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DEMAND/WITHDRAW INTERACTION PATTERNS BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF BATTERERS AND THEIR SPOUSES

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The investigation of subtypes of violent men could provide invaluable information to researchers and clinicians. In earlier studies, investigators examined whether subtypes of male batterers could be identified based on physiological markers in combination with observational and self-report perspectives. In a sample of batterers and their wives, they found a physiological marker that discriminated between two groups of violent men on several interesting dimensions. To highlight the importance of studying batterer typologies, the present study examined differences in marital interaction patterns across the two groups of batterers. Analyses revealed clinically relevant patterns of interaction in the two groups, and effect sizes indicating the possibility of differences between the two types of batterers. Implications for future research as well as therapy are discussed.

The problem of marital violence in this country has reached disturbing proportions: A 1990 survey estimated that 2 million wives are severely beaten by their husbands each year (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Other researchers have even estimated that such nationally "representative" surveys may underestimate the prevalence by half, doubling the existing estimate of women severely assaulted each year to 4 million (Browne, 1993). Despite the presence of domestic violence throughout American history, the first nationally representative survey reporting prevalence data of marital violence was not conducted until 1975 (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Although this survey sparked a dramatic increase in research on domestic violence, therapists in general, and couple therapists in particular, often operated in an information vacuum. Sometimes the interventions were simply not informed by research, partly because the relevant research did not have obvious clinical implications. At other times, the clinical innovations that occurred within the community of experts on domestic violence failed to reach the field of family therapy (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). There were, and still are, two different worlds: the community of domestic violence advocates and the constituency of family therapists. It is still the exception rather than the norm for family therapists to receive state-of-the-art training in detecting domestic violence in their couples, assessing the lethality of batterers, and knowing when to refer

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to specialists in batterers' treatment and discontinue couple therapy. Similarly, research findings pertaining to the correlates, consequences, and causes of domestic violence have been slow to permeate the clinical community, including the community of family therapists (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998).

Until recently, studies have focused on overall differences between batterers and nonviolent men, couples where there is battering and their nonviolent counterparts, and factors that increase the risk of battering (see Holtzworth-Munroe, Bates, Smutzler, & Sandin, 1997, for a review). Overall, we are learning quite a lot about batterers as a group. But can we really consider "batterers" a homogeneous group? It appears that the answer to the question is a definite "no." Just as researchers have found there to be different types of battered women and different types of battering relationships (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997), there appear to be different types of batterers (see Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994, for a comprehensive review). The investigation of batterer subtypes may provide invaluable information to researchers and clinicians.

Given the studies described in their literature review, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart hypothesized that researchers will usually identify several types of batterers. The reviewed studies relied heavily on self-report measures, which in general have been valuable in the initial identification of batterer subtypes. However, due to the pervasive minimization, denial, and distortion in batterers' self-reports, and the subjectivity in retrospective accounts of violent incidents (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998), some researchers have looked toward a more comprehensive battery of assessments. Our research program has expanded the boundaries of traditional assessment. Jacobson, Gottman, and their colleagues (Gottman et al., 1995; Jacobson et al., 1994) actually observed couples with severely violent husbands engaging in nonviolent problem-solving discussions. Observation of couples with physical aggression was not new (Margolin, John, & Gleberman, 1988), but observation of couples with severe husband-to-wife violence was unheard of. Eighty percent of the battered women in our sample had been injured by their partners so badly as to need medical attention. Twenty percent of the batterers had been arrested for domestic violence in the past year. Not only were these couples observed but their emotions were inferred from psychophysiological measures in a way that no previous researcher had attempted.

Theoretically based in the respected literature linking criminality and physiological reactivity, we sought to examine whether subtypes of male batterers could be identified based on physiological markers in combination with observational and interview-based perspectives. Through the use of polygraphs and other sophisticated psychophysiological recording devices, we provided the first objective measurements of physiological arousal during arguments in couples with severely violent husbands. In a sample of 60 couples with a violent husband, we found a physiological marker that discriminated between the violent men in several interesting and clinically relevant dimensions. We found that 20% of the men, despite their severe physical and verbal aggression, actually calmed down physiologically as the argument began. We initially labeled these men "Type I" batterers (Gottman et al., 1995). The other 80% of the battering sample showed the expected heart rate increase as the argument commenced ("Type II" batterers). When batterers were separated based on heart rate reactivity, important differences between the groups emerged. At the beginning of the interaction, Type I men were belligerent, defensive, and contemptuous. They struck quickly and

fiercely. Wives of these men exhibited extreme fear and sadness. Type II men, on the other hand, exhibited their anger in a slower, more gradual buildup. They increased their domineering and threatening behaviors throughout the interaction. Type I men were more likely to have used or threatened to use a knife or a gun on their wives than the other batterers. They were more generally violent toward others in their lives. In fact, 44% of the Type I men had histories of violence outside the marriage, while only 3% of the Type II men had such histories. Type I men were much more likely to have met clinical criteria for Antisocial Personality Disorder and were more often dependent on illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin. Perhaps the most striking difference between the two groups was the likelihood of separation or divorce: At a 2-year follow-up assessment, 38% of all couples with a violent husband had separated or divorced (Jacobson, Gottman, Gortner, Berns, & Shortt, 1996). All of these couples had Type II husbands. This is not particularly surprising, as the terror involved in living with a Type I husband may have acted as a strong barrier to leaving. But we were surprised that so many of the women married to Type II batterers had the courage and resourcefulness to leave. A comparison of the 38% divorce rate in 2 years among couples with a Type II husband with the 3%–4% divorce rate over a 2-year period in the general population (Cherlin, 1992) reveals that women married to Type II batterers were leaving in droves, despite being stalked, beaten, and threatened with murder for up to 2 years following their escape (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Although many women married to Type I husbands eventually left (at least 25% according to a less formal 5-year follow-up), these relationships were more stable despite the ferocity of the physical and emotional abuse.

Understanding the differences between batterers not only informs our knowledge of the men themselves, it also opens the door to understanding how different types of batterers will interact differently with their wives. With all the distinctions described above, it seems reasonable to expect that a Type I batterer will display different interactional dynamics with his wife than a Type II batterer. Many distinctions have already been made between these types of men, and the current study hopes to add to those distinctions by examining these couples' interaction patterns. As the differences between types of batterers are delineated, therapists will gain a greater ability to recognize, understand, and predict the types of couples with a violent husband that will enter their offices.

One interaction style that may provide important information regarding batterer subtypes is the "Demand/Withdraw" pattern (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). In these interactions, one partner, the pursuer, tries to get the partner to change, while the other partner avoids change through Withdrawal, passive inaction, or stonewalling (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). This interaction pattern has received much attention in the clinical and research literature, most likely because it reflects process as well as structure. For example, insofar as this pattern reflects differences in desired levels of intimacy (Christensen, 1987; Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Jacobson, 1989), examination of the pattern provides a window into the power structure of the relationship. Jacobson and colleagues have suggested that intimacy is a commodity in relationships that intersects with power: those wanting more intimacy are typically "one down," and those trying to reduce the level of intimacy are more often the dominant partners in their relationships (Jacobson, 1989; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998).

Empirical research comparing nonviolent distressed couples has shown that the

existence of Demand/Withdraw interaction predicts both concurrent and longitudinal marital distress (Levenson & Gottman, 1985). Studies of this pattern have also found what marital and family therapists have seen time and time again in their practices: wives seek more intimacy and change, therefore assuming the "pursuer" role, while husbands avoid change and keep their distance 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.

Only two studies have experimentally observed this common, powerful interaction pattern in couples with a violent husband (Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler, & Stuart, 1998; Berns, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1997). No previous studies have attempted to examine this interaction pattern in couples with different types of battering husbands. In a previous study that compared the same couples discussed in this paper with nonviolent couples, analyses revealed that each spouse sought to change the behavior of the partner. However, battering husbands differentiated themselves from their wives by their high levels of Demand and Withdraw. In addition to pressuring their wives for change, batterers, unlike their wives, also refused requests that they change and withdrew from their wives. Battered women, in contrast, did not Withdraw from their husbands. They remained engaged in the interaction throughout the problem discussion. We began to wonder if this pattern of interaction, a pattern markedly different from that typically found in nonviolent couples, might be an important interactional dynamic in couples with a violent husband. If so, then studying the shifts in this dynamic across different types of husbands seemed crucial to deepening our understanding of these couples. We decided to examine our sample of batterers and battered women more closely, separating them according to the Type I/Type II distinction.

METHODS

For a more detailed description of subject recruitment and procedures see Jacobson et al. (1994).

Subjects

Three groups of married couples ($n = 95$) were recruited as part of a larger study. For the purpose of this paper, we will focus only on a subset of couples in the violent group where we had complete data ($n = 47$ couples). The group was comprised of mostly Caucasian, low socioeconomic status (SES) couples. If individuals met study criteria, wives were administered the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979). Wives' reports were used for the following reasons: (a) We were primarily interested in husband-to-wife violence; (b) we expected many of the husbands to deny that they were violent; (c) we reasoned that if we only chose couples whose husbands acknowledge that they were violent, we would end up with a very unrepresentative sample. As it turned out, husbands' CTS scores of their own behavior were within the moderate to severe range on domestic violence.

To be included in the "Domestically Violent" (DV) group, the husbands had to have engaged, within the past year, in a minimum of six or more moderately violent acts (e.g., pushing or hitting with something), two or more severely violent acts (e.g., slapping), or

at least one life-threatening violent act (e.g., threatening with or committing violence with a knife or gun). Nearly 50% of the wives admitted to levels of violence that would have qualified them for the study based on the above criteria. However, these data should be read cautiously and carefully. The bidirectionality may be misinterpreted as the partners being "equally violent." As we reported elsewhere, even when violence was bidirectional, the impact of violence, as well as its effectiveness as a method of power and control, suggested that in each and every case the husband was the batterer, and the wife—even when violent herself—was the battered partner (Jacobson et al., 1994).

The DV group was subdivided into the two groups described earlier: Type I ($n = 12$) and Type II ($n = 35$).

Overview of Procedures

Marital interactions were gathered as the second component of a larger study (Jacobson et al., 1994). In addition to several other self-report measures, couples were asked to fill out a measure of marital satisfaction (Dyadic Adjustment Scale; Spanier, 1976). Each spouse was asked to fill out the Areas of Disagreement Scale (Knox, 1971), on which they indicated how much they disagreed about different topics and how long they had disagreed about each. The topics included money, communication, in-laws, sex, religion, recreation, friends, alcohol, drugs, children, and jealousy, as well as other areas of disagreement they may have volunteered. An interviewer then discussed each of the areas with the couple, starting with the items rated highest and moving down until two topics were selected that were important to the couple and on which each partner had a perspective at odds with the other. At this point, the couple was asked to work toward a resolution of the two issues within a 15-minute time period. Debriefing procedures were developed to ensure that no violent episodes occurred after the laboratory interaction as a result of our experimental procedures. The procedures were very successful (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998).

Observational Measure

The Conflict Rating System (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 according to the extent to which they displayed the behaviors considered representative of that dimension. Ratings were completed after viewing the entire 15-minute 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 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 change 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 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 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).

Six undergraduate observers who were unaware of the hypotheses of the study were trained (by S. B.) 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, not used in this study, 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 subjects' verbal and nonverbal behaviors in arriving at each global rating. Each rater practiced coding pilot tapes until they consistently obtained reliability scores of 85% or greater agreement as calibrated against the first author's coding of the interaction. Interclass Correlations averaged 89%. Once coder reliability was established, raters began coding data from the study proper. All coders were subject to random reliability checks, and weekly calibration meetings were held to maintain consistency. Coders were kept blind to the group status of the couples they coded.

Self-Report Measures

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (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).

Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS). The CTS (Straus, 1979) was, at the time this study was conducted, 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 that has occurred during the past year and throughout the duration of the relationship. The CTS subscales have moderate to high internal consistency. Alpha coefficients were high for the verbal aggression (.77 to .88) and violence (.62 to .88) scales and relatively low for the reasoning scale (.50 to .76; Straus, 1979). Significant interpartner agreement on reports of physical aggression has been demonstrated using this scale (Jouriles & O'Leary, 1985). The CTS was administered in order to classify couples as "domestically violent."

RESULTS

Group Differences on Demographic Variables

TABLE 1
Demographics for Couples with Type I and Type II Batterers

Variable	Type I (<i>n</i> = 12)		Type II (<i>n</i> = 35)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Years married	7.46	5.42	5.88	4.95
Age				
Husbands	33.40	7.25	34.99	8.84
Wives	33.29	7.92	35.31	10.37
Education				
Husbands	13.08	2.94	14.03	2.56
Wives	12.83	2.04	14.17	2.29
SES				
Husbands	682.91	259.78	563.17	354.99
Wives	486.67	275.94	555.83	377.01
Monthly income(\$)				
Husbands	1369.30	911.47	1649.85	1075.09
Wives	1031.82	440.61	790.49	795.62

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations on demographic variables for the two groups of couples.

There were no significant differences for the following demographic variables between the two types of violent men: years married, husband age, wife age, husband education, wife education, husband income, wife income, husband SES, and wife SES. Although there was no statistically significant difference in husband marital adjustment or wife marital adjustment across the two groups, we noted an apparent trend toward higher marital satisfaction among Type II husbands ($M = 95.73$) compared to Type I husbands ($M = 84.36$).

Demand and Withdraw

For these analyses, we conducted *t*-tests to compare Type I versus Type II batterers. Although these *t*-tests failed to reach conventional levels of statistical significance, their Effect Sizes (*d*) indicated that examination of this typology warranted further investigation. Therefore, for differences on Demand and Withdraw, we note the "Effect Size" statistics rather than list the nonsignificant results of *t*-tests. The Effect Size measures the strength of association, functioning as an index of degree of departure from the null hypothesis. An Effect Size was calculated as the mean difference between the two groups (M_1 and M_2) divided by the pooled standard deviation (*SD*) (Cohen, 1988). The conventional definitions of Effect Size have been identified as follows: small = .20, medium = .50, and large = .80 (Cohen, 1988).

Table 2 shows means, standard deviations, and Effect Sizes for Demand and Withdraw subscales of the CRS.

Husbands. It is noteworthy that trends are in the direction of Type I husbands

TABLE 2
Subscale Scores for Demand and Withdraw Interaction
Patterns in Couples with Type I and Type II Batterers

Variable	Type I (<i>n</i> = 12)		Type II (<i>n</i> = 35)		Effect Size
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Demand					
Husbands	10.00	4.61	8.57	4.26	.33
Wives	11.42	3.61	11.54	4.47	.03
Withdraw					
Husbands	11.00	6.45	8.69	4.90	.43
Wives	8.42	4.19	6.71	4.02	.31

evidencing higher levels of Demand. The Effect Size of .33 calculated for the difference between Type I and Type II husbands indicates a small to medium effect. Similarly, the table shows higher levels of Withdraw by the Type I husbands, as compared to the Type II husbands. The Effect Size ($d = .43$) indicates a medium effect.

Wives. Analyses of levels of Demand indicated no differences between wives of Type I husbands and wives of Type II husbands. However, there is a noticeable trend in levels of Withdraw. Wives of Type I husbands showed slightly higher levels of Withdraw than wives of Type II husbands ($d = .31$).

In summary, Type I husbands evidenced higher levels of both Demand and Withdraw than Type II husbands. Wives of Type I husbands did not differ from wives of Type II husbands in levels of Demand but evidenced slightly higher levels of Withdraw.

DISCUSSION

In studies of Demand and Withdraw in nonviolent couples, the pattern of high levels of wife Demand paired with high husband Withdraw appears so frequently that it is practically an accepted rule in marital communication. Curious how this pattern might play out in violent samples, we recruited and observed a sample of severe batterers and their wives and watched them communicate (Berns et al., 1997; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). From these studies, we learned that something unusual happened in communication patterns of these couples. The usual pattern of wife-Demand/husband-Withdraw was no longer there. Instead, husbands appeared to be both demanding and withdrawing. As informative as this was, we knew that looking at our subtypes could be even more informative. We attempted to examine them as the heterogeneous group they are.

Our violent group had previously been divided into two types based on heart rate reactivity: Type I husbands (lowered heart rates as they became more aggressive), and Type II husbands (increased rates as they became more aggressive; Gottman et al., 1995; Jacobson, Gottman, & Schott, 1995). That study found differences between the two types on self-report measures of psychopathology, physiology, and observed affect. We knew

that these men were different from one another, but we didn't know how these differences would affect patterns of communication, specifically the Demand/Withdraw interaction.

What did we find when we examined the marital communication of couples with Type I and Type II husbands? From Berns et al. (1997) we already knew that batterers generally exhibited exceptionally high levels of both Demand and Withdraw, a highly unusual pattern. This pattern seems to hold for both subtypes. However, the present study offers preliminary evidence that the pattern is stronger among Type I batterers and their spouses. Through a combination of direct requests for change and blaming for inaction, Type I husbands Demanded modifications in their partners' behavior. However, they were unresponsive to any requests from their wives that they change themselves. In turn, while battered women were equally demanding of their husbands regardless of subtype, wives of Type I husbands were more avoidant and withdrawn than other battered women. In fact, although battered women were less withdrawn than their Type I husbands, these women were actually more withdrawn than the Type II batterers.

Of course, we must be careful in interpreting these findings. Replications are essential, not only because of the small overall sample size but also because of the inequality in our sample sizes of Type I and Type II batterers. Both factors lower statistical power and, as a result, create questions as to the reliability of our findings. However, the Effect Sizes were substantial, creating at least the possibility of real differences between the subtypes. If so, the portrait of couples with a Type I husband is quite frightening. Based on the results from the larger project (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998), we can draw tentative conclusions regarding the combination of high Demand and high Withdraw in both Type I husbands and wives. In wives, the demanding behavior reflects their desire for their husbands to be less violent and emotionally abusive, and withdrawal may be an adaptive response to keep them safe: Type I batterers are quite dangerous if their wives get in their way, but wives may hope that violence can be avoided if they keep a low profile and limit the opportunities for conflict. Type I batterers are quite hedonistic and impulsive and want what they want when they want it; hence the high levels of demanding behavior. At the same time, these brutal men both actively (changing the topic; becoming or threatening to become abusive) and passively (ignoring her or being quiet) resist any pressure put on them to change. They accept no influence from their wives.

How does an understanding of batterer subtypes have clinical implications? First, the variations in batterer type could affect victim safety, the course of the relationship, and the effectiveness of therapy. Ignoring these dimensions by lumping all batterers together paints a fuzzy clinical portrait at best. Our overall understanding of marital violence, and the creation and utilization of effective treatments, is hindered by the failure to recognize that all batterers are not alike. Currently, no distinction is made between types of batterers in treatment outcome studies (Stuart & Holtzworth-Munroe, 1996). If batterers do indeed vary in many important dimensions, it is worth exploring how these variations relate to treatment effectiveness.

We think it highly unlikely, though currently untested, that traditional psychological rehabilitation will effectively eliminate the aggression of Type I batterers. Type I batterers are extremely demanding and intolerant of demands made on them by their wives. We also know that they are more likely to be antisocial, drug dependent, emotionally abusive, possess criminal traits going back as far as adolescence, and come from chaotic, violent families (Gottman et al., 1995). Although currently existing treatments for batterers have

rarely been subjected to rigorous scientific investigation (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998), previous research has shown that it may be a waste of time to even try to offer treatment to these types of batterers (Cadesky & Crawford, 1988; Gondolf, 1988). In addition, studies have shown that the strongest predictors of recidivism after batterer treatment are the very characteristics associated with Type I batterers (see Hamberger & Hastings, 1993).

Several cautions must be presented regarding the results of this study. Due to our small and unequal sample sizes, we lacked the power for conventional inferential statistics. The Effect Sizes are a promising indication of group differences on Demand/Withdraw measures, but a more powerful comparison is necessary before stronger conclusions can be drawn. We would also like to see the typology replicated with other samples of batterers (see Gondolf, 1988; Hamberger & Hastings, 1985, 1986). We must also be cautious about how we interpret differences between batterers and battered women. Differences are always open to multiple interpretations, and we cannot infer causality from group differences.

The closed doors surrounding the lives of batterers and their wives have gradually begun to open in the past few decades. We hope that these data add to the growing impetus to understand the varied interaction patterns of couples with a violent husband.

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