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Perceptions of power and interactional dominance in interpersonal relationships

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ABSTRACT

This investigation uses dyadic power theory (Dunbar, 2000, 2004; Rollins & Bahr, 1976) to examine the relationship between dominance and power and the behavioral manifestations of power in close relationships. Ninety-seven couples (58 married, 39 cohabiting) completed a problem-solving task together while being videotaped. The videotapes were coded for a variety of verbal and nonverbal dominant control attempts including dysfluencies, interruptions, frequency of adaptor and illustrator gestures, vocal characteristics, and general perceptions of dominance. The results revealed that individuals' perceptions of power led to more dominant communication behavior during discussions with their partner. Comparisons between the perceptions of participants and observers and the implications for future research are also discussed.

KEY WORDS: dominance • interpersonal communication • nonverbal communication • power • verbal communication

Dominance–submission and power have been regarded for some time by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and communication scholars as among the fundamental dimensions of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Burgoon & Hale, 1984). A frequently cited quotation by Russell (1938) claims that ‘the fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same way that Energy is the fundamental concept in physics’ (p. 10). Power and dominance are important aspects of all relationships, but

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especially close personal relationships, because people in close relationships depend upon one another to attain their goals. When goals are in conflict, power may be exerted to achieve one's own objectives at the expense of those of the partner. However, power has important implications in marriage and families even when conflicts do not surface (McDonald, 1980).

Despite their prevalence in scholarly literature, power and dominance are elusive concepts that are defined differently by the various disciplines. They are often conflated with one another and with other related concepts such as status. Although power and dominance are clearly connected, we have argued elsewhere (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Burgoon, Johnson, & Koch, 1998; Dunbar, 2004) that power and dominance should be regarded as separate constructs. This article elucidates this connection between power and dominance both conceptually and empirically through an investigation of how power is perceived and dominance is enacted in close interpersonal encounters.

Distinguishing power and dominance

Despite the many definitions of power that exist in the marital conflict and interpersonal communication literatures, scholars from diverse fields are converging on a general definition of power as the capacity to produce intended effects, and in particular, the ability to influence the behavior of another person (Bachrach & Lawler, 1981; Berger, 1994; Burgoon et al., 1998; Foa & Foa, 1974; French & Raven, 1959; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Henley, 1995; Olson & Cromwell, 1975; Rollins & Bahr, 1976). Individuals who fail to achieve their own ends are not necessarily powerless, however. Because power is an ability, like other abilities, it is not always exercised. When exercised, it is not always successful and even when successful, its magnitude may not be fully evident unless it is pitted against a counterforce of appropriate strength (Huston, 1983). Also, powerful people may not necessarily be aware of their power, inasmuch as power is not only based in the relationship between two people but also influenced by cultural norms in the society at large (Komter, 1989).

In contrast to power, which may be latent (Komter, 1989), dominance is necessarily manifest. It refers to context- and relationship-dependent interactional patterns in which one actor's assertion of control is met by acquiescence from another (Rogers-Millar & Millar, 1979). Although dominance elsewhere may be viewed as a personality trait, in the context of communication, it is a dynamic state that reflects a combination of individual temperament and situational features that demand, release, or encourage dominant behavior (Aries, Gold, & Weigel, 1983; Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000). Unlike domineeringness, which is a monadic variable that refers to one individual's attempts to control another, dominance is a dyadic variable in which control attempts by one individual are accepted by the interactional partner, i.e., it is defined by a paired sequence of 'one-up' and 'one-down' acts between two parties (Rogers-Millar & Millar, 1979). Burgoon et al. (1998) further defined interpersonal dominance as

expressive, relationally based communicative acts by which power is exerted and influence achieved.

Although dominance is typically thought of as a purposive act in which one utilizes resources for the exertion of power, Huston (1983) argues that individuals with greater power may also express that power unintentionally. Through a chain of causal events, the person with more power relative to the partner may influence the partner without necessarily intending to. For example, an asymmetry of power may provide one partner with more freedom of movement and may require the subordinate person to anticipate the desires of the more powerful one (Huston, 1983). This may be manifested nonverbally, such as through greater visual vigilance on the part of the subordinate partner, but it is not likely to be intended by the less powerful, or noticed by the more powerful, partner.

A theoretical approach to the relationship between power and dominance

Although power and dominance are distinct, they are clearly related inasmuch as dominance is one behavioral manifestation of the relational construct of power. One theory that illustrates this connection between dominance and power is dyadic power theory (DPT). First proposed by Rollins and Bahr (1976), and later revised by Dunbar (2000, 2004), the theory emphasizes the dyadic nature of power. It asserts that power is an integral part of any relationship, especially close romantic relationships, because it determines how the partners relate to each other and how decisions are made. It assumes that perceptions of legitimate authority to make decisions and access to a variety of resources increase individuals' perceptions of their own power compared to their partner. Perceptions of power, in turn, increase the likelihood of using *control attempts* to exert dominance in the interaction. When those control attempts are successful, the individual is more dominant and thus has greater influence over decisions.

Although Rollins and Bahr (1976) originally argued for a linear relationship between dominance and power, such that more powerful people exert more dominance, it is more likely that the relationship between perceived relative power and manifest dominance is curvilinear such that partners who perceive their relative power as extremely high or low will use fewer control attempts than partners who perceive their relative power differences as small or moderate. This is because extremely powerful individuals do not need to make a large number of control attempts. By virtue of their latent power, they can maintain control without even appearing dominant. A prime example of this is the demand-withdraw interaction pattern. Christensen and Heavey (1990, 1993) found that the common wife-demand/husband-withdraw interaction pattern was more pronounced when the topic was of greater importance to the wife than the husband. Women typically want more changes in the areas of closeness, housework, and childcare. Husbands, who are typically presumed to be the overbenefitted and more powerful partners in a marriage, may resist cooperating in

those areas through withdrawal from communication. Because they have nothing to gain from discussing problems with their partner, they can preserve the status quo and their position of power by avoiding conflict rather than making their power manifest through confrontation (Christensen & Heavey, 1990).

By the same token, powerless individuals are unlikely to express their grievances if they fear that retaliation, violence, or termination of the relationship will result from their control attempt. This is the logic behind the chilling effect, which has been demonstrated in numerous studies (e.g., Cloven & Roloff, 1993; Roloff & Cloven, 1990). Powerless individuals weigh the potential gain or loss of engaging in conflict and find that tolerating or accommodating a conflict at a minor cost is more beneficial than running the risk of pursuing the conflict and disrupting the relationship (Leung, 1988). Only if they expect that the possible gains (regaining equality) outweigh the possible losses or are more likely than possible losses (retaliation or termination of the relationship) should they be willing to risk expressing their grievance. Thus, extremely powerful or powerless individuals (compared to their partner) should be disinclined to use control attempts and more likely to exhibit control avoidance.

McDonald (1980) noted that finding partners who are exactly equal in their power is unlikely because people have different realms of expertise and different resources at their disposal that may or may not be valued equally. However, previous research has demonstrated that some couples are relatively equal at a more global level, especially when gender roles are flexible and relaxed (Dunbar, 2000; Scanzoni, 1980). Relative to partners with large power discrepancies, these couples are more likely to use control attempts when they are negotiating their outcomes with their partner or when they perceive their partner is questioning their decisions. In other words, nearly egalitarian relationships will result in more control attempts than extremely power-imbalanced relationships, a finding supported by some marital research (Felmlee, 1994; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983).

In sum, the predominance of empirical evidence and previous theorizing is consistent with our contention that the relationship between power and dominant behavior is a nonlinear one, such that people with power equal to their partner exert more control attempts than do those with lesser or greater power. We tested this relationship as our sole hypothesis:

H1: Individuals display more dominance when they perceive they are relatively equal in power to their partners than when they perceive they have more or less power than their partner.

Verbal and nonverbal indicators of dominance

For quite some time, communication scholars have argued the necessity of studying both verbal and nonverbal signals of relational states in order to gain an accurate and complete understanding of relational definitions (e.g., Higginbotham & Yoder, 1982; Jones & LeBaron, 2002). Although we advocate that all communication studies should include elements of both

verbal and nonverbal cues, dominance in particular warrants such treatment.

At the nonverbal level, widely ranging cues have been associated with expressions of dominance and power (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990; Schwartz, Tesser, & Powell, 1982; Sillars, Coletti, Parry, & Rogers, 1982), and several studies have identified individual behaviors that are potential control or dominance attempts. One way to divide nonverbal cues is by the general code used to classify them (such as kinesic, vocalic, proxemic, haptic, etc.). Kinesics is the richest of all the codes and includes facial expression, eye gaze, posture, body movements and gestures, among other facets. Individual kinesic behaviors that have been demonstrated to be associated with dominance include posture, elevation, relaxation (Burgoon & Hoobler, 2002; Cashdan, 1998; Schwartz et al., 1982), body lean, gesturing, smiling, eye gaze (Burgoon, Buller, Hale, & deTurck, 1984; Kimble & Musgrove, 1988; Lamb, 1981), and a higher visual dominance ratio (a higher looking-while-speaking to looking-while-listening ratio (Dovidio & Ellyson, 1982, 1985; Ellyson, Dovidio, Corson, & Vinicur, 1980; Exline, Ellyson, & Long, 1975)). A unique study in which nonverbal behavior was manipulated as an independent variable also confirmed that relaxation and eye gaze are dominant behaviors in that relaxed facial expressions increased ratings on all of French and Raven's (1959) power bases – reward, legitimate, expert, referent, and credibility – and more direct eye contact increased ratings of credibility (Aguinis, Simonsen, & Pierce, 1998).

Cues associated with the voice have also been found to have a connection to dominance. Lamb (1981) concluded that individuals high in vocal control actually exert more control over resources and outcomes. Other research has found that vocal features such as the amount of talking time, speech loudness, speech tempo, and pitch play a role in perceptions of dominance, credibility, and leadership ability (Burgoon & Hoobler, 2002; Cashdan, 1998; Gregory & Webster, 1996; Kimble & Musgrove, 1988; Lamb, 1981). Those who initiate and succeed with control attempts will be perceived as dominant by their partners and by third-party observers. To the extent that control attempts rely upon or incorporate noticeable nonverbal behavior, dominant individuals should be perceived as using a dominant style of nonverbal communication. Thus, the prototypical nonverbally dominant communicator would be kinesically and vocally dynamic (using more gestures, greater eye gaze, more vocal animation and greater amounts of talk) while giving the impression of relaxation and confidence.

At the verbal level, there are a variety of influence strategies individuals can use to try to alter the behavior of their partner in relationships, ranging from problem-solving and compromise to unilateral accommodation and the use of insults, threats, and physical force (Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Klein & Johnson, 1997). Canary and Spitzberg (1987) distinguished among three types of strategies: integrative strategies that are cooperative in nature, distributive tactics that are competitive and antagonistic, and avoidance strategies that seek to diffuse discussion of the conflict. Sillars et al.

(1982) identified nonverbal behaviors that are perceptual correlates of the verbal tactics in the integrative–distributive–avoidance distinction. Specifically, increased speech productivity and eye gaze were associated with integrative verbal tactics, frequent use of adaptors was associated with avoidance verbal tactics, and eye glances toward the partner were associated with distributive and avoidance verbal tactics.

The use of verbal influence strategies could be viewed as a type of control attempt. Frieze and McHugh (1992) include six types of verbal strategies: positive–direct (talking about the issue), other–direct (referring to past experience or what others do in the same situation), coercive–direct (verbal and physical coercion), positive–indirect (being affectionate and nice), ignore–indirect (ignoring the issue or pretending there is no disagreement), and withdraw–indirect (emotional withdrawal, refusal of sex, and threatening to leave). Their research showed that the most common strategies used by both husbands and wives were indirect–positive strategies, followed by direct strategies. Similarly, Falbo and Peplau (1980) proposed a two-dimensional model of power strategies in intimate relationships. According to this model, the two dimensions along which the power strategies vary are labeled ‘directness’ and ‘bilaterality.’ The directness dimension ranges from direct strategies such as asking the target and talking to the target about the desired goal on one end, to indirect strategies such as hinting and putting the target in a good mood on the other end. The bilaterality dimension has to do with the interactivity of the approach and ranges from bargaining and persuasion on one end to withdrawal on the other. Typically, direct strategies are considered to be more dominant than indirect strategies (e.g. Rogers & Farace, 1975). Individuals who have greater personal influence (i.e. are more dominant and less egalitarian) are more likely to use bilateral strategies (Falbo & Peplau, 1980).

Dominant behavior has also been examined using coding schemes that have been created for the operationalization of relational control, most notably those created by Rogers and Farace (1975) and Friedlander and Heatherington (1989). These schemes usually assume that individual messages should be treated as a ‘one-up’ (exerting control) or a ‘one-down’ (relinquishing control) but that controlling maneuvers should be examined dyadically (Mark, 1971). That is, a person who displays the most one-up moves that are met by one-down moves from the other person is obviously more dominant than a person who makes more one-down moves that are followed by one-up moves by their partner. The Relational Communication Control Coding Scheme (RCCCS) added the neutral one-across maneuver and spawned a program of research by Rogers and her colleagues (e.g., Escudero, Rogers, & Gutierrez, 1997; Rogers, Castleton, & Lloyd, 1996; Rogers-Millar & Millar, 1979) in which the interactional nature of dominance is emphasized. Examining pairs of messages in a dyad’s conversation, they have found that interactants continually define the degree of dominance or submissiveness in their relationship based on who has the right to direct, delimit, and define the action of the interpersonal system (Millar & Rogers, 1987).

Friedlander and Heatherington (1989) continued this line of research by expanding the RCCCS to group communication. They called their expanded model the Family Relational Communication Control Coding Scheme (FRCCCS). They asserted that ABAB sequences are not inevitable in groups as they are in dyads because A and B do not always take turns reciprocally. One person may intrude on a two-party exchange or a person may deflect a question to a third party (Friedlander & Heatherington, 1989). Siegel, Friedlander, and Heatherington (1992) also expanded the FRCCCS to include nonverbal cues, which were sorely lacking in other relational control models. They found that certain nonverbal behaviors, such as a head nod or a raised eyebrow, are commonly understood and discrete ways of either gaining or relinquishing control of a social relationship.

In light of the panoply of potential verbal and nonverbal indices of dominance, one of the purposes of the current investigation was to validate the many different measures of verbal and nonverbal dominance cited in the extant literature on dominance. Because much of this research has been conducted within the context of close relationships, such as differential expressions of dominance between husbands and wives (e.g. Escudero et al., 1997) or conflict strategies employed in conflicts or problem-solving discussions with friends or roommates (e.g. Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Sillars, 1980), we, too, chose close relationships as the context for study. We explored whether specific verbal and nonverbal indicators of dominance used by previous researchers and assessed by coders are related to general perceptions of dominance, overall. Thus, we asked the following research question:

RQ1: What is the relationship between an individual's verbal and non-verbal control attempts and others' perceptions of dominance during an interaction?

Differing perspectives

A persistent issue in the relational communication literature has been, who is best qualified to report on dominance – the participants themselves or 'objective' observers? Whereas in the animal kingdom, dominance is often obvious based on which animal acquires the most food, the best territory, or access to fertile females, among humans and especially during conversation, objective markers of dominance are typically lacking. Thus, dominance is partly in the eye of the beholder. But which beholder(s) – 'insiders' (i.e., members of the relationship) or 'outsiders'? In our previous studies (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Dunbar, Ramirez, & Burgoon, 2003), participants and observers have not always seen the same behavior in exactly the same way, especially dominance behavior, due to their differing perspectives. Burgoon and Dunbar (2000) found differences according to perspective in the extent to which perceptions of dominance varied with the truthfulness of the encounter and the relationship between participants. Also, Dunbar et al. (2003) found that participants rated their fellow

interaction partners more favorably on a number of dimensions, including credibility, involvement, and pleasantness, than did observers. Other research has found low levels of agreement between self-report and objective measures of the same construct (Sypher & Sypher, 1984). Attribution theory provides some explanation for this difference in perspective. Based on Heider's (1958) assumption that human beings seek to make sense of their social environment by attributing causes for events they experience, participants observe one another's communication behavior, interpret it by assigning a causal attribution to the behavior, and then use the attribution to guide their own response (Stamp, Vangelisti, & Knapp, 1994). However, these attributions are often biased by self-serving interests – what is known as the fundamental attribution error. Individuals tend to make more attributions about negative behaviors than positive behaviors, and tend to make mostly positive attributions for self-behaviors. A related phenomenon, called the actor–observer effect, assumes that participants are unable to see their own behavior and so situational variables attain more salience than dispositional variables. In addition, actors know their own feelings about, and reasons for, their behavior. They understand the history behind their actions and what their behavior has been in other, similar, situations. Thus, participants are more likely to make situational attributions and observers are more likely to make dispositional attributions for the same behavior (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Sypher & Sypher, 1984). This has been demonstrated specifically regarding nonverbal behaviors (Sillars, 1980; Woodall, Burgoon, & Markel, 1980).

Also, participants and observers differ in the sensory immersion and degree of 'presence' they experience during the interaction. Participants, by virtue of their physical proximity, have access to subtle nonverbal and verbal cues that observers may not be able to witness or experience. Burgoon and Newton (1991) put it this way: 'Participants, due to their proximity to one another, are awash in a stream of subtle and visceral nonverbal cues that the observer, standing on the banks, as it were, cannot detect' (p. 109). Observers are unlikely to feel as though they are sharing a personal or intimate moment with the participants, to feel transported to the interaction, or to feel immersed in the experience. In short, participants are more 'there' than observers.

Finally, participants who are part of the on-going relationship being studied may be unable to separate their perceptions of the encounter at hand from their perceptions of their partner more generally. Asking a wife to evaluate her husband's dominance during a particular discussion means she must be able to isolate that encounter and separate it from other discussions in which she has seen him act more or less dominant. She may be comparing his behavior to his 'usual' behavior or to her general impression of his dominance overall. Observers, by contrast, do not know the husband's norm and so may be able to be more objective about a particular encounter without biasing it based on other knowledge and experience with his behavior.

Despite these differences in perspective, past research has found at least

some level of concordance between the ratings of participants and observers. Burgoon and Newton (1991), like many before them, found a positivity bias among participants, relative to observers, in their judgments of relational messages. They assigned more socially desirable meanings to nonverbal behaviors than did observers. Yet observers' and participants' ratings were highly correlated, supporting a general social consensus in the relational interpretations assigned to many nonverbal behaviors. Burgoon and Dunbar (2000) similarly found a fair degree of consensus among senders, receivers, and trained coders in that they all viewed socially skilled individuals as more adept at controlling their social behavior and emotional expressions, and [Dunbar et al. \(2003\)](#) found that actors and observers did not differ significantly in their perceptions of dominance or rapport. It remains unclear, then, whether participants are able to see the subtle differences that occur in interactions. This could be especially difficult in interactions with friends or relational partners where people have relatively equal status.

Third-party observers, especially trained ones, bring a level of detachment to their observations that participants are not capable of, as participants are more involved in the interaction and are therefore more cognitively busy (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; [Burgoon & Newton, 1991](#)). By contrast, participants are more attuned to their partners' communication style, especially if the encounter being observed is part of an ongoing relationship and not simply an encounter between strangers staged for the laboratory. They may be unable to distinguish their partners' current behavior from their normal behavior and therefore are not necessarily reporting on the same behaviors that the trained observers have seen. Given the mixed findings in past research, we asked the following research question about the concordance of participants and observer ratings:

RQ2: To what extent do participants and observers share the same perceptions of dominance?

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 194$) were 58 heterosexual married and 39 heterosexual cohabiting couples recruited from campus advertisements, flyers in the local community, newspaper advertisements, communication classes, local churches and synagogues, personal contacts with the researcher, and through references from other participants. The couples were each paid \$15 for their time. The sessions took between 20 and 50 minutes to complete. Couples recruited from churches and synagogues were given the option to have a donation made in their name. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 79 years ($M = 34.75$, $SD = 13.89$). Of those who were married, 49% of individuals said it was their first marriage. The mean length of relationship was 7.65 years ($SD = 11.19$), and cohabiting couples had been living together for an average of 2.06 years ($SD = 3.27$). The majority of individuals reported that they did not have children

(62%), but 16.5% reported they had one child, 10.3% had two children, 7.2% had three children, and 8.5% reported having four or more children. The ages of the children ranged from 2 months to 50 years. The sample was largely White (81.4%) with 8.8% Hispanic, 4.1% Asian, 2.6% Black and 3% other ethnicities. The majority of individuals reported that they were middle class (46%) with 38.7% claiming they are middle-upper class, 12% middle-lower class, 3% upper class, and 0.5% lower class. A *t*-test revealed that married and cohabiting couples differed significantly on only three variables. Married couples ($M = 10.75$ years), $t(192) = 3.95$, $p < .01$; married couples ($M = 1.32$) had more children than cohabiting couples ($M = .13$), $t(192) = 6.05$, $p < .01$; and married couples ($M = 6.90$) reported that they were slightly more satisfied than cohabiting couples ($M = 6.25$), $t(192) = 3.50$, $p < .01$. These minor and expected differences warranted combining married and cohabiting couples for subsequent analyses.

Procedure

When couples arrived at the research site, they each signed a consent form and then were separated while they completed pre-interaction questionnaires on relative power. The couple then engaged in an exercise, developed by Kenkel (1957) and modified by Cromwell, Klein, and Wieting (1975), that asked the couple to decide how to spend a hypothetical gift of \$1000. First, they individually ranked five things on which they would like to spend the money. The couple was then brought together in a room with two living-room style chairs and a coffee table that was equipped with microphones and video cameras. The cameras were unobtrusively hung on the wall but were not hidden from view. The microphones were placed in stands next to the couple and were positioned so that they were not in their line of sight. The couple was told to discuss the items on their individual lists and arrive at a joint list of how to spend the \$1000. They were told to jointly rank the items from one to five, with one being the most important. The sessions were videotaped with two cameras, one focused directly on each participant so that each person could be viewed head-on from the waist up, and mixed with an audiovisual mixer to produce a split-screen image (both people viewed on the same screen) for subsequent coding of control attempts and dominance indicators. This is similar to the method used by Gottman and his associates in SPAFF coding (e.g., [Gottman & Levenson, 1999](#); [Krokoff, Gottman, & Hass, 1989](#)). The discussions lasted between 2 and 19 minutes ($M = 324.94$ sec, $SD = 185.94$ sec).

When the couple had finished their discussion and had completed their joint list, they were once again separated and given post-interaction questionnaires in which they rated each other's dominance during the interaction. After completing the post-questionnaire, the couples were asked to give their name and address to the researcher for a follow-up survey and were paid \$15. The subjects were debriefed and then dismissed. During the debriefing, they were told the purpose of the study and were reminded that their questionnaires and videotapes would remain confidential.

Measurement

Because we defined power or potential influence as a perceptual variable, it was necessary to use a self-report measure to capture the individuals' perceptions of relative power (but see Olson & Cromwell, 1975, and Safilios-Rothschild, 1970, who demur on this approach). Both Glidden (1986) and

Felmlee (1994) used single items to measure the balance of power in relationships. These were 'indicate your judgment of the overall balance of influence in your marriage' and 'in your relationship, who has more power?' respectively. In the present study, these items were combined, and the items 'on balance, how much influence do you have over your partner's actions?' and 'how often do you give in to your partner's demands?' were added to increase the length of the scale and improve the reliability. All items were rated on a 9-point Likert scale with separate anchors appropriate for each item. Owing to low reliability item four was dropped. Cronbach's alpha for the resulting 3-item scale was .62.

Verbal and nonverbal coding

Three sets of trained coders completed ratings on the videotapes of the couples' sessions; two coders examined body and vocalic behavior, two coders examined eye gaze, and two coders examined verbal behavior. In all analyses, the dominance measures were standardized to control for the length of the discussion. For all verbal and nonverbal codes used in subsequent analyses, the average of the two coders was used to create the best estimate of the control attempt. Coder training lasted between 1 and 5 hours, depending on the level of difficulty. The exact behaviors examined in the coding process were culled from the literature described earlier. Verbal and nonverbal behavior was coded at both the macroscopic level and the microscopic level. Macroscopic measures identify large-scale, molar phenomena, whereas microscopic measures identify precise, fine-grained behavior (Baesler & Burgoon, 1987). For example, asking participants or observers to make a holistic, gestalt judgment about an individual's dominance during an entire interaction is asking for a more general, macro-level assessment than looking at particular verbal and nonverbal indicators of dominance such as particular utterances or gestures.

Burgoon et al. (1998) argue that micro-level analyses like Rogers' relational control coding scheme, which focuses on contiguous pairs of messages, may miss the broader context as well as longer or noncontiguous behavioral patterns. By contrast, Gottman's research (e.g., Gottman & Krokoff, 1989) has demonstrated that the micro-level coding can be valuable for pinpointing certain behaviors that emphasize control. Microscopic behaviors are influential but are often barely noticeable to the untrained eye. Moscovitz (1988, 1990) used both macroscopic and microscopic methods conjunctively in his research. At the macro-level, he asks raters to judge 'how much the person tried to dominate the partner' (Moscovitz, 1988, p. 833) as an overall, aggregated measure. At the micro-level, he also uses trained coders to count certain behaviors. Like Moscovitz, we believe it is best to use a combination of both micro- and macro-level indicators in order to get both a broad perspective of the encounter as well as the small behavioral moves that may be operating outside of conscious awareness.

Microscopic measures. Nonverbal control attempts were assessed by two coders who counted the number of *adaptor* and *illustrator* gestures for each person. Inter-rater reliabilities based on Ebel's intraclass correlation for average scores across raters were .73 for illustrators and .89 for adaptors. Two more nonverbal coders examined the gaze patterns of looking while speaking and looking while listening to establish a *visual dominance ratio* of looking while speaking to looking while listening (Ellyson et al., 1980; Exline et al., 1975). Using a stopwatch computer program, coders counted the frequency and

duration of gaze for both male and female partners while speaking and listening during their interaction. Coders trained for this portion took between 2 and 3 hours. Effective intercoder reliabilities based on the intraclass correlation for average scores across raters were .97 for frequency of gaze while speaking, .94 for frequency of gaze while listening, .92 for duration of gaze while speaking, and .91 for duration of gaze while listening.

Verbal control attempts were also measured by two additional coders. After the couples' conversations had been transcribed, coders unitized the transcripts and coded verbal units in the transcripts to avoid bias from the nonverbal cues. In a previous study on relational control, Dunbar (1996) found the RCCCS to be cumbersome because coders are required to remember and identify 17 codes, which makes for long training sessions and, often, unreliable findings. Thus, a truncated version with the most common 'one-up' moves, including suggestions, demands, reasoning, ignoring, and nonsupportive moves, was created. Suggestions are messages that involve making suggestions, asking questions, or offering ideas. Demands are unqualified commands with little or no explanation. Reasoning is stating reasons or giving opinions. Ignoring involves any message that ignores or bypasses the request of the previous message or offers silence in response to the partner's statement. Nonsupportive moves are any messages that are a disagreement, rejection, criticism, or challenge. Effective intercoder reliabilities based on the intraclass correlation for average scores across raters were .86 for nonsupport, .80 for demands, .96 for suggestions, .61 for ignoring, and .91 for reasoning. For simplicity, the five codes were combined to form one composite measure of *coded verbal dominance* to be used in all analyses. The interitem alpha reliability was .94 for the coded verbal dominance composite measure overall.

The coders also used the videotapes and transcripts of the interactions to identify *interruptions* made by the participants as a controlling move and *dysfluencies* as a sign of a lack of control. Interruptions were defined as instances in which one of the two interactants stopped the other to interject his or her own comment, not including back-channeling. Interruptions can be successful or unsuccessful (called *attempted* or *completed interruptions* here). Both completed and attempted interruptions were also combined to examine the impact of all types of interruptions together in a variable called *total interruptions*. Dysfluencies were defined as disturbances in the speech pattern other than interruptions. The coders marked on the transcripts the attempted and completed interruptions and dysfluencies and then recorded on a coding sheet the number of dysfluencies and interruptions. Effective intercoder reliabilities based on the intraclass correlation for average scores across raters were .86 for dysfluencies, .77 for attempted interruptions, and .67 for completed interruptions. The *verbosity* of the individual participants was also measured by counting the number of words each participant said during the entire encounter, controlling for the length of the encounter. Intercoder reliability for verbosity based on the intraclass correlation for average scores across raters was .98.

Macroscopic measures. Coders also rated, on 7-point scales, four aspects of the individuals' voice (pitch, loudness, tempo, and variety), three aspects of their face (expressiveness, pleasantness, and smiling frequency), and three aspects of their body (intensity/relaxation, shifting posture, and lean). Inter-rater reliabilities based on Ebel's intraclass correlation for average scores across raters

were .63 for vocal pitch, .65 for loudness, .61 for tempo, .59 for vocal variety, .64 for facial pleasantness, .72 for smiling frequency, .57 for body intensity/relaxation, .61 for shifting posture, and .61 for body composure. To improve reliability and parsimony, the items were combined into three composite measures representing *vocal control*, *facial expressiveness* and *body control* as indicators of nonverbal dominance. The interitem alpha reliabilities were .82, .85 and .69 for vocal, facial and body composite measures, respectively, and the inter-rater reliabilities were .72, .75 and .52 for the vocal, facial and body composite measures, respectively.

Perceptions of interactional dominance were measured by both the participants themselves and by two third-party observers (to obtain an outside perspective) using 7-point semantic differential scale items taken from previous studies of dominance (Burgoon et al., 1998; Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000). These scale items, which included 'dominant/submissive,' 'confident/unconfident,' 'sluggish/energetic,' and 'outgoing/withdrawn' (with the first two items reverse-scored), were intended to capture more general impressions of an individual's dominance over the course of an entire encounter. Participants completed their ratings after their interaction; observers completed their ratings while observing the videotaped interaction. Neither participants nor observers were trained in the coding of dominance so as to insure that their perceptions would reflect their own subjective interpretations of the individual's overall dominance. The means for the dominance scale were 4.87 ($SD = .78$) for participant raters and 3.99 ($SD = .75$) for observers. The interitem reliabilities of the dominance measure was .84 for the participants and .92 for the coders. Inter-rater reliability was .60 for the two coders. For simplicity, this variable will be referred to as *perceived dominance*.

Results

Overview

As the data used in this study were gathered from couples in dyadic relationships, there is interdependence between the individuals. This violates the independence-of-observations assumption required by many statistical tests. One common way to deal with nonindependence is to conduct separate analyses of men and women, but this does not allow examination of the dyadic effects contained in the theory. We used the statistical method of dealing with dyadic data proposed by the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Campbell & Kashy, 2002; Kashy & Kenny, 2000). Gonzalez and Griffin (1997) argue that the treatment of data in this manner allows researchers to 'ask questions at both the dyad-level and the individual-level simultaneously' (p. 273). Thus, analyses were completed by, first, using the APIM to test the hypothesis and research questions at the dyadic level and, second, conducting additional analyses as warranted by the results. In cases where the dyadic analysis was not appropriate and the independence assumption was not violated (such as comparing individuals to observers), individual-level analyses were conducted.

The relationship between power and dominance

The hypothesis predicted a curvilinear relationship between power and dominance. This was first tested using the dyadic method explained by Campbell and Kashy (2002). A separate multiple regression analysis was conducted for

each of the verbal dominance behaviors (coded verbal dominance, interruptions, dysfluencies, and verbosity) with the individual's own power, their partner's power, the individual's power squared, the partner's power squared, and sex as the predictor variables. The polynomials were included to test for the curvilinear effect. For coded verbal dominance, the analysis revealed a significant curvilinear effect for partner's power on the number of completed interruptions, $B = .41$, $t(151) = 2.70$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .05$. The resultant regression equation was Completed Interruptions = 1.80 (intercept) +.21 (own power) +.13 (partner's power) +.06 (own power squared) +.41 (partner's power squared) +.30 (sex). The number of interruptions overall also had a significant curvilinear effect for partner's power, $B = .46$, $t(122) = 1.95$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .03$. The resultant regression equation was Interruptions = 3.06 (intercept) +.30 (own power) +.24 (partner's power) +.14 (own power squared) +.46 (partner's power squared) +.39 (sex). These relationships are depicted graphically in Figures 1 and 2. Although the curvilinear effect is significant, the figures show that the relationships appear largely linear and are not in the expected direction.

For nonverbal dominance, the same analysis was conducted for each of the dominance behaviors (adaptors, illustrators, visual dominance ratio, vocal control, facial expressiveness, and body control) with the individual's own power, their partner's power, the individual's own power squared, the partner's power squared, and sex as the predictor variables. The analysis revealed a significant curvilinear effect for partner's power on the number of illustrator gestures, $B = 1.02$, $t(163) = 1.85$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .02$. The resultant regression equation was Illustrators = 7.82 (intercept) +.56 (own power) +.50 (partner's power) +.08 (own power squared) + 1.02 (partner's power squared) -.55 (sex). Both facial expressiveness, $B = .14$, $t(148) = 1.95$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .03$, and body

FIGURE 1
Relationship between completed interruptions and partner's perceptions of relative power.

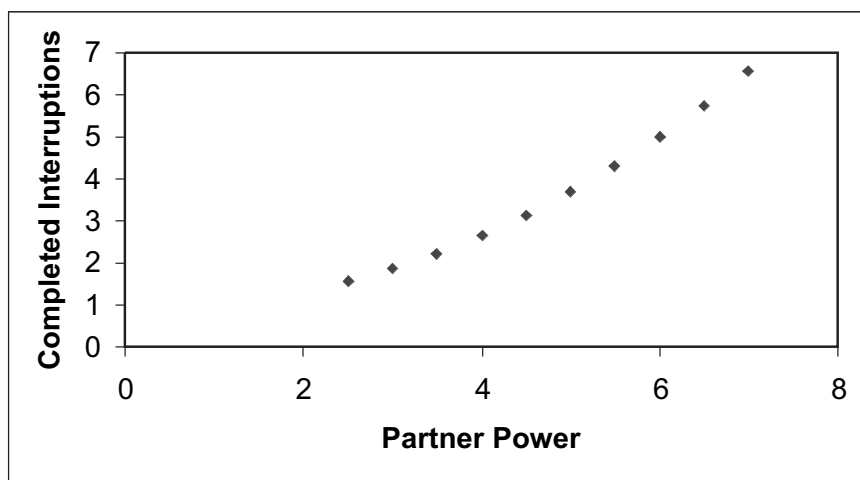
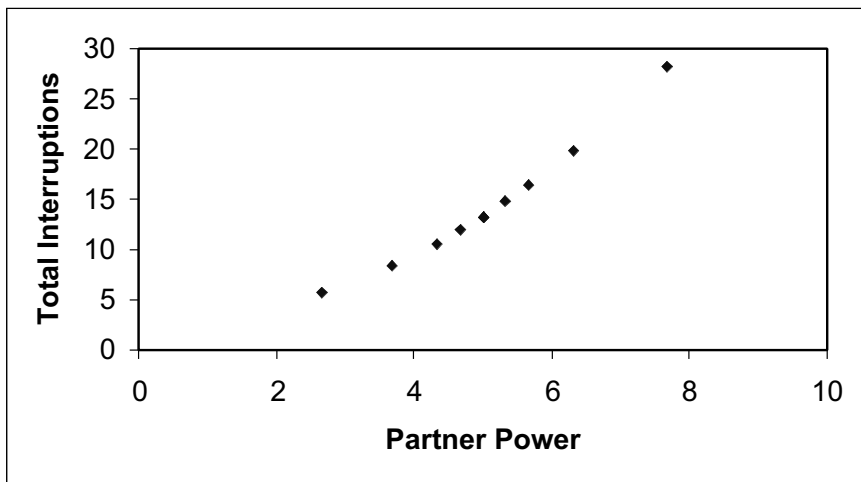


FIGURE 2
Relationship between total interruptions and partner's perceptions of relative power.



control, $B = -.10$, $t(180) = -2.02$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .02$, also had a significant curvilinear effect for the individual's own power. The resultant regression equations were Facial Expressiveness = 4.58 (intercept) +.02 (own power) +.02 (partner's power) +.14 (own power squared) +.07 (partner's power squared) -.53 (sex) and Body Control = 5.14 (intercept) +.03 (own power) +.002 (partner's power) -.10 (own power squared) -.02 (partner's power squared) -.23 (sex). These curvilinear relationships are depicted graphically in Figures 3 through 5. Once again, although the curvilinear effect is significant, the figures show that the relationships appear largely linear and are not in the expected direction.

Also, the same analysis was conducted for each of the perceived dominance ratings (made by partners and observers) with the individual's own power, their partner's power, the individual's own power squared, the partner's power squared, and sex as the predictor variables. The analysis revealed a significant effect for the individuals' ratings of their own power relative to their partners on their partners' rating of the individual's dominance, $B = .18$, $t(158) = 2.72$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .04$. This suggests that there is a linear relationship between how powerful people feel and how dominantly their partners report they behave. The resultant regression equation was Partner Dominance Rating = 4.78 (intercept) +.19 (own power) +.07 (partner's power) -.09 (own power squared) -.04 (partner's power squared) +.13 (sex). This relationship is depicted graphically in Figure 6. These results suggest that the hypothesized relationship between power and dominance was not supported.

These analyses also revealed some significant findings for sex on verbal dominance, vocal control, body control, and facial expressiveness. For verbal dominance, $B = 1.87$, $t(94) = 2.14$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .05$, men were rated as less verbally dominant ($M = 21.39$, $SD = 13.64$) than women ($M = 23.04$, $SD =$

FIGURE 3
Relationship between illustrator gestures and partner's perceptions of relative power.

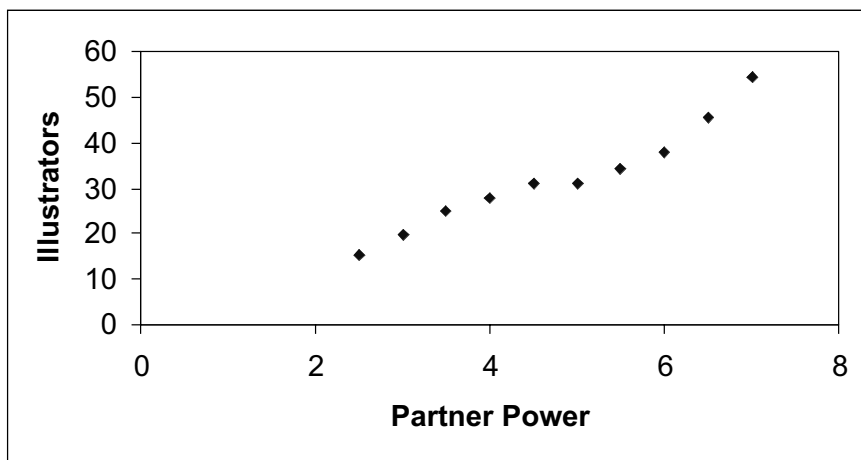
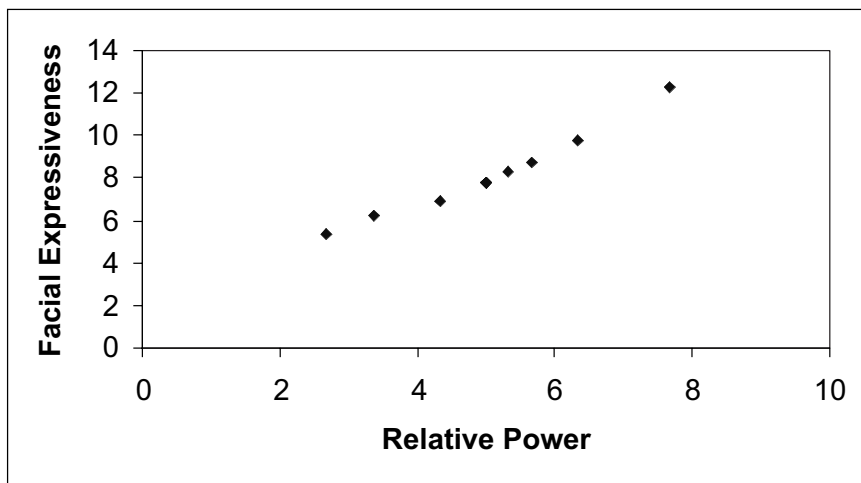


FIGURE 4
Relationship between facial expressiveness and individuals' own perceptions of relative power.



13.05). On vocal control, $B = .88$, $t(94) = 8.78$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .45$, men were rated as less controlled ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .79$) than women ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .71$), whereas on body control, a negative relationship, $B = -.23$, $t(94) = -2.53$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .06$, was due to men being rated as more controlled ($M = 4.83$, $SD = .68$)

FIGURE 5
Relationship between body control and individuals' own perceptions of relative power.

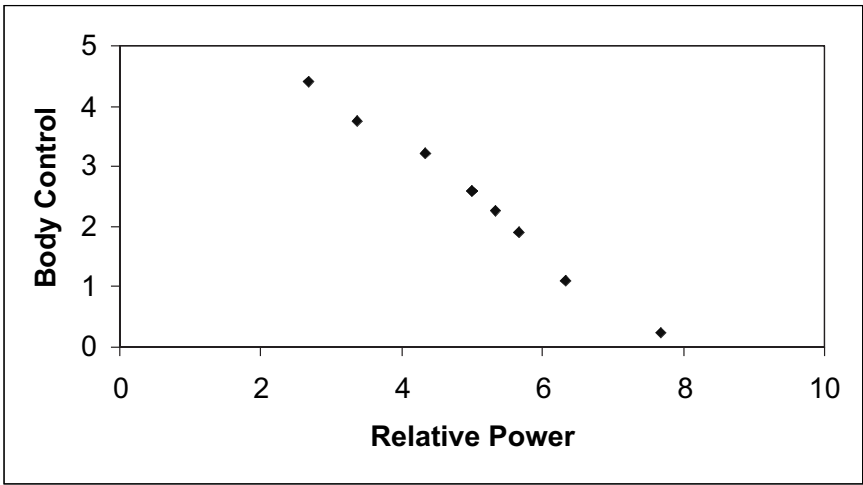
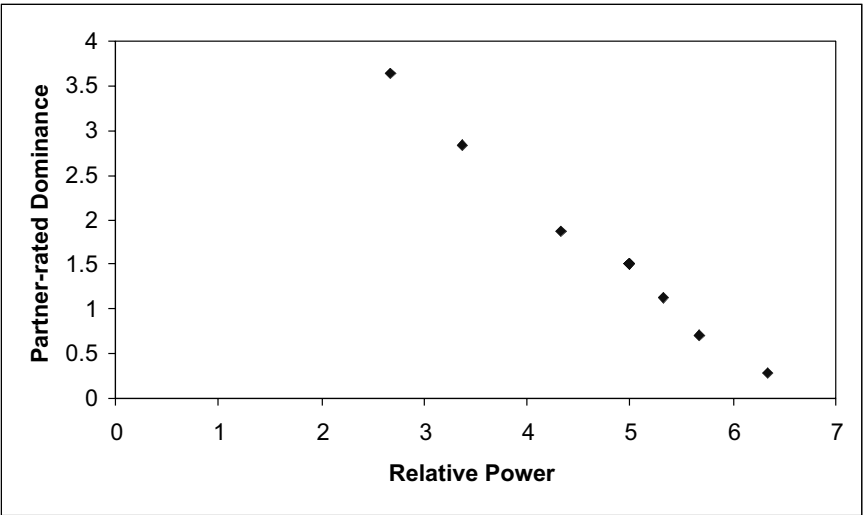


FIGURE 6
Relationship between partner-rated perceived dominance and individuals' own perceptions of relative power.



than women ($M = 4.58$, $SD = .74$). Finally, a negative relationship between sex and facial expressiveness, $B = -.053$, $t(94) = -5.10$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .22$, was due to men being rated as more facially expressive ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.04$) than women ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.02$).

These sex differences warrant further exploration. The original theory proposed by Rollins and Bahr (1976) suggests that men and women will have different views of their power and thus may behave differently. This was tested first with separate bivariate correlations between the participants' perceptions of their own power and their dominance as recorded by both their partners and the trained coders (Tables 1 and 2). Perceived power was not significantly correlated with either the coders' or partners' perceptions of perceived dominance. For the individual dominance indicators, only one relationship was significant: power was negatively correlated with the amount of body control for males.

Comparing actors and observers

RQ1 was concerned with the relationship between an individual's verbal and nonverbal control attempts and others' perceptions of dominance during an interaction. The bivariate correlations found in Tables 1 and 2 indicate positive correlations between the partners' perceptions of interactional dominance with verbosity for males and vocal control for females. Males who were more verbose, and women who exercised greater vocal control, were perceived as more dominant. A negative correlation was found between the use of adaptor gestures and partners' perceptions of interactional dominance for females. Women who used fewer adaptor gestures were perceived as more dominant. In addition, there were several correlations between the perceptions of interactional dominance made by third-party observers and the coded control attempts. This included more illustrator gestures, greater vocal control, more facial expressiveness, a greater visual dominance ratio, fewer dysfluencies, more interruptions, greater verbal dominance, and verbosity for males as well

TABLE 1
Intercorrelations between power and control attempts for males

	PD	OD	IL	AD	VC	FE	BC	DR	DY	IN	VD	VB	RP
PD	–	.36*	.01	.04	.16	–.04	.11	.08	–.05	–.04	.05	.21*	–.02
OD		–	.39*	.18	.76*	.26*	.09	.37*	–.28*	.27*	.38*	.53*	.04
IL			–	.33*	.34*	–.11	–.01	.32*	.46*	.45*	.57*	.34*	.17
AD				–	.00	.03	.07	.02	.30*	.38*	.50*	.12	.11
VC					–	–.32*	.06	.31*	.25*	.19	.23*	.39*	–.01
FE						–	–.38*	–.18*	–.05	–.06	–.16	.01*	–.09
BC							–	.02	.16	–.04	.12	.11	–.26*
DR								–	.44*	.32*	.21*	.45*	–.02
DY									–	.61*	.64*	.36*	.13
IN										–	.57*	.10	.12
VD											–	.29*	.15
VB												–	–.01
RP													–

Note. PD = partner-rated perceived dominance, OD = observer-rated perceived dominance, IL = illustrator gestures, AD = adaptor gestures, VC = vocal control, FE = facial expressiveness, BC = body control, DR = visual dominance ratio, DY = dysfluencies, IN = total interruptions, VD = coded verbal dominance, VB = verbosity, RP = relative power.

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed).

TABLE 2
Intercorrelations between power and control attempts for females

	PD	OD	IL	AD	VC	FE	BC	DR	DY	IN	VD	VB	RP
PD	–	.34*	–.07	–.22*	.23*	–.15	.04	.07	–.09	.10	–.06	.08	.07
OD		–	.07	–.11	.70*	–.36*	.27*	.28*	.15	.06	.13	.47*	.06
IL			–	.14	.19	–.18	.12	.04	.48*	.42*	.28*	–.04	–.10
AD				–	–.02	.09	–.15	–.01	.24*	.23*	.41*	–.13	.04
VC					–	–.37*	.27*	.28*	.27*	.21*	.21*	.38*	.03
FE						–	–.41*	–.13	–.04	–.20	–.14	–.27*	.10
BC							–	.02	.09	.14	.15	.14	–.15
DR								–	.07	–.04	.05	.48*	–.12
DY									–	.59*	.51*	.05	–.10
IN										–	.54*	–.19	.12
VD											–	.16	.15
VB												–	–.01
RP													–

Note. PD = partner-rated perceived dominance, OD = observer-rated perceived dominance, IL = illustrator gestures, AD = adaptor gestures, VC = vocal control, FE = facial expressiveness, BC = body control, DR = visual dominance ratio, DY = dysfluencies, IN = total interruptions, VD = coded verbal dominance, VB = verbosity, RP = relative power.

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed).

as greater vocal control, less facial expressiveness, greater body control, a greater visual dominance ratio, and verbosity for females. In general, more of the individual coded control attempts related to observers' perceptions of dominance than the partners' perceptions of dominance.

RQ2 asked whether participants and observers would make similar dominance judgments. The bivariate correlations discussed previously in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the two perceived assessments of dominance (for both partners and observers) were significantly correlated with one another for both males and females. Concordances between the partners' perceptions of interactional dominance and coder ratings for each of the individual control attempts are also found in Tables 1 and 2.

The similarity of the perceptions of partners, observers, and coders prompted a further analysis into the actual similarity of both partners' behavior. Although this is beyond the scope of the research questions, our analysis raised some additional questions about the synchrony of both partners in the interaction. This was tested using the 'partial pairwise intraclass correlation' explained by Gonzales and Griffin (1997). This is an example of the 'distinguishable case' as men and women are identified in the sample. The intraclass correlation indexes similarity of individuals within dyads and is reported in Table 3. The results show a high degree of similarity in the control attempts of both partners. There is a high degree of correspondence between individuals in the dyads on coded verbal dominance, attempted interruptions, completed interruptions, total interruptions, illustrator gestures, adaptor gestures, dysfluencies, and facial expressiveness. This pattern is consistent with interaction adaptation theory's claim of matching and reciprocity being the default condition for normal interaction (Burgoon, Stern & Dillman, 1995).

TABLE 3
Partial pairwise intraclass correlations

Partner-rated perceived dominance	.07
Observer-rated perceived dominance	-.42*
Illustrator gestures	.38*
Adaptor gestures	.53*
Vocal control	.16
Facial expressiveness	.51*
Body control	.19
Visual dominance ratio	-.19
Dysfluencies	.49*
Total interruptions	.73*
Attempted interruptions	.65*
Completed interruptions	.48*
Coded verbal dominance	.80*
Power	-.35**

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

Discussion

Power is an integral part of any relationship, especially close romantic relationships, because it determines how the partners relate to each other and how decisions are made. While the terms dominance and power are typically used interchangeably, the results of this study indicate that the two constructs, although related, are not synonymous. Also, this research uncovered how power influenced dominance within couples' communication and how perceptions of dominance differed between participants and observers as well as between men and women.

The relationship between power and dominance

Dyadic power theory (DPT) posits that there will be a curvilinear relationship between dominance and power. The curvilinear relationship between completed interruptions, total interruptions, and illustrator gestures with partners' ratings of power suggests that an individual will interrupt more and gesture more when their partner is highly powerful. The trend in Figure 1, for example, suggests that at the lower levels of reported power, the relationship again curves upward but there is not enough data to see the entire curve. Although these curvilinear trends were statistically significant, a close look at the figures suggests that the relationship between dominance and power found here is largely linear. The restricted range of power differences in this dataset suggests that the trend could be curvilinear with a wider range, so more testing is required to ascertain whether or not DPT's predictions are, in fact, correct.

Some of our results point to the linear trend between dominance and

power. The data suggest that the most powerful individuals are the most facially expressive, are the least controlled in their body actions, and have the lowest ratings of perceived dominance according to their partners. Similarly, when individuals' partners reported more power, they interrupted them more and used more illustrator gestures, conceivably in an attempt to persuade their partners to their viewpoint. This finding is, at least in part, consistent with the curvilinear prediction made by DPT in that the participants in this study were, in general, a satisfied volunteer sample, not a distressed sample, with few couples reporting great differences in relative power. As such, their perceptions of being moderately powerful relative to their partners should have been accompanied by greater attempts at nonverbal dominance by both parties. This is further borne out by the high degree of correspondence between individuals within the dyads on particular dominance behaviors and the intraclass correlations on self-reported power. The intraclass correlations on specific behaviors demonstrate that the individuals within the couples matched one another on verbal dominance, attempted interruptions, completed interruptions, total interruptions, illustrator gestures, adaptor gestures, dysfluencies, and facial expressiveness. The negative intraclass correlation between the two partners' self-reported power was relatively low and suggests that when power is relatively equal, it is not the zero-sum proposition that it is sometimes claimed to be. Having feelings of power does not mean one's partner will feel powerless, and control attempts by one partner do not typically elicit compensatory submissive behavior by the other. Rather, when individuals perceive relative equality in power they are inclined to match their partner's level of control attempts.

Despite this tendency for matching, the relationship between power and verbal and nonverbal control attempts was not identical for men and women. Whereas power was associated with decreased body control, facial expressiveness, and illustrators for men, it was associated with more partner-rated dominance for women. The fact that none of the same variables were significant for both men and women demonstrates that men and women use different behavioral means to express their power to their partner.

Comparing actors and observers

This investigation revealed some commonalities between the perceptions of dominance of both actors and observers. Observer-rated dominance and partner-rated perceived dominance were positively correlated; however, partner-rated perceived dominance corresponded to few of the individual dominance behaviors measured by coders. This suggests that while partners and coders agree somewhat, interactants may not be using individual behaviors to make their dominance judgments, but as they are more cognitively busy and less able to scrutinize individual behaviors, they may be using a more gestalt, holistic judgment than coders.

As far as individual behaviors were concerned, when combining the findings of both males and females, and actors and observers, it appears

that most of the verbal and nonverbal behaviors coded in this study (including illustrator gestures, adaptor gestures, vocal control, facial expressiveness, body control, visual dominance, dysfluencies, interruptions, verbal control attempts and verbosity) were related to general perceptions of dominance in one way or another. These findings support the work of previous nonverbal and verbal researchers who have struggled to identify nonverbal cues that indicate dominance. They also remind us that dominance is a multi-faceted construct that can be demonstrated interactively in many ways and whose meaning depends on both the context and the perceiver.

Finally, this study sheds some light on the differing perspectives of dominance. When there is a difference between actor and observer perceptions, who should we believe? Our research suggests that perhaps coders' perceptions of dominance correspond more closely with objective measures of verbal and nonverbal dominance than those of participants themselves, based on the correlations between overall perceptions and individual dominance indicators. However, the coders' observations are limited to the behaviors in a particular interaction, whereas participants are privy to the ongoing interaction that is part of a continuing relationship. Thus, as with many other findings, whose perception you trust depends on what question is being asked.

Limitations and future directions

This study is the first to examine power in close relationships using DPT's theoretical framework. In fact, though many studies have cited the original Rollins and Bahr (1976) theory, this is the first one to test the theory empirically. One of the strengths of this study was the use of a nonstudent sample. Many studies of the chilling effect, relational control, and social exchange theory have used college students in their studies, but while it is more expensive to use couples from the community than to use college students, the diversity of the couples in age, income level, and length of relationship should make the findings more generalizable. However, this strength is also a weakness because the sample was self-selected. Couples needed to voluntarily take part in the study and be willing to participate for only \$15, which may have influenced the type of couples that were included. Individuals with extreme levels of power and low satisfaction were not present in this study and so the hypothesis could not be fully tested. Seeking out troubled couples and persuading them to take part in research such as this may not be feasible but the possibilities should be explored for future studies.

In addition, in order to increase the number of couples that were included, both cohabiting and married couples were combined for the analyses of this study. Rollins and Bahr (1976) only discussed married couples in their original iteration of the theory, but in this sample, there was enough homogeneity to warrant combining these groups. Ideally, larger samples should be collected to allow testing of the model within married and cohabiting groups. All the couples in this study reported high

levels of interdependence and all were invested in their relationships because they were at least living together. Perhaps somewhat different relationships would emerge among the correlations within these separate samples.

Although it may be premature to suggest modifying the model based on only one study, this research does suggest some future directions for the progression of DPT. First, more testing of the theory could further refine the measures used in this study, especially in the case of power, whose low alpha reliability could have negatively affected the results. Second, the use of the hypothetical topic for discussion was designed to create a similar conversational topic for all couples but could have been more salient in some couples than in others. One couple commented that they had just had a similar conversation when they received their tax refund but other couples may not have found the discussion as stimulating, which would account for the large range in discussion length across the couples (between 2 and 19 minutes). In the future, researchers could consider allowing the couples to select their own topic in order to achieve comparable levels of importance or salience. This is especially true because some research has found that the relevance of the topic can influence the dominance used by couples in conversation (e.g. [Caughlin, 2002](#)). Third, future researchers should consider the inclusion of trait variables, especially argumentativeness. Argumentativeness, however, should not be viewed in a vacuum outside the influences of interaction. Many situational factors, such as characteristics and attributes of the opponent in an argument and the topic of conversation, can influence a person's motivation to engage in argument ([Rancer & Infante, 1985](#)). In the future, argumentativeness might be combined with situational factors, such as various topics of conversation or different conversational partners, to assess its influence on the verbal and nonverbal behavior of interactants.

Future researchers should also consider other ways to test the relationship between dominance and power. Although we still expect that extremely powerful or powerless individuals will not engage in dominance behavior, these individuals are probably rare and so this proposition made by DPT will prove difficult, if not impossible, to test in naturally occurring relationships. A more likely scenario is that those highly imbalanced relationships will not survive to marriage or even cohabitation. If they do happen to survive, finding those couples and including them in a voluntary study will prove very difficult. The results of this study suggest that most couples are relatively equal in power, all things considered, and deviations from this trend toward equality are typically very small. As equity theory suggests, equally balanced relationships are the most comfortable and so people may either convince themselves they are equal (even when they are not) or if they recognize inequity, may use their verbal and nonverbal control attempts to change this power discrepancy. Thus, those who are slightly more or less powerful will use *more* control attempts but those who are extremely powerful or powerless will use *fewer* control attempts than those who are equal. This is a very complex relationship, but is borne out

by the findings reported here. Further research needs to continue to investigate this relationship between power and communication behavior. Perhaps experimental research, in which power relationships can be manipulated, or relationships such as superior-subordinate in work environments where power relationships are unequal, will provide more clear results about the relationship between dominance and power.

Overall, the results of this first foray into DPT are enlightening. While it should be remembered that power influences the behavior of men and women differently, power certainly plays a role in the communication of long-term couples. It is hoped that these findings will act as a springboard to future research and will highlight the importance of investigating power in close relationships.

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