

Demand–Withdraw Interaction in Couples With a Violent Husband

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This study examined the relationship between demand–withdraw interaction and battering in couples with a violent husband. The authors compared the interaction patterns of 47 couples with a violent husband with the interaction patterns of 28 distressed but nonviolent couples and 16 happily married nonviolent couples. All couples engaged in videotaped discussions of problem areas in their marriage. Both batterers and battered women showed less positive communication and more negative communication than did their nonviolent counterparts. Additionally, batterers showed significantly higher levels of both demanding and withdrawing than did other men. Battered women demanded more change than did women in nonviolent marriages but were significantly less inclined to withdraw than were their husbands. The discussion of these findings focuses on the interactional dynamics between batterers and battered women and how these interactions might be understood.

Although victim advocates have been actively helping battered women since early in the century (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998), domestic violence has received widespread attention from scientists only in the past 20 years. And only in the past decade have investigators begun to conduct well-controlled, observational research to look objectively at the arguments that male batterers have with battered women (Burman, John, & Margolin, 1992; Margolin, John, & Gleberman, 1988). One interaction style that may be of particular use in understanding the dynamics of male battering is the demand–withdraw pattern (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). In this pattern, the demanding partner tries to get the withdrawing partner to change, whereas the withdrawing partner retreats from these pressures through avoidance, passive inaction, or stonewalling (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). The demand–withdraw interaction may be one of the rare observable *processes* that provide insight into *structural* characteristics of relationships (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). By understanding the extent and nature of demand–withdraw interaction in a marriage, it is possible to derive inferences about important general characteristics of the couple.

For example, there is considerable evidence that demand–withdraw interaction reflects the amount and intensity of intimacy that each person wants in the relationship (Christensen, 1987, 1988; Jacobson, 1989). People in the demanding role generally want more closeness, whereas those who withdraw express a desire for greater separateness or autonomy. Jacobson and colleagues have suggested that intimacy is a commodity in relationships that often represents power: Those wanting more intimacy are often “one down,” and those trying to reduce the level of intimacy are often the dominant partner in their relationships (Jacobson, 1989; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998).

Moreover, Christensen and Shenk (1991) found that both the degree of disparity and the likelihood of demand–withdraw interaction are greater for distressed couples than for happily married couples. Along the same lines, we know that the existence of demand–withdraw interaction predicts reduced marital satisfaction years later (Levenson & Gottman, 1985). Because the pattern becomes more pronounced over time, with both demanders and withdrawers escalating their efforts, demand–withdraw interaction may help explain not only marital deterioration but also divorce (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Levenson & Gottman, 1985). Finally, in distressed couples, men and women tend to play different roles in the demand–withdraw interaction pattern, with the wife typically seeking change and the husband more often avoiding change by withdrawing (Christensen, 1987, 1988; Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

Thus, beyond telling us what couples say to one another, this interaction pattern may tell us what couples want from one another, what happens to the relationship when each partner acts on these needs, and how gender roles typically differ in marital conflict.

Because batterers use violence as a method of power and control, and because battered women are the victims of these power and control tactics, we might expect an accentuation of the previously described gender differences in couples with a violent husband. We would be inclined to predict from the demand–withdraw literature that battering husbands would be particularly likely to withdraw and that battered women would be particularly likely to demand. After all, batterers dominate their marriages, couples with

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a violent husband tend to be more dissatisfied with their marriages than maritally distressed but nonviolent couples, and battering relationships are quite unstable compared with other marriages (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998; Jacobson, Gottman, Gortner, Berns, & Shortt, 1996; Jacobson et al., 1994; Rogge & Bradbury, 1999).

However, our inclinations are mitigated by other factors that marital interaction research has taught us about couples with a violent husband. In particular, the vast majority of batterers appear to be emotionally dependent on their partners despite their power and control tactics, fear being abandoned by these partners, and may not perceive themselves as being in a position of power despite the objective truth (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994; Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, & Hutchinson, 1997; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). To the extent that power is in the eye of the beholder, batterers might be expected to manifest both the high levels of withdrawal characteristic of spouses in power and high levels of demanding behavior because of their perception that they are in a one-down position. In contrast, battered women, as extremely unhappy married women, would be expected to be highly demanding but not more so than women in nonviolent marriages. In fact, given the risks of being unresponsive to batterers' requests for change, battered women might be disinclined to withdraw, given the potential for abuse.

The two published studies that have examined the demand-withdraw interaction pattern in couples with violent husbands partially support our inclinations (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler, & Stuart, 1998). Using the Conflict Rating System (CRS), an observational measure designed to rate demand-withdraw interaction in problem-solving discussions, Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1998) videotaped couples discussing two areas of conflict: one complaint raised by the husband and one raised by the wife. These investigators found that, when discussing a topic raised by the husband, violent-distressed couples exhibited uniquely high levels of husband demand and wife withdraw, as compared with violent-nondistressed, nonviolent-distressed, and nonviolent-nondistressed couples. Similarly, when discussing a topic raised by the wife, violent-distressed couples exhibited uniquely high levels of wife demand and husband withdraw. Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1998) concluded that "as degree of marital dysfunction (i.e., violence, distress, or both) increased, both spouses engaged in more demanding and withdrawing behavior" (p. 740).

In the other previous investigation of demand-withdraw interaction, conducted in our laboratory, the Communications Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984), a self-report measure of marital interaction, was used to measure the demand-withdrawal interaction (Babcock et al., 1993). In this study, couples were simply asked to pick two areas of conflict, without designating one husband complaint and one wife complaint. Battered women were no more demanding than women in nonviolent relationships. However, batterers were more demanding than nonviolent men. Thus, in contrast to the typical pattern found in distressed couples, batterers were more often in the demanding role than were men in nonviolent marriages. In addition, both batterers and battered women responded to the other partner's demands by withdrawing.

In short, both previous studies, despite different methodologies, obtained results that converged in some ways and partially support our predictive inclinations. First, batterers were in the demanding

role, more so than nonviolent men. This is counterintuitive to the extent that demanding behavior is associated with a lack of power. However, to the extent that batterers *feel* one down despite their power and control tactics, as we suspect they do, the results from previous studies make sense. Second, in both studies batterers and battered women exhibited high levels of withdraw behaviors. Both partners demanded changes from each other, and both partners responded to these pressures by withdrawing. This finding surprises us because previous research suggests that withdrawing reflects power and a desire for distance and battered women are dominated by their abusive husbands. We considered three possible explanations for this finding: (a) Withdrawing behavior was not adequately measured in the two previous studies; (b) withdrawing behavior is not truly indicative of power, as previous research has suggested; or (c) battered women are not as powerless as previous research has suggested. Given the strong support for an association between withdrawing behavior and power, along with the body of literature documenting the powerlessness of battered women, we chose to revisit the demand-withdraw interaction, with a possibly more objective and representative way of measuring this pattern in the laboratory.

In the present study, like Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1998), but unlike Babcock et al. (1993), we used objective, observational measures of the interaction pattern. However, we used the same interaction task as used by Babcock et al., which differed from the one used by Holtzworth-Munroe et al. in that couples mutually chose the topics of discussion, without the requirement that the husband and wife each pick one complaint. Although this decision was made prior to our knowledge of the Holtzworth-Munroe et al. study, we felt at the time that the fewer constraints on couples' choices of which problems to discuss, the more generalizable their laboratory interaction would be to naturally occurring interaction.¹

In the present study, we compared violent men with nonviolent men (and their spouses), controlling for levels of marital satisfaction, and maritally satisfied couples with dissatisfied couples, controlling for the existence of violence, in the likelihood of demand-withdraw interaction. We combined the objectivity of observational methods (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1998) with the interaction task used in our previous research on domestic violence (Babcock et al., 1993; Jacobson et al., 1994) to determine whether or not demanding and withdrawing behavior was more common in either violent husbands or the women to whom they are married. Previous research might have led us to predict that there would be particularly high levels of demand and withdraw in batterers and battered women (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1998). However, neither the results nor the methodologies were consistent across the two previous studies. On the basis of what we believe to be the *meaning* of demand-withdraw interaction, and what we have learned from previous research on these couples with a violent husband, we predicted that batterers would be *both* more demand-

¹ It remains an empirical question whether or not one type of measure or laboratory task is more generalizable than another. No direct tests of generalizability have been conducted on demand-withdraw interaction measured in the laboratory. However, Jacobson et al. (1994) did report correspondence with laboratory interaction and self-reports of arguments on other measures, suggesting the possibility that the same might be true of demand-withdraw interaction generated by the task we used.

ing and more withdrawing than nonviolent men. In addition, battered women would be *more demanding* than women in nonviolent marriages and *less withdrawing* than their counterparts in nonviolent marriages.

Method

Participants

Participants in the present study came from a larger study of domestic violence (Jacobson et al., 1994), which provides a detailed description of how participants were recruited. The subset of couples in the present study is identical to the subset analyzed by Babcock et al. (1993). Participating couples ($n = 95$) responded to public service announcements. Wives were first administered a telephone version of the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959). This was used to immediately classify couples as distressed or nondistressed, although marital adjustment was measured again on laboratory assessment using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976). The DAS was used as our primary measure of marital adjustment. Wives were also given the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979), the most commonly used instrument at that time for assessing frequency of domestic violence. Wives' reports were used because husbands tend to minimize, deny, and distort their own use of violence (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). To be included in the domestically violent (DV) group ($n = 49$), the husbands had to have engaged in a minimum of six or more acts of "low-level" violence (e.g., pushing, slapping, or shoving), two or more severely violent acts (e.g., hitting with a closed fist), or at least one life-threatening violent act (e.g., beating up or threatening with a knife or gun) in the previous year. Couples were categorized as nonviolent when neither spouse reported any physical aggression in the past 5 years and no severe or life-threatening violent acts ever. Nonviolent couples in which wives scored 115 or more (1 *SD* above the mean) on the SMAT were classified as happy-nonviolent (HNV; $n = 16$); those who scored 90 or below were classified as distressed-nonviolent (DNV; $n = 30$).

Overview of Procedures

Marital interactions were gathered as the second component of a larger study (Jacobson et al., 1994). During Stage 1, interviews were conducted with each member of the couple and several questionnaires were completed (described below). During Stage 2, each member of the couple was asked to fill out the Areas of Disagreement Scale (Knox, 1971), on which spouses indicated how much and for how long they had disagreed about various aspects of their relationship (e.g., money, sex, and communication). For approximately 15 to 20 min, an interviewer discussed each area of disagreement with both spouses present, starting with the items rated with most disagreement and moving down until two topics were selected that were important to both and for which partners had divergent perspectives.² Stage 3, in which each couple was asked to work toward a resolution of the two issues within a 15-min time period, was videotaped. No attempt was made to designate or influence which topics were to be discussed, the number of different issues that spouses could bring up with respect to that topic, or the manner in which the discussion time should be allocated between the two topics.

Ethical Obligations

Our debriefing procedures were developed to make sure that violent episodes after the laboratory interaction did not occur as a result of our experimental procedures; these debriefing procedures were successful (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). All battered women were given referrals for shelters and individual and legal counseling after each laboratory interaction. Each woman was then interviewed separately to assess how danger-

ous the current situation was and, if necessary, develop a safety plan. The mood of each spouse following the interaction was carefully assessed, and whenever the anger induced by the interaction did not go away quickly, we used a series of interviewing techniques to soothe each partner. The campus police were on call within 2 min of the laboratory in case we needed them. All participants were given a written debriefing statement stating that verbal and physical aggression is destructive to intimate relationships and that we do not condone domestic violence under any circumstances. We called the wives each night for 2 weeks after their participation to make sure that our study had not led to violence.

Measures

CRS. The CRS is an expanded version of the observational rating system used by Christensen and Heavey (1990) to characterize the behavior of couples during problem-solving discussions. The CRS consists of 15 behavioral dimensions along which spouses are rated by observers on a 9-point scale. Ratings were completed after viewing the entire 15-min interaction. This global rating technique, distinct from the categorical rating approach used in most microanalytic coding schemes (cf. Markman & Notarius, 1987), parallels procedures used with several of the more recently developed coding schemes (e.g., Julien, Markman, & Lindahl, 1989; Roberts & Krokoff, 1990).

The 15 dimensions were further divided into four subscales: Demand, Withdraw, Positive Communication, and Negative Communication. The Demand subscale consists of ratings of *blames* (blames, accuses, or criticizes the partner and uses critical sarcasm or character assassinations) and *pressures for change* (requests, demands, nags, or otherwise pressures for changes in the partner). The Withdraw subscale consists of *avoidance* (avoids discussing the problem by hesitating, changing topics, diverting attention, or delaying the discussion), *withdraws* (withdraws, becomes silent, refuses to discuss topic, looks away, or disengages from discussion), and low levels of *discussion* (does not try to discuss the problem, is not engaged and emotionally involved in the discussion). The Positive Communication subscale consists of *negotiates* (suggests possible solutions and compromises), *backchannels* (shows he or she is listening to partner through positive minimal responses, [e.g., "uh-huh"]) and nonverbal behaviors [e.g., head nods]), *validates* (indicates verbal understanding or acceptance of partner's feelings), and *positive affect* (expresses caring, concern, humor, or appreciation). The Negative Communication subscale consists of *expresses critical feelings* (verbally expresses hurt, anger, or sadness directed at partner), *interrupts* (interrupts or talks over partner), *dominates discussion* (dominates, controls, or tries to take control of discussion, regardless of whether he or she succeeds), and *negative affect* (verbally or nonverbally expresses anger, frustration, hostility, hurt, or sadness directed toward partner, self, or others).

We computed two Cronbach's (1951) alphas for each subscale (husband's and wife's behavior during discussion). The means of these two alphas for the Demand, Withdraw, Positive Communication, and Negative Communication subscales were .64, .73, .83, and .66, respectively. We also computed intraclass correlations (ICCs) for each subscale using the sub-

² This paradigm is very common in the marital literature and involves a discussion between the interviewer and the couple to highlight their differences to ensure that the problem they discussed was indeed an issue that they had yet to resolve in their relationship. The task is predicated on the assumption that we are measuring problem-solving skills. The prediscussion interview is intended to be a priming interview, not so much about their emotions as about arranging for a genuine display of their problem-solving abilities. The interviews were generally relatively short and were only lengthened when the couple had a hard time finding something they disagreed about. Although we did not code affect prior to the onset of the task, our experience was that the vast majority of couples exhibited little emotion until they were left alone with the cameras.

scale scores of the three observers who rated each spouse's behavior. The mean ICCs for the Demand, Withdraw, Positive Communication, and Negative Communication subscales were .82, .81, .84, and .85, respectively. These ICCs indicate high levels of interobserver agreement.

Six undergraduate observers who were unaware of the hypotheses of the study were trained to use the CRS during an 8-week period. Training consisted of having raters read descriptions of each dimension and then view and rate a series of videotaped problem-solving interactions that were not used in this study. For training, we chose interactions that showed a range of behaviors considered to be exemplars of the different rating dimensions. Raters were instructed to consider the frequency, intensity, and duration of the participants' verbal and nonverbal behaviors in arriving at each global rating. Each of the six coders practiced coding pilot tapes under the supervision of Sara B. Berns until they consistently agreed at least 85% of the time with the calibrator (Sara B. Berns). All coders were subject to random reliability checks once the study was under way, and weekly calibration meetings were held to minimize rater drift. Coders were kept unaware of the group status of the couples they coded.

Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF). The SPAFF was used to code affect and verbal content during the laboratory interaction using the same codes measured in the Gottman et al. (1995) study. The SPAFF is a cultural informant coding system in which coders consider an informational gestalt consisting of verbal content, voice tone, content, facial expression, gestures, and body movement. Using Gottman laboratory AffectWheels, a computer-assisted video coding station and a computer program that automate timing information (with a vertical interval time code signal), observers coded the onset of a set of listener and speaker affects. Two coders classified the behaviors of each speaker as affectively neutral, as 1 of 6 positive affects (humor, affection, validation, interest/curiosity, joy/enthusiasm, and affection/humor), or as 1 of 11 negative affects (anger, distrust, contempt, domineering, belligerence, fear, whining, sadness, tension, defensiveness, and listening with stonewalling).

Our SPAFF coding system demonstrated high levels of reliability, with kappas averaging .89. Generalizability coefficients for individual codes were all over .80 and averaged .87 (see Gottman et al., 1995, for more information).

CPQ. The CPQ (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) was designed to assess spouse perceptions of dyadic communication about relationship problems. The CPQ items were divided into two subscales that indicated (a) husband demand/wife withdraw interaction and (b) wife demand/husband withdraw interaction. Husband demand/wife withdraw communication consists of three items that assess asymmetrical behaviors in which the husband presses the wife to discuss a problem and then criticizes, nags, and makes demands on her, whereas the wife tries to avoid discussion of the problem and defends herself, withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further. Wife demand/husband withdraw communication consists of three items identical to the subscale above, except that the husband and wife are in opposite roles. Reliability and validity data of these subscales, using Cronbach's alpha, have been reported to range from .62 to .86 ($M = .71$; Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

DAS. The DAS (Spanier, 1976) was administered to husbands and wives separately on their initial visit to the laboratory. The DAS is a 32-item, primarily Likert-style questionnaire based on a theoretical scoring range from 0 to 151, with higher scores reflecting better adjustment in the marital relationship. The questionnaire assesses dyadic satisfaction, consensus, cohesion, and affectional expression and has been shown to have high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$; Spanier, 1976).

CTS. At the time this study was conducted, the CTS (Straus, 1979) was the most widely used measure of domestic violence. It is a multidimensional scale with three subscales and measures the ways in which people attempt to deal with conflict during the past year and throughout the duration of the relationship. The CTS subscales have moderate to high internal consistency reliability. Alpha coefficients were high for the Verbal Aggression (.77 to .88) and Violence (.62 to .88) subscales and relatively

low for the Reasoning subscale (.50 to .76; Straus, 1979). Significant interpartner agreement on reports of physical aggression have been demonstrated using this scale (Jouriles & O'Leary, 1985). The CTS was administered to both husbands and wives.

Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ). The EAQ (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998) is a project-designed, partner-report measure. It contains 66 items, each rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Four subscales were derived from the EAQ: Isolation, Degradation, Sexual Abuse, and Property Damage. The coefficient alphas for the subscales were .92, .94, .72, and .88, respectively. The Isolation subscale comprises 24 items and includes such items as "My partner tries to control whom I spend time with," "My partner has disabled the car," and "My partner often disapproves of my friends." The Degradation subscale is composed of 28 items and includes such items as "My partner humiliates me in front of others," "My partner ridicules me," and "My partner forced me to do things that are against my values." The Sexual Abuse subscale is composed of 7 items, including "My partner makes me engage in sexual practices I consider perverse" and "My partner has intentionally hurt me during sex." The Property Damage subscale is composed of 7 items, including "My partner has damaged things that I care about" and "My partner has threatened to destroy my property."

Results

Group Differences on Demographic and Marital Satisfaction Variables

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations on demographic variables and marital satisfaction scores (the DAS) for the three groups of couples.

Using an analysis of variance, we uncovered significant between-groups differences for years married, $F(2, 90) = 4.1, p < .05$; husband's age, $F(2, 90) = 5.1, p < .01$; husband's education level, $F(2, 90) = 3.3, p < .05$; wife's education level, $F(2, 90) = 4.5, p < .05$; and husband's income, $F(2, 90) = 6.5, p < .01$. However, none of these demographic variables correlated significantly with the dependent measures. Thus, there was no need to use any of them as covariates in subsequent analyses. Most importantly, differences in DAS scores between the DV and DNV spouses were not significant on the basis of either the husbands' or wives' reports. Our DV and DNV groups were equally distressed, allowing us to compare the groups on variables of interest without having to worry about the potentially confounding influence of differential marital distress. Husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction scores were highly correlated ($r = .71, p < .01$).

CRS

In the following set of analyses, we compared husbands and wives in the three groups (DV, DNV, and HNV) across the four subscales of the CRS (Positive Communication, Negative Communication, Demand, and Withdraw). We focused particular attention on the comparisons of primary interest: (a) DV husbands and wives versus DNV husbands and wives and (b) the two maritally distressed groups (both violent and nonviolent) versus HNV couples. With regard to Demand and Withdraw subscales, we also examined the patterns in means on these subscales to draw some tentative conclusions on gender differences.

Positive Communication. Means and standard deviations on the four subscales of the CRS are reported in Table 2.

In our first planned comparison between DV and DNV couples,

Table 1
Demographic Variables and Marital Satisfaction Scores for the Three Groups of Couples

Variable	DV (n = 47)		DNV (n = 28)		HNV (n = 16)		F(2, 90)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Years married	6.3	5.1	11.5	10.1	7.3	8.4	4.1*
DAS							
Husbands	92.9	16.3	93.4	13.7	124.3	11.0	29.4***
Wives	86.9	19.4	85.0	18.4	121.6	8.6	26.5***
Age (years)							
Husbands	34.6	8.4	41.7	8.6	37.3	12.3	5.1**
Wives	34.8	9.8	38.8	8.2	35.4	12.0	1.4
Education ^a							
Husbands	13.8	2.6	14.6	2.4	15.6	2.6	3.3*
Wives	13.8	2.3	14.8	2.4	15.8	2.2	4.5*
SES ^b							
Husbands	515.7	345.3	432.5	345.5	426.6	328.0	0.7
Wives	538.2	352.4	451.1	342.4	510.0	368.4	0.5
Monthly income							
Husbands	1,586.10	1,036.80	2,735.70	2,026.00	1,575.60	732.20	6.5**
Wives	848.20	729.60	986.70	741.30	1,328.10	1,744.50	1.4

Note. DV = domestically violent; DNV = distressed–nonviolent; HNV = happy–nonviolent; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; SES = socioeconomic status.

^a Total number of years completed. ^b SES scores are derived from a regression equation based on occupational prestige, education, and income as associated with job title.

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

we first examined positive communication exhibited by husbands. There was significantly less positive communication by the DV husbands than by the DNV husbands, $t(73) = -3.06, p = .003$. For wives, however, there was no significant difference in positive communication between the two groups, $t(73) = -0.122, ns$. In our second planned comparison between the two maritally distressed groups with the happily married group, positive communication was significantly lower for the distressed husbands, $t(88) = -5.12, p < .001$, as well as for the distressed wives, $t(88) = -5.065, p < .001$. This serves as a manipulation check on the observational coding system because previous studies have consistently shown that batterers are less positive in their communication during conflict discussions than are nonviolent men, whereas battered women are no different than other nondistressed

women. Moreover, marital interaction research has consistently shown that *both* maritally distressed husbands and wives are less positive than their happily married counterparts (Burman et al., 1992; Margolin et al., 1988).

Negative Communication. In the first planned comparison between DV and DNV couples, we found that DV husbands were significantly more negative than DNV husbands, $t(73) = 2.76, p < .01$. For wives, however, there was no significant difference in negative communication between the two groups, $t(73) = 1.96, ns$. In comparisons between the two distressed groups and the non-distressed group, negative communication was significantly higher for the DV and the DNV husbands than for the HNV husbands, $t(88) = 2.579, p = .012$, and significantly higher for the DV and DNV wives in comparison with the HNV wives, $t(88) = 3.85, p =$

Table 2
Conflict Rating System Subscale Scores for the Three Groups of Couples

Subscale	DV (n = 47)		DNV (n = 28)		HNV (n = 16)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Positive Communication						
Husbands	7.5	4.5	11.3	6.4	17.0	5.6
Wives	7.8	5.9	8.0	4.1	15.4	5.6
Negative Communication						
Husbands	14.7	7.2	10.2	6.3	7.8	4.7
Wives	17.5	6.8	14.6	5.5	10.7	4.8
Demand						
Husbands	8.9	4.3	6.5	3.9	3.4	1.9
Wives	11.2	4.5	7.6	3.2	5.1	4.2
Withdraw						
Husbands	9.3	5.4	7.5	4.3	6.9	3.6
Wives	7.2	4.1	8.8	4.9	5.7	3.0

Note. DV = domestically violent; DNV = distressed–nonviolent; HNV = happy–nonviolent.

.002.) Again, these findings are consistent with previous studies, which have found that batterers, but not battered women, are more negative than their counterparts in distressed but nonviolent marriages but that both men and women in maritally distressed marriages exceed happily married couples in their negativity (Burman et al., 1992; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998; Margolin et al., 1988).

Demand. The primary purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between domestic violence and demand-withdraw communication. We found that violent husbands exhibited significantly higher levels of demand than their DNV counterparts, $t(88) = 2.56, p < .001$, as did their battered wives, $t(88) = 4.15, p < .001$. The same pattern was found in comparisons between the two distressed groups and the nondistressed group, with husbands, $t(88) = 4.02, p < .001$, as well as wives, $t(88) = 4.06, p < .001$, exhibiting higher levels of demand.

Examination of the mean scores on demand and withdraw across all groups reveals that wives expressed more desire for change than did their husbands, with the highest levels of demand exhibited by wives in the DV group. Husbands exhibited less demand than wives overall but showed a similar pattern of high levels of demand in the DV group and less in the other two groups. Thus, both batterers and battered women assumed the demanding role more frequently than did both their equally unhappy but nonviolent counterparts and happy counterparts.

Withdraw. We examined the tendency to assume a withdrawing role using the same analyses we used to examine the demanding role. Consistent with predictions, the first primary comparison revealed that DV husbands exhibited higher levels of withdraw than their DNV counterparts, $t(88) = 1.59, p < .05$. Although differences in levels of withdraw for wives did not meet conventional levels of statistical significance, $t(88) = -1.63, p = .06$, battered women behaved as we expected, exhibiting less withdrawal than women in nonviolent relationships, in stark contrast to their violent husbands. We also found a nonsignificant trend revealing that unhappily married husbands withdrew more than did their happily married counterparts, $t(88) = 1.89, p = .06$. The equivalent trend with wives was statistically significant, $t(88) = 1.96, p = .05$.

In general, we found that as level of relationship dysfunction increased (distress and violence), husbands tended to exhibit higher levels of demand behaviors, with violent husbands exhibiting the highest levels of demand. For wives, the portrait was different, consistent with our predictions. Whereas DNV wives exhibited much higher levels of withdraw than their happily married counterparts, the level of withdraw dropped despite the distress when violence was added into the picture. In contrast, as we predicted, violent husbands exhibited higher levels of withdrawal, moving in a direction that was opposite to that exhibited by their wives.

Correlations With Self-Report Measure (the CPQ)

We computed two composite variables on the CRS to compare observational ratings with self-reports of demand and withdraw behaviors (the CPQ). Husband demand/wife withdraw was created by summing total scores on husband demand with total scores on wife withdraw. Wife demand/husband withdraw was created by summing total scores on wife demand with total scores on husband

withdraw. Because these composite variables are sums of demanding and withdrawing, they should not be confused with interactional process descriptions. They do not necessarily imply that one spouse's demanding was followed by the other spouse's withdrawal. However, we found these composites useful as a way of comparing high levels of observed demanding and withdrawing behaviors with self-reports of a demand-withdraw interaction pattern.

We compared observer and self-reports of the demand-withdraw pattern for each spouse within each of the three groups. We also calculated the correlations across all three groups for husbands and wives, resulting in a total of eight computed correlations. Here, we present only the statistically significant correlations.

Across all couples, analyses revealed a significant correlation between husband self-reports of the husband demand/wife withdraw pattern on the CPQ and observer ratings on the CRS ($r = .34, p < .01$). In other words, for couples in which husbands exhibited demand and wives exhibited withdrawal on the CRS, husbands corroborated that they observed this as an interactional pattern in their self-report. The same was true for wives ($r = .46, p < .01$). Within the DV group, wife self-reports continued to significantly correlate with observer ratings ($r = .30, p < .05$). However, husband self-reports in the DV group failed to significantly correlate with observer ratings ($r = .19, ns$). So, batterers, unlike other spouses, did not see themselves the way observers saw them.

Correlations With Emotional Abuse (the SPAFF and the EAQ)

The SPAFF rating system provided us with a moment-by-moment look at the emotions, and the reactions to those emotions, for each group of couples. Whereas the CRS provided us with a global indication of the amount of demand and withdraw, the SPAFF allowed us to examine behaviors and emotions in a microanalytic fashion, studying their relative occurrence as well as their direct emotional impact. Whereas Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1998) separated demand into "positive demand" and "negative demand," we used the SPAFF to provide a measure of the negativity associated with demand. Previous reports from this sample indicated that the men in the DV group were not only extremely physically abusive but also extremely emotionally abusive (Gottman et al., 1995; Jacobson et al., 1994). We were particularly interested in examining whether the type of demands exhibited by batterers may be more like emotional abuse than mere pressures for change. We computed a summary code labeled "global negative affect," an aggregate of the most negative codes (e.g., contempt, domineering, belligerence, and defensiveness) found in previous studies to reflect emotional abuse (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998).

We examined correlations within the DV group between each spouse's demanding behavior and ratings of global negative affect. Significant correlations are presented here. Within the DV group, husband demand was significantly correlated with the SPAFF code husband global negative affect ($r = .48, p < .01$).

Additionally, we examined correlations within the DV group between husband and wife demand and report of partner emotional abuse on the EAQ. We present significant correlations here. Within the DV group, husband demand significantly correlated

with wife reports of husband emotional abuse on the EAQ ($r = .35, p < .05$). In other words, on the basis of observational and wife self-report, batterers who assumed the demanding role were also more emotionally abusive.

Discussion

These results are consistent with our predictions and partially corroborate previous research. Our theorizing was consistent with previous research, leading us to hypothesize that batterers might be more "demanding" (i.e., desirous of change) than men in unhappy but nonviolent marriages. This finding was confirmed. Even though distressed couples showed high levels of demand and withdraw, which is consistent with previous research (Christensen, 1987, 1988; Christensen & Shenk, 1991), batterers were more demanding than nonviolent men. What are we to make of these findings? They suggest, at the very least, an important difference between batterers and nonviolent men in unhappy marriages: Despite equivalent amounts of marital distress, batterers demand more change than do nonviolent men. Given that this finding has now been replicated twice, we can be confident in it. At the very least, it suggests that despite the beatings and the emotional abuse, batterers are still not satisfied and seek more changes from their wives. When considered in the context of the physical and emotional abuse they inflict, demands from a batterer may very well reflect the function of seeking further power and control. This is what led us to the prediction that, despite the power and control inherent in perpetrating abuse, batterers may not experience themselves as powerful or as having what they want. The fact that their demand-withdraw behavior was correlated with observational measures of emotional abuse supports this interpretation. Although the demanding behavior may simply reflect the more general pattern of low positivity and high negativity also elevated in these men, it is reasonable to at least hypothesize that the function of this behavior is to compensate for a perception that their wives are still insufficiently controlled and that the low positivity, high negativity, emotional abuse, and demands for change function to keep the pressure on. Although battered women also made more demands than did women in nonviolent marriages, it is reasonable to hypothesize that, for them, demanding behavior serves a different function. After all, they are being abused, both physically and emotionally, and one would expect them to want the abusive behavior to stop.

In our attempt to understand the meaning of demanding behavior in batterers and battered women, it is insufficient to focus purely on the topography of these behaviors because they are likely to serve different functions: Husbands are demanding in the context of being abusive, whereas battered women are demanding in the context of being abused. Unfortunately, it is difficult to directly measure functions, and admittedly our interpretations are speculative. Although these results are consistent with both our predictions and previous research, they must at present remain hypotheses consistent with, but not decisively proven by, our findings.

Our findings on withdrawal are also consistent with our predictions but inconsistent with the findings of previous studies. Therefore, we must be tentative in interpreting them, especially because the trend stopped just short of reaching conventional standards of statistical significance. We expected and found that, although both

spouses in the DV sample demanded more than nonviolent spouses, only batterers showed greater levels of withdrawal than other married men. In fact, as we expected, battered women actually moved in the opposite direction from that manifested by both their husbands and by women who were not in abusive relationships: They withdrew *less*. This gender difference was expected in light of the differences in the histories of couples with a violent husband compared with those of other couples. Again, given the context of an abusive history, we expected battering husbands to be both demanding and withdrawn, whereas wives were expected to also be demanding but less withdrawn. In an abusive relationship, the consequences of women withdrawing from husband demands could be grave—that is, even more severe abuse.

Because our findings for wife withdrawal were discrepant from those of previous studies, they demand replication. Our study differed from the previous study using the CRS (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1998) in the specific interaction task, and our less constrained instructions *may* mean that our findings are more reliable than those of our predecessors. Our previous study used only self-report measures of demand-withdraw (Babcock et al., 1993), and we designed the present study believing that the CRS provided a more objective, and therefore more accurate, measure than the CPQ. There is some evidence to support the latter belief; namely, among husbands, the two measures were uncorrelated (which is consistent with previous research showing that batterers minimize their negative behavior) to the point of denial and distortion (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Nevertheless, only with further research into the demand-withdraw pattern and its relationship to domestic violence can such discrepant findings be definitively confirmed.

In the spirit of hypothesis generation and theory building, we interpret the overall pattern of results as follows. Batterers put continued and exceedingly high levels of pressure on their wives for change. Yet they simultaneously avoided and withdrew from their wives' efforts to change them. In contrast, although their wives similarly demanded change, any tendencies they might have had to withdraw from their husbands' change demands were suppressed.

We also believe that the demand DV husbands exhibited was substantially more than just pressures for change. Ratings of husband demand significantly correlated with ratings of global negative affect, a summary code for emotional abuse. Not surprisingly, husband demand also significantly correlated with wife reports of husband emotional abuse. In comparison, wife demand did not significantly correlate with husband reports of wife emotional abuse. In other words, although both partners pressure for change in their spouses, the affect and content of such pressures is much more hostile and provocative when coming from husbands than from wives. What emerges is a profile of a batterer incessantly demanding change in his partner, demands that are not met, with resistance from the wives. In contrast, wife demands are met with withdrawal from husbands. Moreover, when husbands demand, they do so abusively. Battered women are in a position of being controlled, dominated, and manipulated by their husbands, and when they try to enact change they are faced with either counter-demands or simply being ignored.

Did DV couples differ in their communication patterns from other couples simply because the problems they discussed were

more severe or harder to resolve? For example, perhaps the couples with violent husbands discussed issues relating to violence, which might have elicited distinct interaction patterns. To answer this question, we had raters code the topics of discussion across all couples in each group. After categorizing by type, we looked for substantial differences in the topics discussed across the groups. We found that all couples, regardless of group, tended to discuss the same basic issues: communication, money, and children. In fact, only 8 of the couples in the DV group covered topics deemed "high severity": 4 couples discussed abuse or violence and 4 couples discussed alcohol or drug use. Therefore it seems that the unique asymmetry in the demand-withdraw patterns seen in these couples cannot be reasonably attributed to differences in conversation topic.

Although these findings may shed new light on the interaction patterns of couples with a violent husband, we would like to see them both replicated and extended. Our sample was small, and our resultant low statistical power was exacerbated by unequal sample sizes. It is also important to be cautious about deriving causal differences between batterers and other men from these correlational findings. Because we used cross-sectional data, we do not know whether demand-withdraw interaction is a cause, effect, setting event, marker, or artifact. We do know, however, that the unique pattern found in these couples cannot be attributed to marital distress per se. If future longitudinal research reveals that the demand-withdraw interaction we found in DV couples also precedes the onset of violence, therapists might be able to use this information to quell such patterns when they arise.

There are several other factors that should be considered in interpreting the results of this study. First, because of the relative safety of a laboratory environment, the interactions of these couples might have been different from what transpires in the natural environment. However, previous research from this same sample suggests good correspondence between laboratory interactions and self-reports of arguments at home (Jacobson et al., 1994). Second, all of the arguments were nonviolent; so the findings may not hold for violent altercations. These two caveats both suggest the need for further research attempting to measure these processes in the natural environment. Third, subpopulations of DV couples may show differing interactional dynamics. We grouped all DV couples into one group, but a number of authors have suggested that the understanding of domestic violence would be aided by classifying batterers into meaningful subtypes (e.g., Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). In one such classification proposed by Jacobson and Gottman, violent men were divided into two groups on the basis of physiological reactivity. It was hypothesized that the two types would respond differently to demands placed on them by their wives. One group was hypothesized to respond to demands by withdrawing, whereas the other group was hypothesized to respond to demands by both demanding and withdrawing. To clarify what types of couples produce particular patterns, future research should attempt to examine the destructive demand-withdraw pattern within subtypes of battering relationships.

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