of such interactions are a disagreement about money, a misunderstanding about tasks around the*

house, or an argument about revealing secrets to someone outside the family. Additionally, couples sometimes just experience a diminished level of quality in their relationship without necessarily knowing the cause. Thinking about situations like these, consider the sort of communication you use to repair the damage or to restore your relationship with your spouse to a satisfactory level."

Respondents were asked to indicate the likelihood of their using a particular item to repair or restore their marital relationship using a 7-point Likert scale anchored by *highly likely* and *highly unlikely*. Examples of items include "I hug and kiss my spouse," "I talk about my fears," and "I try to avoid fights".

Johnson, Caughlin and Huston's (1999) tripartite marital commitment scale was used to measure the three types of commitment: personal, moral, and structural. It used 9-point Likert scales anchored by *not at all* and *very much*. Some of the items were "Getting a divorce violates your religious beliefs," "Being married helps you feel good about yourself," "How much would you miss being a couple?," and "It would be hard for you to find a new place to live."

Results

To identify the underlying factors of the relational repair construct, we conducted an exploratory (common) factor analysis of the 85 item relational repair instrument. Because previous research has consistently shown that the underlying factors of the relational maintenance construct are correlated, we chose an oblique rotation (PROMAX). The great majority of research studies in this area has used principal components, rather than exploratory, factor analysis. This practice has a number of disadvantages and may have contributed to inconsistent findings (Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2004). The main disadvantage of principal components analysis (PCA) is that it combines common and unique variance (Wegener & Fabrigar, 2000). As a result, the emergent factors "are not latent variables and cannot be equated with common factors" (Wegener & Fabrigar, 2000, p. 414). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), on the other hand, decomposes the variables which have been measured "into common variance (i.e., the variance explained by the common factors; also referred to as the communality) and unique variance (including random measurement error)" (p. 414). In practical terms, it has been our experience (Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2004) that EFA also explains substantially more of the error variance than does PCA.

It has been a rather common practice in social science research using factor analysis to employ rules of thumb for setting an appropriate sample size. As Stevens (2002) notes, some have suggested that there should be at least two participants for each item to be assessed, but others have offered five participants as the rule of thumb, and some have proposed 20. Stevens (2002) suggests that instead of rules of thumb, researchers should consider the findings of Guadagnoli and Velicer (1988), whose Monte Carlo simulations indicated that the main determinants of reliable factors are the size of the factor loadings and the sample size, not some arbitrary rule of thumb. For example, where there are factors with four loadings equal to or greater than .60, there will be a reliable factor irrespective of sample size. Stevens (2002) adds that the same is true when there are three loadings of .80 or better.

Given our 85-item questionnaire and sample size of 239, which is small by all but the smallest rule of thumb, we established a conservative method of factor identification. Like virtually every study of relational maintenance of which we are aware, we required that factors meet Kaiser's criterion of an eigenvalue of one or more, and we checked scree plots to verify that there were no other major fall-offs in the factor plots for eigenvalues less than one.

Following the advice of Guadagnoli and Velicer (1988), McCroskey and Young (1979), and Stevens (2002), we required that factor loadings for items be .60 or larger, which is a departure from previous research in relational maintenance where loadings have been accepted as low as .40 (Stafford et al., 2000; Messman et al., 2000; Stafford & Canary, 1991). We also required that each factor must have at least three items to assist in subsequent calculations of Cronbach's *alpha*. Like other researchers, we required that primary factor loadings exceed secondary ones by at least .20.

An initial factor analysis produced 13 factors accounting for 82 percent of the error variance among the 85 items. We eliminated items that did not meet our specified selection criteria, and a second factor analysis was conducted on the remaining 38 items. We continued this process until a fourth run produced four clear factors, all of whose items met our criteria. This analysis accounted for 99.83 percent of the total variance of the remaining 19 items. Kaiser's measure of sampling adequacy of .89. The results are shown in Table 1 on the next page.

Factor 1 accounted for 65.99 percent of the variance and included 9 items which stressed the future of the relationship and the individual commitment to the relationship. This factor was labeled *assurances*, following the practice of the relational maintenance literature. The second factor was labeled *openness*, because it contained 4 items that pertained to self-disclosure. It accounted for 14.06 percent of the variance. Factor 3 accounted for 10.33 percent of the variance and included 3 items that involved spending time with one's spouse, hence it was labeled as *time*. The fourth factor (9.45 percent of the variance) contained 3 items that demonstrated a withdrawal of attention and/or affection from one's partner, therefore it was labeled as *punishments*.

Before attempting to connect our relational repair factors to it, we investigated the factor structure of the multidimensional commitment construct using our own sample. We did this for three reasons. First, Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston's (1999) research is the first report of the particular measure of tripartite commitment which we used. We felt that it might be advisable in this early stage of theory formulation to replicate their results to some degree. Second, Johnson et al. (1999), as we did, used a relatively small sample (N = 187), and we were curious to learn whether or not a somewhat larger sample would yield different findings. The most important of our reasons, however, is that factor analysis often yields both different components and item compositions even in samples of the same population, as we have shown in the relational maintenance research literature (Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2004).

We began by conducting a confirmatory first-order maximum-likelihood factor analysis using the CALIS procedure (SAS Institute, Inc., 1999) of our participants' responses to the tripartite commitment measure. Like Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston (1999), we omitted the structural commitment dimension from this analysis, since factor analysis is not appropriate for this dimension. As these authors point out, "the components of structural commitment are not presumed to be a function of some underlying state of the individual but represent the summation of external constraints that may or may not be highly correlated with each other" (p. 168). Our hypothesized model for the confirmatory analysis was the five-factor solution offered by Johnson et al. (1999), wherein personal and moral commitment broke down into love and couple identity, divorce attitudes, consistency values, partner contract, and marital satisfaction. Results showed that this model is not appropriate for our dataset. Chi-square for overall goodness of fit of the model was 835.37 ($p < .0001$). Of course, chi-square should be nonsignificant if the model fits the data. Since this statistic is highly

sensitive to large N's, we also checked three other standard indicators of goodness of fit, each of which should show a value in excess of .90 if models match (Stevens, 2002). The goodness of fit index adjusted for degrees of freedom (AGFI) was .70, Bentler and Bonett's nonnormed fit index (NNFI) was .66, and James, Mulaik, and Brett's parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI) was .60. Based on this evidence, we next performed an exploratory factor analysis of our data. We used the same criteria for factor identification set forth earlier in our discussion of relational repair factors.

Table 1

Relational Repair Factors, Item Composition, and Principal Factor Loadings

Factors/Items	**Factor Loadings**
Factor 1: Assurances	
I kiss and make up with my spouse.	.74
I hug and kiss my spouse.	.78
I say "I love you."	.78
I show my love for my spouse.	.81
I imply that our relationship has a future.	.80
I tell my spouse how much s/he means to me.	.87
I stress my commitment to her/him.	.82
I cuddle with her/him.	.73
I have sex with her/him.	.67
Factor 2: Openness	
I have regular, periodic talks about our relationship with my spouse.	.71
I simply tell my spouse how I feel about the relationship.	.79
I disclose what I need or want from the relationship.	.79
I like to have periodic talks about our relationship.	.81
Factor 3: Time	
I spend more time with my spouse.	.86
I do more things with my spouse.	.93
I spend time with my spouse together with our children, family, or friends.	.70
Factor 4: Punishments	
I sulk, pout, and give my spouse the silent treatment.	.65
I give my spouse the cold shoulder.	.78
I refuse to supply my spouse with usual favors or I refuse to accept favors I plainly need from my spouse.	.74

In spite of the failure of our confirmatory analysis to support their specific model, the findings of the exploratory factor analysis provided strong support for the tripartite approach to marital commitment of Johnson et al. (1999). We proceeded as with the relational repair items, performing five runs of the data. On each run, we discarded those items which did not meet our criteria and reran the analysis with the remaining items. We did this until there were

no items which failed to meet the criteria. The final run yielded two clear-cut factors, which explained 107% of the total item variance (Five other factors had negative eigenvalues, contributing to the explained variance being greater than 100%.). Kaiser's measure of sampling adequacy was .81. Factor 1, which may be called love/couple identity, had five items all with loadings greater than .70. Factor 2, called consistency values, had four items with no loading smaller than .61. Based on our earlier discussion of the size of loadings needed for reliability, these results are particularly strong.

Factor 1, love/couple identity, clearly represents Johnson et al.'s (1999) *personal commitment* dimension, while Factor 2, consistency values, represents *moral commitment*. Even though they are different from Johnson et al.'s findings, we regard these results as an affirmation of the tripartite approach, although our use of exploratory factor analysis as well as our factor identification criteria differed. A major contribution of our analysis is to show that perhaps personal and moral commitment are themselves unidimensional, for all of the advantages unidimensionality contributes toward a reduction in error variance in and a parsimonious interpretation of future research findings.

To test our hypotheses, we used simple MANOVA procedures (SAS Institute, Inc., 1999), once with the four relational repair factors and then with the three measures of marital commitment as the dependent variables. Wilks' Λ (.89) for the first multivariate analysis was highly significant ($F = 6.89$, $p < .0001$). Examination of the univariate analyses, however, showed that sex differences were significant only for the assurances ($p < .0006$) and openness ($p < .0001$) factors of relational repair. Sex differences approached significance in the case of the time factor ($p < .07$) but not in the case of punishments ($p < .26$). However, least-squares mean differences were significant ($p < .0001$) in every case. Specifically, women used more of all four relational repair strategies than men, with the largest mean differences emerging with assurances and openness strategies. Generally, these findings strongly support Hypothesis One.

For the second analysis, Wilks' Λ was .95 ($F = 1.83$, $p < .09$). As expected with this nonsignificant value, none of the univariate analyses were significant either. On the other hand, the least-squares mean differences between men and women revealed some suggestive results. All were significant ($p < .0001$), even though the numerical differences were quite small. The males were actually slightly more committed, in general, than the females. They showed higher least-squares means for personal commitment (love/couple identity), moral commitment (consistency values), and on two subscales of structural commitment. Research Question One, however, must be answered in the negative.

Discussion

Our results confirm our expectations about the likelihood of relational repair by women as opposed to men. When there has been a period of decline in a marriage or the occurrence of a negative event, it is more likely that it will be the wife who initiates repair behavior. We do not mean to suggest that husbands do not engage in repair, only that their wives are more likely to do so than they are. These efforts are most likely to involve assuring their partners of the ongoing nature of the marriage and a generous amount of openness, perhaps about the nature of the decline or the negative event themselves. Wives also are more likely to offer their spouses the gift of time and to decline punishments in an effort to coerce, but they do not exceed their husbands so much in the choice of these strategies. In sum, these findings fit well with those of researchers in the use of relational maintenance strategies

(Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Dindia, 1989; Ragsdale, 1996; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986; Stafford & Canary, 1991; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999a, 1999b) and are less equivocal about the behavior of women.

Culturally, women are socialized to be concerned with their relationships, hence women spend more time thinking about, maintaining, and repairing relationships than men. According to Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001) women are more likely to use a high context style and men are more likely to use a low context style. Typically, the high context style is elaborated, concerned with the feelings of others, interpersonally focused, and concerned with relational harmony. Individuals using a high context linguistic style are concerned with repairing relationships because relationships are central to this cultural view. Our findings are consistent with the description of high context culture, women are likely to be the ones to restore their marital relationships. The significance of the role of women in relational repair was more strongly stated by Gamble and Gamble (2003), who asserted that "Women, it appears, are relationship makers and breakers. They have to care about the relationship and its future for the relationship to survive" (p.180).

Our finding that marital commitment levels were largely unrelated to sex differences was surprising and, ultimately, puzzling. In terms of marital commitment theory (Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Rusbult et al., 1994; Rusbult et al., 1986), especially with respect to accommodation processes (Rusbult et al., 1991; Rusbult et al., 2001), commitment is a product of marital satisfaction, amount of investment in the relationship, and alternatives to the relationship which are poor quality. In turn, commitment makes accommodation more likely, and women have been found to be more accommodative than men 75% of the time (Rusbult et al., 1991).

There seem to be two possible explanations for the findings in this case. The first is that the men and women in our sample, having been married for more than 9 years, were simply by now all highly committed. Perhaps a sample of shorter-term marital dyads would show the larger differences between men and women that we had expected based on Rusbult et al.'s (1991) findings. The second possible explanation may lie in our restriction in this study to an examination of only one of the four types of accommodation, which was voice. We are doubtful that persons who have been married more than 9 years are likely to use exit strategies, but it is quite possible that loyalty or even neglect strategies would show wider variations according to sex. It is worth continuing to study the connection between voice as an accommodative tactic in other populations and perhaps in other types of relationships than marriage. Since the study of relational repair is in its infancy, the number of individual difference variables and interpersonal variables that might be connected to repair behavior is also quite large. We hope that others will join us in the exploration.

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