

Attachment, Emotional Regulation, and the Function of Marital Violence: Differences Between Secure, Preoccupied, and Dismissing Violent and Nonviolent Husbands

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The purpose of this study was to investigate behavioral differences among nonviolent, unhappily married husbands and violent husbands with different attachment classifications on the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; Main and Goldwyn, 1994). Twenty-three Domestically Violent (DV) husbands and 13 maritally distressed but non-violent (DNV) husbands were interviewed using the AAI. Violent husbands (74%) were more likely than the distressed/nonviolent husbands (38%) to be classified into one of the insecure categories on the AAI. As predicted, during laboratory arguments with their wives, dismissing husbands were the most controlling and distancing, and preoccupied husbands the least distancing, during marital interactions. Secure husbands were significantly more defensive than the two insecure types. Sequential analyses of reports of violent arguments at home revealed different patterns among different types of batterers. For the preoccupied batterers only, wife withdrawal was a significant predictor of husband violence. For the dismissing batterer only, wife defensiveness was a significant precursor to husband violence. It is theorized that preoccupied batterers' violence and emotional abuse is related to expressive violence in response to abandonment fears; whereas dismissing batterers use instrumental violence to assert their authority and to control their wives. The overlap between this and other typologies of violent men is explored.

KEY WORDS: attachment; emotional regulation; function of marital violence.

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According to Bowlby (1973), quality of attachment interactions results in mental working models that organize cognition, affect, and behavior in close relationships. An alternative but not contradictory model is to view attachment as an index of emotional regulation (Fuendeling, 1998; Kobak and Hazan, 1991; Mikulincer, 1998). For securely attached individuals, negative affect serves a communicative function and promotes effective responses from others (Cassidy and Kobak, 1988; Kobak and Hazan, 1991). In contrast, insecurely attached individuals may experience negative emotions as ineffective for eliciting contingent responses and learn to inhibit or exaggerate negative emotions (Kobak and Hazan, 1991), which may lead to symptomatic patterns in the expression of emotions. Insecure attachment can be viewed along a dimension of deactivation vs. hyperactivation of attentional systems (Dozier and Kobak, 1992) which are invoked in the service of regulating affect, especially during stressful situations (Kobak and Sceery, 1988; Simpson, 1990). Thus, the attachment construct and its measures may be thought of as indices of how one regulates emotions in the context of close, personal relationships.

Dysregulation of affect may have profound effects on relationship stability, satisfaction, and the manner in which conflict is resolved. Research suggests that insecure attachment may contribute to observed, dysfunctional displays of affect among maritally distressed couples (Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, and Pearson, 1992; Kobak and Hazan, 1991). Dutton and colleagues (Dutton, 1994; Dutton and Starzomski, 1993) found that anger, jealousy, and affective instability were all strongly and significantly related to the frequency of verbal and physical abuse in intimate relationships and that batterers are likely to be angered by perceived abandonment by their spouses (Dutton and Browning, 1988). Using questionnaire measures, researchers also found that maritally assaultive men were less securely attached (Kesner and McKenry, 1998), more attuned to being abandoned by their wives, and less affectively stable (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, and Bartholomew, 1994) than a control group of nonassaultive men. However, correspondence between self-report and interview measures of attachment are notoriously poor (de Haas, Bakermans-Kranenburg, and van IJzendoorn, 1994), perhaps because questionnaires do not adequately assess the emotional regulatory component of the attachment construct. More recently, Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, and Hutchinson (1997) administered the Adult Attachment Inventory (AAI; Main and Goldwyn, 1994) to samples of maritally violent and nonviolent husbands. As predicted, violent husbands were more likely than nonviolent men to be classified as insecure, specifically preoccupied, or cannot classify on the AAI. However, to our knowledge, no studies to date have addressed how batterers with different attachment or emotional regulation strategies differ in their behavior toward their wives.

ATTACHMENT AND MARITAL INTERACTIONS

Observational studies of marital conflict have highlighted the importance of patterns of emotional responses in marital satisfaction and stability (Gottman, 1994). Attachment researchers (e.g., Kobak and Hazan, 1991) have suggested that insecure attachment may contribute to these dysfunctional displays of affect. There is only one other study, to our knowledge, that examines the association between AAI classification and observations of couples' interactions. Cohn and colleagues (Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, and Pearson, 1992) found, within a normative sample of couples, that secure husbands were likely to be in better functioning relationships and engage in more positive and fewer conflictual behaviors than husbands classified as insecure. Wives' security as assessed by the AAI, on the other hand, was not significantly related to differences in affect or behavior observed during couples interactions. However, there have been no studies to date to examine the differences between different types of insecure husbands (dismissing vs. preoccupied) on specific forms of negative affect displays. Based on our understanding of attachment, emotional regulation style, and psychopathology, we predict that dismissing husbands would use more distancing (e.g., stonewalling, defensiveness, and contempt) or controlling (domineering) types of negative affect. Preoccupied husbands, because of their intolerance of distance in relationships, would display more provocative engagement (belligerence, anger) and less distancing affect. Similar behavior patterns may be found in violent arguments as well. In previous research from our lab (Jacobson *et al.*, 1994), we found that during violent arguments, wives' attempts to withdraw from their husbands were likely to be an immediate antecedent of their husbands' violent act. However, patterns of wives' withdrawal predicting husbands' violence may be common only among a subset of batterers—specifically, the preoccupied batterers.

TYOLOGY OF BATTERERS

It has become increasingly clear that batterers are a heterogeneous group and efforts to make sense of this heterogeneity have resulted in a proliferation of typologies of batterers in the past decades (e.g., Gondolf, 1988; Hamberger and Hastings, 1986; Jacobson and Gottman, 1998). Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) recently attempted to integrate various typologies theoretically. Briefly, they describe three types of men who batter their wives: (1) generally violent/antisocial batterers; (2) dysphoric/borderline batterers; and (3) family-only batterers. The *family-only batterers* are likely to engage in the least severe marital violence and emotional abuse

and evidence the least psychopathology, accounting for approximately 50% of a community sample. According to Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) typology, the family-only batterers are likely to be either secure or preoccupied with respect to attachment classification. The *dysphoric/borderline batterers* tend to engage in moderate to severe physical and emotional spousal abuse, and experience high levels of anger. These men are the most dysphoric, psychologically distressed, and emotionally volatile. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) predict that the dysphoric/borderline type of batterer will manifest preoccupied attachment patterns and represent 25% of batterer samples. Finally, the *generally violent/antisocial batterers*, engage in moderate to severe marital violence, including psychological and sexual abuse. They are most likely to have witnessed their parents engaged in marital violence. These men are likely to engage in the most extrafamilial violence and may manifest antisocial or narcissistic personality disorders and represent 25% of batterer samples. Although the generally violent/antisocial batterers experience moderate levels of anger, they are likely to be the most hostile and disengaged and are most likely to be classified as dismissing with respect to attachment (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994).

Our first goal in the current study is to replicate the Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, and Hutchinson (1997) investigation of maritally violent and distressed/nonviolent husbands. The second goal is to extend it to explore differences in emotional behavior during laboratory-based marital interactions among husbands with different AAI classifications and differences in patterns in their use of violence outside the lab. Finally, we attempt to test the predictions made by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) with regard to the correspondence between their tripartite typology and attachment classification in attempt to integrate a typology based on emotional regulation with a benchmark typology based on psychopathology and levels of violence.

METHOD

Participants

Subjects were originally recruited as part of a larger study, comparing couples with a violent husband ($n = 60$) to maritally distressed, non-violent couples ($n = 23$) and nondistressed, non-violent couples ($n = 13$) (Jacobson, Gottman, Waltz, Rushe, and Babcock, 1994) and were re-contacted for this follow-back study. Couples originally were recruited at Time 1 through newspaper ads and radio public service announcements. Subjects were

classified into DV and DNV groups based on the wife's report of marital satisfaction and marital violence at Time 1. The *Short Marital Adjustment Test* (Locke and Wallace, 1959), assessing marital satisfaction and the *Conflict Tactics Scale* (Straus, 1979), assessing marital violence, were administered to wives over the phone. To be classified as DV, wives must have reported that in the past year their husbands (1) pushed, shoved or slapped them six or more times; (2) hit them with a fist at least twice; or (3) beat them up, threatened them with or used a knife or gun on them at least once. Criteria for inclusion in the DNV group involved wife's report of (1) no husband-to-wife or wife-to-husband violence in the history of their relationship; and (2) a SMAT score of 85 or less. The main findings of behavioral differences between violent and nonviolent couples (Babcock, Jacobson, and Gottman, 1993; Cordova *et al.*, 1993; Jacobson *et al.*, 1994; Jacobson *et al.*, 1996) and psychophysiological differences among subtypes of batterers (Gottman *et al.*, 1995) have been reported previously.

The DV and DNV husbands who were still married to their partners and participated in follow-up two years later (Time 2) were recontacted and asked to participate in a study on "the effects of childhood experiences on marital relationships" immediately following their second laboratory visit. Subjects were then interviewed by trained, post-baccalaureate students while being videotaped and audiotaped. The questionnaires and interview took approximately 1½ hr. Subjects were paid \$20 each for their participation. One AAI was lost due to technical problems, for a final N of 36 (DV $n = 23$; DNV $n = 13$).

Adult Attachment Interview

The AAI, a semi-structured hour-long interview, asks subjects about their experiences with their parents as children, about their continuing relationship with their parents and about how those experiences affect their current relationships. The AAI is not a measure of attachment history (Jones, 1996) or current romantic attachment. The AAI primarily classifies adults' stylistic response during the interview about one's family of origin into one of four categories, secure/free-autonomous (F), dismissing (Ds), preoccupied (E) and unresolved (U), which are conceptually and empirically related to Ainsworth's attachment A,B,C,D classifications (van IJzendoorn, 1992). There is also a "cannot classify" for adults who evidence a mixture of the dismissing and preoccupied patterns (Hesse, 1996). Studies comparing adult-to-infant classifications find matches in 69% to 87% (Main and Goldwyn, 1994; Ward, Botyanski, Plunket, and Carlson, 1991). In a test-retest study, the interview classifications are stable over 2 to 15 months

(van IJzendoorn, 1995). Kappa coefficients of reliability have been reported to be .73 (Crowell and Feldman, 1988) to .80 or higher (Ward, Botyanski, Plunket, and Carlson, 1991).

Adult Attachment Interviews (AAI; Main and Goldwyn, 1994) were administered by post-baccalaureate students trained to administer the AAI. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded. The primary coder (first author) was trained to reliability by Dr. Mary Main and Eric Hesse in 1994 and coded exclusively from transcripts. Ten of the transcripts (28%) were double-coded by a secondary, certified AAI coder (M. DeKlyen) for reliability purposes. Percent agreement for the major AAI classifications (F, Ds, E) was 80%; including the Unresolved category, percent agreement was 70%. When there was a discrepancy between the primary and reliability coder, the reliability coder's scores were used. Interviewers and coders were blind to subject condition (DV or DNV).

Affect Coding During Marital Interaction

Couples discussed a problem area of continuing disagreement for 15 min at Time 2 while being videotaped. The problems were chosen from a structured interview based on partners' reports of current relationship problems (Play-by-Play Interview; Gottman, 1995). Specific affect elicited during the marital interactions at Time 2 was coded using the SPAFF system (Gottman, 1995; Gottman and Krokoff, 1989). This system was designed to dismantle the global concept of negative and positive affect using facial and vocal expressions and body movement. The SPAFF contains the following affect codes: joy, humor, affection, validation, interest, neutral, tension, whining, anger, sadness, stonewalling, defensiveness, domineering, belligerence, disgust, and contempt. Videotapes were SPAFF coded as part of the larger project. Kappa coefficients of reliability for specific codes averaged .89 (range .70-.97). The first five codes were collapsed into one "positive" category. To reduce Type I error, only codes included in our prior predictions were analyzed here: stonewalling, defensiveness, domineering, belligerence, contempt, anger, and positive.

Coding Reports of Violent Incidents

At Time 1, DV subjects were asked to describe in detail their most recent, worst, and first violent incidents. A structured probe was used to generate step-by-step descriptions of the violent incidents. Each act reported to have occurred during the violent argument was assigned one of

the following codes: withdrawal (ignore or leave room), negative (criticize, nag, complain or blame); defensive (disagree or repute); demand (command); psychological abuse (verbal put-downs, threats, or sarcasm); violence; positive/neutral (solicit information, facilitation, problem solving, apologize or make request); distress (express distress or plead); and self-defense (physical self-defense from violence or verbal self-defense from verbal aggression). Intraclass correlation coefficients of reliability between two coders ranged from .65 to .81 for this coding system.

Batterer Typology

Husbands completed the *Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-II* (Millon, 1987) at Time 1. The MCMI-II is a 175-item, true-false self-report inventory with 22 clinical scales which parallel the DSM-III-R diagnostic categories (American Psychiatric Association, 1987, *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (3rd ed., revised). Subjects' base rate standard score (BR score) for each scale was entered into analysis. Test-retest reliability of the Axis II scales range from .77 to .85 (Millon, 1987). To reduce Type I error, only three scales highlighted by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) typology of batterers were included in the analyses: antisocial, borderline, and dysphoric.

General violence was assessed during a face-to-face interview at Time 1. Subjects were asked about physical fights with other family members, coworkers, police, strangers, and others. General violence was calculated as the number of violent assaults reported against people other than the spouse. In analyses of batterer type, marital violence was based on wife's report of husband violence during the past year on the *Conflicts Tactics Scale* (Straus, 1979); and emotional abuse was based on wife's report of husband behavior using the *Emotional Abuse Questionnaire* (EAQ; Jacobson and Gottman, 1998). The EAQ is a project-designed, partner-report measure. It contains 66 items on verbal and sexual abuse and threatening behavior, each rated on a 4-point frequency scale. Subjects were also administered the *Child Maltreatment Interview Schedule* (Briere, 1992). This inventory asks about physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse experienced as a child and witnessing parental abuse as a child. Child abuse was measured by one item assessing the frequency of being hit as a child during the worst year in memory. Witnessing parental abuse was scored from the reported frequency of witnessing mother-to-father violence and witnessing father-to-mother violence throughout childhood.

RESULTS

Demographics of all of the DV and DNV subjects who completed the AAI are reported in Table I. There were no significant demographic differences at Time 1 between the subset of husbands who completed the AAI and those who did not. Age and length of marriage were not significantly correlated to any of the affect/behavioral measures of interest and thus were not controlled for in the subsequent analyses.

Differences in Attachment Between Violent and Maritally Distressed/ Non-Violent Husbands

Table II shows the distribution of AAI classifications of DV and DNV husbands. To replicate the Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, and Hutchinson (1997) study, participants were collapsed into secure (F) versus insecure (Ds, E, U, CC). The group by security chi square is significant, $\chi^2 (n = 35, df = 1) = 4.39, p < .05$, as expected. DNV husbands were more likely to be classified as secure and DV husbands as insecure on the AAI. The four DV husbands classified as unresolved or cannot classify on the AAI were classified into their secondary, "next-best fit" category (Mary Main, per-

Table I. Means, Standard Deviations and *F* Values of Demographic, Violence and Marital Satisfaction Variables by Group of Subjects Completing the AAI

Variable Name	Group				<i>F</i> (1,34)
	DV (<i>n</i> = 23)		DNV (<i>n</i> = 13)		
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	
Years of education	13.78	(2.86)	15.31	(2.53)	2.56
Gross monthly income	1488.23	(737.04)	2246.15	(1635.86)	3.43
SES ^a	37.95	(22.20)	36.322	(25.00)	.04
Years married	6.11	(4.75)	15.68	(15.46)	7.34*
Age	34.90	(9.04)	44.95	(12.74)	7.17*
Husband violence					
Wife report	20.83	(24.31)	0.15	(0.38)	9.28**
Husband report	12.05	(27.95)	0.83	(0.29)	2.17
Marital satisfaction					
Wife report	90.78	(19.29)	90.85	(12.50)	0.00
Husband report	97.75	(16.47)	94.67	(16.66)	0.61

Note: *Conflict Tactics Scale* violence subscale (Straus, 1979). *Dyadic Adjustment Test* (Spanier, 1976).

^aSocioeconomic status was calculated from occupational title using Stevens and Cho's (1985) total socioeconomic index based on the 1980 U.S. Census Bureau's listing of occupational title.

**p* < .05.

Table II. Frequency and Percentage of AAI Category by Group

		Group	
		DV	DNV
Secure	<i>n</i>	6	8
	%	26.1%	61.5%
Dismissing	<i>n</i>	6	3
	%	26.1%	23.1%
Preoccupied	<i>n</i>	7	2
	%	30.4%	15.4%
Unresolved/ can't classify	<i>n</i>	4	0
	%	17.4%	0%

sonal communication, April 4, 1996). Both "cannot classify" batterers were secondarily coded as preoccupied; one unresolved batterer was secondarily coded as preoccupied; and the other unresolved batterer as dismissing. All subsequent analyses on AAI classification use the three categories of secure, dismissing, and preoccupied.

Affect During Time 2 Marital Interactions by AAI Category

Upon visual inspection of the data, it became obvious that SPAFF data could not be analyzed using parametric tests because of their extremely skewed distributions. Attempts to transform the data failed to normalize the distributions. Instead, we utilized the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis rank order test (see Table III). We hypothesized that AAI classification of maritally distressed couples, regardless of violence status, would be related to different base rates of affect codes during the marital interaction.

Specifically, we hypothesized that dismissing husbands would be

Table III. SPAFF Codes by AAI Category (DV + DNV Husbands)

	Total Mean	Total SD	Mean Rank			Chi Sq.	<i>p</i>
			Secure	Dismiss	Preoccup.		
Domineering	30.54	43.41	10.71 _a	25.20 _b	22.00 _b	13.53	0.001
Stonewalling	12.77	72.75	16.50 _a	23.70 _b	16.50 _a	7.07	0.029
Defensiveness	234.28	114.88	25.00 _a	16.30 _b	12.75 _b	9.35	0.009
Contempt	4.27	8.19	14.54 _a	25.10 _b	17.63 _{ab}	6.48	0.039
Belligerence	3.53	11.03	15.57	16.80	23.33	4.54	0.103
Anger	0.23	0.72	21.21	14.50	18.67	4.50	0.106
Positive	22.7	23.6	13.14	11.67	16.35	1.53	0.465

more controlling (domineering) and attempt to withdraw (stonewalling, defensiveness, contempt) more; preoccupied husbands would be more provocatively angry (belligerent); and secure husbands would be more positive during interactions with their wives. We found that secure husbands were less domineering than both dismissing and preoccupied husbands. Consistent with our predictions, dismissing husbands spent more time stonewalling than either secure or preoccupied husbands. Secure husbands were more defensive than both dismissing and preoccupied husbands. Dismissing husbands displayed the most contempt toward their wives, while secure husbands displayed the least, with preoccupied husbands falling in between the other two groups. There was no significant difference in the amount of belligerence, although as predicted preoccupied husbands displayed the most belligerence. Similarly, there was no significant difference in the amount of anger displayed, although as predicted, dismissing husbands displayed the least. Contrary to our prediction, there was no significant difference in the amount of positive affect displayed by the secure husbands.

Descriptions of Violent Incidents

Descriptions of husband and wife behaviors during violent arguments were entered into sequential analysis (Bakeman, 1983). Lag one z -scores were computed using the binomial formula (Allison and Liker, 1982) for each couple, then combined into an aggregate group z score using Rosenthal's (1991) method. When this aggregate group score exceeds 1.96, one can infer that the prediction of husband's violence is improved significantly. Twenty two of the 23 DV husbands had codable wife descriptions of violent arguments. Lag one predictors of husband violence were compared between preoccupied, secure, and dismissing batterers, as shown in Fig. 1. As predicted, only preoccupied batterers responded to wife withdrawal with violence ($z = 3.52$) as predicted. For secure and dismissing batterers, the relationship between wife withdrawal and husband violence was not significant, $z = 1.25$ and $-.18$, respectively. The difference comparing z -scores between the Preoccupied and Dismissing batterers in wife withdrawal preceding husband violence was significant, $z_{diff} = 2.62$. However, the comparison between Preoccupied and Secure husbands z -scores was not significant, $z_{diff} = 1.61$. Wife self-defense was also a significant predictor of preoccupied husbands' violence, $z = 2.27$. For dismissing batterers, only wife defensiveness predicted husband violence, $z = 2.40$. This z -score was significantly higher than the z -score of $-.61$ for Preoccupied husbands ($z_{diff} = 2.13$). It

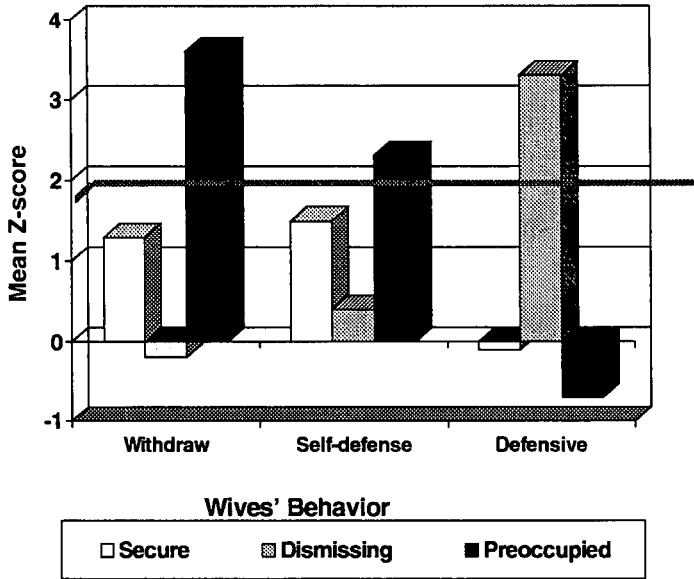


Fig. 1. Mean z-scores of behavioral sequences predicting husbands' violence by AAI category.

was not significantly higher than the z-score of $-.11$ for Secure husbands ($z_{diff} = 1.77$).

Congruence Between Batterer Typology and AAI Classification

To examine the correspondence between the antisocial/generally violent, borderline/dysphoric, and family-only batterer typology and the AAI categories, secure, preoccupied, and dismissing husbands were first compared on variables thought to discriminate the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) subtypes of batterers. Table IV reports the means, standard deviations and *F* statistics comparing secure, preoccupied, and dismissing husbands on variables related to the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) typology. There were significant differences on the MCMI-II antisocial personality scale, with dismissing husbands scoring significantly higher than secure husbands. Borderline personality disorder also tended to be higher among the dismissing husbands, but this was not significant ($p < .10$). The antisocial and borderline scales were highly correlated in this sample ($r = .67, p < .001$). We expected to find an increased report rate of abuse in the family of origin within the insecure attachment classifications on the

Table IV. Variables Related to Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) Tripartite Typology of Batterers by AAI Classification

	Secure (<i>n</i> = 14)		Dismissing (<i>n</i> = 11)		Preoccupied (<i>n</i> = 11)		<i>F</i> (2,33)
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	
Marital violence	10.50	(25.48)	10.90	(13.64)	18.75	(23.19)	.54
General violence	0.71	(0.83)	1.90	(2.38)	1.75	(1.60)	1.98
Emotional abuse	107.96	(36.82)	119.14	(31.20)	147.12	(42.76)	3.64*
Witnessed	0.77	(1.48)	3.13	(6.21)	2.49	(5.65)	.82
father-to-mother violence							
Witnessed	0.214	(0.80)	1.75	(2.15)	0.30	(0.61)	4.95*
mother-to-father violence							
Abused as child	1.79	(1.31)	3.56	(1.74)	3.55	(2.38)	3.85*
Antisocial	54.64	(23.56)	81.00	(26.23)	72.33	(20.72)	4.01*
Borderline	44.93	(22.00)	65.30	(31.20)	63.67	(19.92)	2.78
Dythymia	37.43	(21.84)	60.30	(41.15)	38.25	(27.94)	2.01

**p* < .05.

AAI. There was a significant difference in report of frequency of being hit as a child. The highest report of frequency of hitting during the worst year of childhood was among the Preoccupied husbands. Dismissing husbands reported witnessing more mother-to-father, but not father-to-mother violence growing up. There were no significant differences on frequency of marital violence during the past year or general violence by AAI classification. In an ANOVA examining security (secure vs. insecure) by group (DV vs. DNV) there were no significant group by security interactions on any of the variables included in Table IV.

DISCUSSION

Maritally violent husbands show more insecure attachment than distressed but non-violent husbands on the Adult Attachment Interview. As Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, and Hutchinson (1997) report, violent husbands were more likely to be classified as "insecure" by the AAI than were distressed, nonviolent husbands. In our sample, insecure violent husbands are equally likely to be classified as Dismissing as they were Preoccupied. Although less frequent in occurrence, six of the violent husbands (23%) were classified as Secure with respect to their attachment when describing their relationship with their parents. This is not to say that they have secure relationships with their wives. Just as other typologies describe a "low pathology" subtype of batterers (Hamberger and Hastings, 1986; Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994), there is a subtype of violent men who appear to have resolved childhood difficulties, present a coherent picture

of their early relationships, and are able to modulate their affect during a potentially emotional interview. Clearly, not all men who engage in repeated physical aggression against their wives have attachment patterns that differ from other men (O'Leary and Cascardi, 1998). It is likely that there are many different pathways to becoming maritally violent, and a route involving insecure attachment and dysregulated affect is only one of them.

However, our results were not entirely consistent with a previous study administering the AAI to violent and nonviolent husbands (Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, and Hutchinson, 1997). We found that the majority of batterers were likely to be classified as preoccupied or dismissing and approximately 9% classified as "cannot classify." In the Holtzworth-Munroe study however, the largest group of batterers (37%) were coded as "cannot classify." Our different results may be attributable to differences in the DV samples. Half of the 30 batterers administered the AAI in the Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues study (Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, and Hutchinson, 1997) were recruited from a marital violence treatment program and the other half from newspaper advertisements. In our study, all 23 batterers were recruited from a community sample. Although we attempted to screen for "clinically significant" levels of violence, the abundance of batterers classified as "cannot classify" in the Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues study may reflect that their DV sample consists of batterers who are more severely disturbed in terms of emotional regulation.

There are several observed behavioral differences between secure, dismissing, and preoccupied husbands that are consistent with their respective styles of emotional regulation. Secure husbands were more defensive than preoccupied and dismissing husbands. Defensiveness is a relatively low-level negative behavior. Couples who have very high defensiveness by definition have low levels of the more intense negative codes, such as contempt, belligerence and domineering. The lack of differences in the rates of positive affect in retrospect is not surprising, since there was very little positive exchange in this sample of unhappy couples.

Dismissing and preoccupied husbands tended to be more domineering during interactions with their wives than the secure husbands. Domineering as coded by SPAFF is marked by a person trying "to force compliance, to get the other person to withdraw, retreat, or submit to their own view" (Gottman, 1995). This suggests that these men were more often actively invalidating their partners, being patronizing, and lecturing them in an effort to gain compliance or submission. While both dismissing and preoccupied husbands were domineering, only the dismissing husbands used the distancing behaviors of stonewalling, "an active tuning out of the partner" and contempt, "an icy, distancing stance" (Gottman, 1995). By contrast, preoc-

cupied husbands tended to provocatively engage their wives by the use of belligerence, and were decidedly not distancing.

The controlling and distancing style of dismissing batterers may play a role in violent incidents as well. According to the wives, only when wives of dismissing batterers became defensive did their husbands become violent, which may indicate a possible function of the husbands' violence. The function of violence can be described on a continuum ranging from "expressive" to "instrumental" (Berkowitz, 1993; Brown and Forth, 1997; Cornell *et al.*, 1996; Neidig and Friedman, 1984). Instrumental violence is directed at obtaining a specific goal, whereas expressive violence has the function of reducing negative affect. Instrumental violence is the deliberate use of violence as an instrument or tool for social influence, it is generally limited to that which is necessary to attain victim compliance (Brown and Forth, 1997), in this case the wife's, and is reinforced by her acquiescence. The controlling pattern among dismissing batterers may reflect a characteristic use of instrumental violence. Consistent with the profile of the dismissing, instrumental batterer is the finding that the dismissing batterers reported the most antisocial personality features. Violence and aggression may represent a general approach to getting what they want in life, indicative of instrumental violence.

Whereas dismissing husbands evidenced distancing, preoccupied batterers were remarkable for their *lack* of distancing behavior during nonviolent interactions. Dismissing husbands displayed stonewalling during observed marital interactions; however, preoccupied husbands did not. Consistent with the notion of hyperactivation of the emotional regulation system, preoccupied men may lack strategies to effectively disengage from conflict. Attempts by the wife to disengage during arguments appear to threaten or provoke the preoccupied batterer, as wife withdrawal is a predictor of violence only for the preoccupied batterer. The behavior of the preoccupied husbands during violent arguments may evidence such fears. Rather than serving as a coping strategy to deal with arousal during conflict, disengagement may reflect abandonment and increase arousal for preoccupied husbands. Our preoccupied type of batterer may parallel the borderline, cyclical type of batterer profiled by Dutton (1995). These batterers, like people diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, are ambivalently anxious: they have strong ambivalent feelings of love, anger, and guilt directed toward those upon whom they are dependent, and are particularly sensitive to real or imagined threats of abandonment. Thus, wife's withdrawal may elicit a reactive display of expressive violence. The reinforcer of the violence of the preoccupied batterer may be an emotional release and maintaining, at least in the short term, his wife's proximity. Deactivating and hyperactivating emotion regulation strategies may render salient spe-

cific response classes of wife behaviors, (i.e., those that would be perceived as being threats of authority or abandonment) and influence the husbands' display of negative affect and patterns of aggression in marriage.

Consistent with Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) model are the differences between AAI classification on measures of psychopathology, emotional abuse, and report of childhood abuse. The dismissing husbands, like the detached and hostile generally violent/antisocial batterers they describe, evidenced more antisocial personality patterns but not emotional abuse. The preoccupied husbands, like the dependent dysphoric/borderline batterers, were the most emotionally abusive toward their wives, which may be related to a general inability to regulate anger, a feature consistent with a hyperactivating regulational style. Secure husbands, like the family-only batterers, reported less pathology and relatively non-abusive family histories. Considering our findings in light of the evidence for the relationship between attachment and psychopathology (see special sections on attachment and psychopathology in JCCP, 1996 Volume 64), the AAI appears to be sensitive in assessing emotional regulatory features related generally to psychopathology but does not capture aspects specific to frequency or generality of violence. A typology of batterers based on the AAI may overlap with the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) typology insofar as they both relate to differences in psychopathology and its correlates.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study is limited by its small sample size and its follow-back design. Specifically, we lacked the power test AAI classification by group (violent or distressed/nonviolent) interactions and also collapsed the unresolved and cannot classify husbands into their "next-best fit" category, which may increase the heterogeneity within the three major AAI classifications.

Further, some of the measures (wives' violent incident descriptions, MCMI-II) were collected only at Time 1 and compared to the AAI, which was administered approximately two years later. Although there is no theoretical reason to argue that family of origin attachment or emotional regulation style would have changed over the course of the study, and the AAI has demonstrated test-retest reliability, the stability of AAI category over time within this population of distressed men is unknown. It is possible that earlier marital interactions with their spouses affected men's stylistic report on the AAI rather than specific emotional regulation strategies being the basis of behavioral differences in their marriages.

Future research might elucidate alternative hypotheses that could explain these results. For instance, dismissing individuals tend to marry preoccupied spouses (Kirkpatrick and Davis, 1994) and insecure males paired with dismissing females were most likely to be violent toward their partners (Kesner and McKenry, 1998). It is possible that differences between the wives account for behavioral differences in marital interactions, specifically that preoccupied husbands have wives who are more likely to withdraw during arguments and dismissives have wives who are more likely to argue back. Future researchers interested in emotional regulation patterns of batterers should administer multiple measures of emotional regulation (e.g., the AAI, facial affect display, psychophysiology, etc.) to a larger sample of batterers and their wives.

Because of these study limitations, results from this study must be interpreted with caution and should be replicated with a larger sample. What this study suggests is a profile of at least two types of batterers whose violence may function in different ways. The preoccupied batterers exhibited a pattern of emotional abuse and expressive violence, becoming violent when the wife attempted to withdraw from the argument. Dismissing batterers were more distancing and controlling with their wives and became violent only when she became defiant. Although the "function of violence" can only be speculative, taken as a whole, these results may suggest differences in the function of violence among different types of batterers. The preoccupied husbands' violence and emotional abuse may be an "expressive" response to abandonment fears. The dismissing batterer may react with "instrumental violence," attempting to thwart perceived threats towards his authority. Future research may be able to draw definitive conclusions about the relationship between emotional regulation style of batterers and the apparent function of marital violence.

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