

## Gender, Control, and Interaction\*

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*This research examines gender as status, and gender and control (which share the meaning of dominance) as identities by analyzing negative and positive behavior of married couples whose task is to resolve disagreements in their marriage. On the basis of recent extensions of expectation states theory dealing with emotion-based behavior, we hypothesize that husbands will be more likely than wives to use negative behavior in conversation. On the basis of identity theory and the meanings of emotion-based behavior, we also hypothesize that those with a more masculine and more dominant control identity will be more likely to use negative behavior in interaction, and that those with a more feminine and less dominant control identity will be more likely to use positive behavior. We test these predictions on a representative sample of newly married couples, using videotaped conversations. Although the results are consistent with predictions from identity theory, they are inconsistent with predictions following from the extension of expectation states theory. Specifically, wives rather than husbands employ more negative behavior in conversation. The results, paradoxically, are different for being female than for being feminine, and different for being male than for being masculine; nonetheless, we argue that understanding the implications of gender as both status and identity helps to resolve the paradox.*

One of the most persistent issues in sociology, which gained the early attention of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, and many other founders, has been the relationship between social structure and the person (House 1981). Gender provides an important subject of study because it may be understood both at the macro level, as a position in the social structure (Ridgeway 1993), and at the micro level, as an identity that persons apply to themselves (Burke 1989; Burke, Stets, and Pirog-Good 1988; Burke and Tully 1977). When gender is conceptualized as a position, the question is how a particular class of persons (either men or women) behaves and is treated in interaction, given the expectations attached to their status. When gender is conceptualized as an identity, we examine the meaning of *male* or *female* for persons when they are reflexive, and how this self-meaning

guides behavior in interaction. Gender as status comes from the viewpoint of society; gender as identity comes from the viewpoint of individuals.

Gender should not be analyzed only through the lens of status or of identity because conceptual limitations exist when only one of these views is addressed. For example, examining gender only as status may address issues of power and inequality between the sexes, but it tends to mask individual choice and agency (Molm 1993). Alternatively, studying gender only as identity treats gender as an individual characteristic while ignoring how “doing gender” in interaction creates and reinforces differences between men and women in the social structure (West and Fenstermaker 1993; West and Zimmerman 1987). We see the *status* of gender and the *identity* of gender as simultaneously produced and maintained in interaction. Gender signals one’s social structural position and one’s view of himself/herself. The meaning of both influences behavior in interaction; this behavior, in turn, sustains identities and social structures. In other words, both being male or female and seeing oneself as more masculine or more feminine influence behavior in interaction; through this influence, they help to reproduce social structure and sustain a sense of self. In this way, an analysis of gender as status and

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gender as identity helps us understand the link between macro and micro processes. In this study we examine conversational behavior to show how this link occurs.

We look first at the status aspect of gender in conversations. According to expectation states theory (Berger, Wagner, and Zelditch 1985), people develop *performance expectations* regarding how each status group *relative to the other* should act in task situations. We expect more from higher-status people (for example, high participation in a conversation) and less from lower-status people because we expect the efforts of higher-status people to be more successful than those of lower-status people in meeting the goals of an interaction (Ridgeway and Walker 1995). This theory has been applied to gender differences in conversation. For example, when we find that men talk significantly more than women, we can attribute this difference to men's higher status relative to women in society, and to the judgment (based on their higher status) that they are more intellectually competent than women in making effective contributions to a group (James and Drakich 1993). In this way, external status such as gender structures interaction.

Although expectations states theory is useful in predicting particular interaction patterns from classes of persons, it misses the individuality and variability of behavior that has intention and purpose. Identity theory takes individuality and purpose as central while recognizing that the meaning of group membership for any one person is not idiosyncratic but consensually based (Burke and Tully 1977; Stryker 1980). When people enter interaction, they bring not only their group memberships but also (and more important) self-meanings regarding how they see themselves as a member of that group. In the case of gender, people enter interaction with self-perceptions of the degree to which they are masculine or feminine—that is, their gender identity. Within the scope of identity theory, interaction is viewed as an arena in which these self-meanings, such as being masculine or feminine, are created, verified, and maintained by active social agents (Burke and Reitzes 1981, 1991), with the ultimate consequence of reproducing the social structure in all of its complexity (Stryker 1980).

In investigating how gender as both a status category and an identity are produced and maintained in interaction, we study emotion-

based behavior displayed by a representative sample of newly married couples in problem-solving discussions in which they are asked to resolve disagreements in their marriage. We test predictions following from expectation states theory and identity theory. Specifically, we examine whether the status of male and female and the identity of being male (masculine) and female (feminine) influence negative and positive conversational behavior.

We add to our analysis the role of the control identity—that is, the self-meanings related to how much one controls another person (Stets and Burke 1994)—on the production of these speech acts. We do this for two reasons. First, as two persons become a single (family) unit, issues of control and coordination of activities become paramount, making the meanings associated with the control identity relevant for the interaction of husband and wife. Insofar as the control identity may be correlated with gender identity, given their somewhat overlapping domains, the control identity must be parceled out in examining the effects of gender identity. Second, in studying both the control identity and the gender identity, we can examine the impact of two identities on interaction. These share the component of meaning known as dominance but operate under different canons; one is a role identity (gender), the other a person identity (control) (Stets and Burke 1994).

## THEORY

### *Expectations States Theory (EST)*

According to EST, we can predict people's behavior in interaction by locating their status in the social structure. Those with high status (e.g., men) will be held in *higher esteem than others* in a group (e.g., women) and will be more likely to assume a position of authority because they are judged as more competent and more likely to contribute to the goals of the interaction. Expectations following from high-status positions include giving high-status persons more opportunities to participate in a conversation, allowing them to make more task suggestions, evaluating their suggestions positively, and allowing their suggestions to influence group decisions (Ridgeway and Walker 1995). Higher-status persons are more likely to exact deference from lower-

status persons when they are viewed as legitimate occupants of high positions (Ridgeway and Berger 1986) and when the motive underlying their efforts is seen as group-oriented rather than self-oriented (Ridgeway 1978).

Gender is a diffuse status characteristic (a characteristic that is not attached to a specific skill) in interaction. When activated (as it is in most encounters), it invokes cultural assumptions that men are competent and valuable and that women are incapable and not to be taken seriously; thus women are placed at a disadvantage (Ridgeway 1993; Wood and Karten 1986). To overcome this disadvantage, women might modify gender expectations by demonstrating (for example) that in fact they are higher than men on a particular skill needed to accomplish the task in a group, thereby elevating themselves to equal status with men (Pugh and Wahrman 1983). Alternatively, women might achieve more influence in a group by appearing to be motivated by a desire to help the group rather than themselves (Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill 1977; Ridgeway 1982).

Because of their lower status, women are held to a stricter standard to prove their competence in a group while receiving greater leniency in demonstrating incompetence (Foddy and Smithson 1989; Foschi 1989). Therefore they must work harder than men in a group to show that they are capable. We see this point as very important because it concerns how women respond when others act toward them on the basis of their gender (class membership). We return to this issue later.

The scope of EST has been confined to task-oriented behaviors, to the neglect of socioemotional behaviors. Recently some researchers have extended EST to affective behaviors by hypothesizing that higher-status people will be more likely than lower-status people to use negative socioemotional behavior in interaction (negative expressions directed at another, which are hostile or critical in tone) as a way of maintaining the system of stratification (Ridgeway and Johnson 1990). According to this hypothesis, higher-status people such as men should use negative socioemotional behaviors when they encounter challenges to their position—particularly illegitimate—opposition from lower-status people such as women, whose judgment is not valued. The negative behavior is used by

higher-status people to punish lower-status people for their opposition; thereby it serves as a social control mechanism to maintain the status hierarchy.

Negative socioemotional behavior is inhibited for lower-status people, but positive socioemotional behavior is not. Positive behavior—that is, showing acceptance of another's position, as in expressing enthusiasm for another's view or offering support—tells higher-status people that their behavior is successful because it is well received. In turn, this should generate a feeling of mastery for higher-status people (Ridgeway and Johnson 1990). To continue feeling good, higher-status people may respond positively to lower-status people to encourage them to behave positively in the future. In this way, lower-status people's positive behavior influences that of higher-status people (Ridgeway and Johnson 1990).

To our knowledge, the extension of EST as it applies to the status characteristic of gender has not been tested; we do that here. We examine whether predictions about socioemotional behavior for husbands and for wives are confirmed for married couples engaged in a problem-solving (task) situation. The current study meets all of the scope conditions to which EST applies (Webster and Foschi 1988): (1) It involves two persons who are differentiated by the status characteristic of gender; (2) the task outcome is a success when couples agree that a problem has been resolved; (3) effective problem-solving ability is viewed as relevant to task completion; (4) deference is offered to the more effective problem solver when couples know who that is; otherwise deference is based on diffuse status characteristics; and (5) couples are collectively oriented to the task of resolving disagreements in their marriage.

Several unique features distinguish this study from the conventional way in which EST has been tested. First, the task is internal to the group (dealing with its own functioning) rather than external to the group, as in task groups, where EST traditionally has been tested. Consequently the discussions may be viewed as more personally relevant (given that the issues involve problems within the marriage) and may generate greater negative socioemotional behaviors than might occur in traditional, neutral task situations. Second, unlike typical tasks used in EST experiments, where disagreements initially do not exist, the

task in this study involves a disagreement between actors from the beginning of the interaction. Thus discussions may be viewed as more emotionally laden, given the initial conflict. Third, the task in this study is embedded in a history of interaction between individuals, whereas traditional task groups used in EST have no such history.

Nothing in the stated assumptions of EST indicates that it must be tested in the same way as past research. For example, nothing in EST states that the task must be external to the group—only that there is a task to complete. The fact that EST is tested by external (rather than internal) tasks is a product of convention. Therefore the issue in this research is not whether we have a fair test of EST, but the degree to which we are departing from the conventional way of testing EST. Insofar as EST is supported in the face of unconventional tests, we have increased the scope conditions in which it holds and therefore its utility.

We hypothesize that higher-status people (in this study, husbands) will be more likely than lower-status people (wives) to enact negative behavior in interaction. Because husbands and wives also simultaneously possess other status characteristics such as age, education, and occupational status, and because their states on these attributes also may influence performance expectations, our analysis of the effects of gender controls for these other status characteristics.

We do not expect that positive behavior will vary by gender because (1) the status hierarchy does not limit the expression of positive acts to the same degree as it limits the expression of negative acts, and (2) positive behavior is highly reciprocal: High-status persons are likely to return the positive behavior they receive from low-status persons (Ridgeway and Johnson 1990). Therefore, in examining the status of gender on socioemotional behavior in interaction, we hypothesize:

H<sub>1</sub>: Husbands will be more likely than wives to use negative behavior in conversation, controlling for other status characteristics on which the couple differ.

### *Identity Theory (IT)*

An identity is a set of self-meanings of which the self becomes aware through its

ability to be reflexive. In this study we examine the self-meanings related to the degree to which individuals see themselves as feminine or masculine (the gender role identity) and as controlling or not controlling of others (a person identity). Roles traditionally have been viewed as tied to groups and situations, where they are taken on and abandoned depending on situational demands. Roles also may be tied, however, to the way our society is organized more generally (Rosenberg 1979). Thus, situated identities (e.g., “parent,” “worker”) are meanings associated with roles that are tied to a particular setting, whereas master identities (e.g., “male/female,” “white/nonwhite,” “young/old”) are meanings tied to roles that cut across situations and that shape how our society is structured. We conceptualize gender identity as the meaning tied to the role of gender, a master status. Indeed, this is consistent with the idea that “doing gender” across situations is unavoidable (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Following recent developments in IT, we conceive of role and person identities as control systems that maintain congruency between self-perceptions of identity-relevant meanings in a situation and meanings contained in the identity standard (Burke 1991; Stets and Burke 1994). People continuously act to achieve and maintain this congruency in the face of disturbances. With respect to gender identity, one’s identity standard might be set at a certain degree of masculinity/femininity. Self-perceptions monitor the degree of masculinity/femininity one appears to possess in a situation. If the self-in-situation meanings are consistent with the identity standard, the person will continue to act in the manner that produces those self-perceptions. If a discrepancy exists between self-perceptions of masculinity/femininity and the identity standard, the control system sends an error signal. This signal is translated into meaningful behavior (by behaving as either more or less “masculine,” depending on the direction of the discrepancy), which acts on the situation to change it and produces a change in self-perceptions (Burke and Reitzes 1981).

The IT model contains two different consequences that must be made clear. A person with a more masculine identity will act, on average, in a more masculine manner—that is, will engage in behavior

whose meaning is more masculine. This situation sustains the current gender self-perceptions. A disturbance, however, can alter self-perceptions. A person who has a more masculine identity and who receives feedback (perceptions) that he or she is *extremely* masculine will begin to act in a more feminine fashion to counter the extremity of the feedback. This behavior brings the current gender self-perceptions back into alignment with the gender identity standard. These two different ways of acting (to sustain a given set of identity meanings and to counter any disturbances to those meanings) are actually a single outcome of the identity model, in which behavior remains constant except to counter disturbances to the perception of identity-relevant meaning.

The control identity operates according to the same principles as gender identity. One's control identity standard is set in terms of being more (or less) dominant over others. People are motivated to control others by the degree to which they experience control over their environment. Control over the environment is a central motive underlying human behavior (Gecas 1982); thus when people experience reduced control, the result is a discrepancy between how they see themselves (perceptions) and how they would like to see themselves (standards). To compensate, they may increase their control of others to regain the perceived loss of control (Stets 1995a, 1995b). In entering an interaction, individuals make a comparison between self-in-situation meanings of controlling others and the control identity standard.<sup>1</sup> If self-perceptions of controlling others match the control identity

standard, individuals will continue to act so as to produce those very perceptions. Alternatively, people will change their behavior by increasing either dominance meanings or submissiveness meanings, depending on the direction of the discrepancy. In either case, the new behavior will reduce the discrepancy (Swann and Hill 1982).

Following from recent theorizing (Stets 1995c; Stets and Burke 1994), we distinguish between a role identity—that is, meaning that is tied to and maintains the *social structure*, as in being male or female, or husband or wife—and a person identity—that is, meaning that is tied to and sustains *the self*, as in being more or less controlling. As with role identities, people control the meanings of their person identities; they are more (or less) strongly committed to these identities; and these identities are more (or less) salient across roles and situations. A person identity is distinguished from a personality trait by its self-regulatory character, though that self-regulation need not be conscious. Personality traits are usually habitual dispositions to act in a certain manner, which are acquired through learning. Therefore they are not self-regulatory. Insofar as personality traits are self-regulatory, we would classify them as identities. In this way, being “happy,” “an introvert,” “stubborn,” “friendly,” or “honest” are person identities or aspects of a person identity only insofar as regulate their meanings.

In our culture, the meaning of being male is associated in part with dominance, competitiveness, and autonomy, while the meaning of being female is associated in part with submissiveness, cooperativeness, and affiliation (Ashmore, Del Boca, and Wohlers 1986; Deaux 1987). Although gender has other meanings as well, people who see themselves as more masculine or more feminine should identify to a certain extent with these cultural meanings and should behave accordingly in interaction. Indeed, research has found that men and women who have a more masculine gender identity are more likely to overlap or interrupt the speech of another in a conversation, thus demonstrating a more dominant, and more competitive style (Drass 1986).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We assume that individuals do not have different control identities for the different persons with whom they interact. For example, one may be more controlling as a parent or employer than as a friend, but this control pertains more to parent/employer/friend role expectations than to the control identity as such. Nevertheless, role expectations and personal expectations operate simultaneously in interaction. For example, an employer with a more dominant control identity may be more imposing at work than an employer with a less dominant control identity. This also helps to distinguish status in the EST tradition from control in the IT tradition. Those who have high status may not behave in a controlling fashion because their standard of control (which guides their behavior) is set at a low level. In fact, we would argue that those of low status may have a more dominant control identity than those of high status in order to compensate for their continued treatment (disturbances) as powerless and unimportant.

<sup>2</sup> Whereas early research found that men interrupted women more than women interrupted men (West and Zimmerman 1983; Zimmerman and West 1975), a recent review of all the research finds that the status of being

Given the above, we expect masculinity to be associated with negative behaviors in conversation and femininity to be associated with positive socioemotional behaviors.

The meaning of masculinity and femininity overlaps in part with the meaning of having a more or less dominant control identity. The commonality reveals itself in research which finds that a more dominant control identity is associated with self-views as dominant, competitive, and cold (versus warm) in relations with others, while a less dominant control identity is associated with self-views as submissive, noncompetitive, and warm (Stets and Burke 1994). This suggests that gender and control share a dimension of meaning concerning power and dominance in social relations. Therefore we expect that a more dominant control identity will be associated with negative behaviors, and a less dominant control identity will be related to positive socioemotional behaviors. In examining the effects of each, the other must be controlled to prevent or remove spurious associations.

Our hypotheses regarding gender identity and the control identity on socioemotional behavior are stated formally as follows:

H<sub>2</sub>: Persons with more masculine gender identities will be more likely than those with more feminine gender identities to use negative behaviors in conversation.

H<sub>3</sub>: Persons with more feminine gender identities will be more likely than those with more masculine gender identities to use positive behaviors in conversation.

H<sub>4</sub>: Persons with more dominant control identities will be more likely than those with less dominant control identities to use negative behaviors in conversation.

H<sub>5</sub>: Persons with less dominant control identities will be more likely than those with more dominant control identities to use positive behaviors in conversation.

The predictions derived from the extension to EST and IT appear to lead to similar

conclusions about who will express negative behaviors in interaction. The extension to EST predicts that having the status of male will lead to negative behaviors; identity theory predicts that perceiving oneself as more masculine will produce negative behaviors. IT also predicts that a more dominant control identity will induce dominant, negative behaviors in conversation. We now turn to the data and examine the results from a representative sample of newly married couples.

## METHOD

### *Sample*

The sample was drawn from marriage registration records in 1991 and 1992 in two mid-size communities in Washington State. Of the 1,295 couples in the marriage registry during this period, 574 met the criteria for involvement in the project: both persons were over age 18, it was the first marriage for both, no children were living in the home.

The primary purpose of the study was to focus on marital dynamics in the first few years of marriage. The investigators sent 574 couples a letter describing the study. They were told that after initial information was collected (anywhere from two weeks to three months into their marriage), they would be contacted at yearly intervals for two additional years in order to gather further data. Each data collection period with the newly married couples involved (1) a 90-minute face-to-face interview, (2) four one-week daily diaries kept by respondents at 10-week intervals, and (3) a 15-minute videotaping of couples' conversations on areas of disagreement. The data for the present analysis are based on information from the interview and the 15-minute videotapes in the initial (1992) data collection period.

Of the 574 couples eligible for participation, 338 (59%) agreed to take part in the study. Twenty-five of these 338 couples later withdrew from the study for personal reasons (for example, time constraints or relocation) or administrative reasons (for example, difficulty in contacting them and securing their participation). This left 313 couples who were interviewed. Thirty additional couples dropped out of the study before they were videotaped. As a result, 283 couples were videotaped. Of these, 278 couples provided

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male or female does not predict who will interrupt in a conversation (James and Clarke 1993). This suggests that behavior in interaction may be predicted by factors other than the gender status, such as power (Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz 1985), formal authority (c. Johnson 1994), or gender identity (Drass 1986).

usable data that form the basis of the current study.

These 278 couples do not differ significantly in important ways from couples married for the first time, nationwide. Nationally, for example, the mean ages of women and men marrying for the first time are 24 and 26 respectively (Vital Statistics 1987); these ages are not significantly different from those of our sample. Nationally the mean level of education for both men and women marrying for the first time is two years of college (Vital Statistics 1987). The mean educational level for respondents in this sample was "some college." Washington State has a slightly higher proportion of whites (89% versus 84% nationally), an underrepresentation of blacks (3% versus 13% nationally), and an overrepresentation of Asians and Hispanics (9% versus 4% nationally) (World Almanac 1992). Nationally, first-married persons are 85% white, 13% blacks and other minorities (Vital Statistics 1987). The current sample contains 89% whites, 3% blacks, and 9% other minorities, reflecting the racial distribution in Washington State.

#### *Coding the Interactional Data*

We obtained the interactional data from the 15-minute videotape of husbands and wives as they engaged in a problem-solving discussion in the laboratory with an eye toward resolving a marital problem previously identified. Before the videotaping, the husband and the wife each filled out a sheet indicating areas of disagreement—for example, housework, alcohol use, sex, money, religion, or in-law problems. Then they met with the interviewer who, after reviewing their responses, spoke with them to identify three areas that appeared to generate the most disagreements. The couple then briefly shared with the interviewer their general thoughts on these disagreement areas. The interviewer then instructed the couple to discuss one of these three areas for the next 15 minutes, and to reach a resolution. If they completed an area before the 15 minutes were up, they could move on to the other areas, again trying to reach a resolution. The interviewer left the room, and the videotaping began.

All speech from each person was transcribed and organized into turns following the conventions of the Rapid Couples Interaction Scoring System (RCISS). Each turn was

given a unique line number. A turn included all utterances by the person who was the speaker from the time when that person started to speak until he or she stopped (assuming that the other had not started speaking). During this time, the other spouse was the listener. Listener acts were coded, including vocal back channels (such as "Mm-hmm" or "Yeah") and nonverbal facial and body expressions. The listener acts were not counted as turns but were coded as positive or negative listener behaviors, depending on their positive or negative character.

We used an amended version of the RCISS to code the interaction from the videotape and transcripts (Krokoff, Gottman, and Hass 1989). The RCISS originally was developed by creating a checklist, based on all observational systems in the marriage literature (see Markman et al. 1981 for a review), of negative and positive speaker and listener acts. This checklist then was applied to a sample of roughly 50 couples, inappropriate items were dropped, and a reduced set of categories was created, as shown in the appendix (Krokoff et al. 1989). The appendix also provides a definition and example of each category. Italicized categories indicate frequently occurring behaviors in the present study which we made into categories in the process of amending the RCISS.

The coding system is rapid because it relaxes the mutually exclusive and exhaustive criteria of observational coding. Coders check *all codes* that describe a turn, rather than a particular code. In this way, they capture multiple meanings that may be revealed in any one turn.

To tie the behavioral codes to our hypotheses, we note that negative behavior is oppositional; it seeks to oppose, undermine, negate, and modify the aims and goals of the other. Behaviors classified under "Negative Speaker Acts"—that is, the first nine categories (including complaining, criticizing, negative talk, defensiveness, and put-downs)—fit this description and are used to indicate the negative, oppositional, dominating character of behavior addressed in the hypotheses. At the other end of the continuum are the positive, supportive, nonoppositional behaviors. The character of these behaviors is not to oppose but to cooperate, support, and strengthen the other's aims and goals, and to move the discussion forward. We include

here the behaviors from the "Positive Speaker Acts" (including positive/neutral problem description, task information, assent, humor, and other positive actions).

After extensive training lasting several weeks, five observers were used to code the 278 videotapes.<sup>3</sup> They first viewed the 15-minute videotaped conversation of each couple. Then they watched the videotape a second time while reading the transcript. Following this, they coded each turn for each partner, using the RCISS and judging each turn independently. To determine the accuracy of the observers' application of the codes to the interactional data, we calculated Cohen's (1960) kappa<sup>4</sup> on a random sample of 10% of the couples to obtain intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability is the proportion of agreement between the coders, above chance levels, on the use of the speaker and listener codes for couple's talk. Cohen's kappa was .74, a score similar to that found in other coding systems (Gottman and Krokoff 1989; Haefner, Notarius, and Pellegrini 1991; Julien, Markman, and Lindahl 1989; Krokoff et al. 1989).

### Measures

For the status characteristics, gender was coded 0 for women and 1 for men. Age and education were measured in years. To measure occupational status, we asked respondents to describe the work they currently did. If they were not currently working, they were to describe the work they had done at their last job. Their responses were coded according to the Socioeconomic Index (Stevens and Cho 1985). The scores were based solely on occupational status.

In this research, we use the Burke-Tully (1977) method to measure gender identity. This method involves identifying people's meanings with regard to being male or female, and then using these meanings as they

apply to the self to form a scale of gender identity. As Burke and Tully point out, the method uses the meanings of the people in the sample rather than meanings derived from some other source, such as the researcher or another population. It uses discriminant function analysis as the tool for selecting those adjectives whose meanings are shared to discriminate most clearly between the meanings of being male and being female. The most highly discriminating adjectives are then applied to the respondent, weighted, and summed to form a gender identity scale.

The items used in this study are taken from the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Spence and Helmreich 1978), one of the sets of adjective pairs most widely employed to capture the meanings of maleness and femaleness. Results from the discriminant function analysis showed that six of these bipolar items discriminated most clearly between being female and being male: (1) not at all competitive-very competitive, (2) very passive-very active, (3) very excitable in a major crisis-not at all excitable in a major crisis, (4) very aware of the feelings of others-not at all aware of the feelings of others, (5) feelings easily hurt-feelings not easily hurt, and (6) cries very easily-never cries. The items as applied to the respondent were weighted (by the discriminant function) and summed to measure gender identity; a high score reflected masculinity, and a low score reflected femininity.

We emphasize that our measure of gender identity does not equate masculinity with instrumentality and femininity with expressiveness, as might Spence and Helmreich's measure. Indeed, Miriam Johnson (1988) argues that the PAQ adjectives associated with expressiveness (such as weakness and emotionality) are not only inconsistent with the meaning of expressiveness which involves a concern with relations among individuals. In addition, she says, the PAQ adjectives reinforce femininity (and expressiveness) in negative terms. In our measure of gender identity, however, we let respondents collectively identify those adjectives which they regard as discriminating most clearly between being masculine and being feminine.

We measured the control identity using the control scale (Stets 1995b), as shown in Table 1. In the interview, respondents were asked how often during the past year they had engaged in the itemized acts with their

<sup>3</sup> Several prospective coders who could not meet the reliability requirements by the end of the training period were dropped from the study. The investigators made periodic checks on reliability and discussion of coding issues throughout the coding period to maintain a common coding culture for all coders.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen's kappa is an agreement statistic that corrects for chance and is defined as  $K = (P_{O-PC}) / (1 - P_O)$ , where  $P_O$  is the proportion of agreement observed and  $P_C$  is the proportion expected by chance, given the marginal distribution of acts across categories.



Table 1. Principal Component Factor Analyses, Correlations, and Reliabilities of Control and Negative and Positive Behavior Scales

Control over Spouse	Factor Loading
I make my spouse do what I want.	.55
I keep my spouse in line.	.66
I impose my will onto my spouse.	.60
I keep tabs on my spouse.	.60
I regulate who my spouse sees.	.64
I supervise my spouse.	.65
I keep my spouse from doing things I do not approve of.	.65
I let my spouse do what s/he wants.	-.30
If I don't like what my spouse is doing, I make him/her stop.	.50
I set the rules in my relationship with my spouse.	.50
Reliability ( $\Omega$ )	.89
Negative Speaker Acts	Factor Loading
Complain	.61
Criticize	.67
Negative relationship issue problem talk	.91
Defensive/Self-protect	.46
Put-down	.74
Escalate negative affect	.65
Other negative	.65
Reliability ( $\Omega$ )	.91
Negative Agenda Building	Correlation
(1) Complain	.48 <sub>12</sub>
(2) Criticize	.65 <sub>23</sub>
(3) Negative relationship issue problem talk	.54 <sub>13</sub>
Reliability ( $\Omega$ )	.81
Negative Affect	Correlation
(1) Put-down	.5312
(2) Escalate negative affect	.4523
(3) Other negative	.5013
Reliability ( $\Omega$ )	.74
Negative Listener Acts	Correlation
(1) No backchannels	.5412
(2) Negative facial expression	
Positive Speaker Acts	Factor Loading
Neutral/Positive problem description	.69
Assent	.53
Humor	.41
Other positive	.37
Reliability ( $\Omega$ )	.65
Positive Listener Acts	Factor Loading
Backchannels present	.88
Look at speaker	.86
Positive facial expression	.26
Responsive facial and body movement	.32
Reliability ( $\Omega$ )	.76

spouse. Response categories were "never," "seldom," "sometimes," "fairly often," or "very often" (coded 1–5). As Table 1 shows, the items formed a single factor with a .89 omega reliability (Heise and Bohrnstedt 1970). Item 8 was reverse coded. The items were summed; a high score indicated a more dominant control identity.

In both the measure of gender identity and the measure of the control identity, we operationalize the identity standard in the feedback control process. The comparator in the control system uses this reference value in evaluating self-perceptions in a situation. In the absence of a direct measure of the identity standard, we can examine whether particular

behaviors are associated with these indirect measures, given identity theory. If the findings are consistent with our expectations, then this is one test (albeit indirect) of identity theory.

We measured several aspects of the interaction between husbands and wives. First, the relative frequencies of each of the coded categories were measured. We calculated the relative frequency as the number of codes in a particular category for the husband and for the wife in a couple, divided by the total number of codes for the couple. We did this separately for speaker and for listener codes. This measure allows us to make relative comparisons about husbands' and wives' behavior, given their total activity in the conversation.

In addition, we created several negative and positive speaker and listener summary scales. As shown in Table 1, seven of the nine negative speaker codes tended to co-occur, and formed one factor with a .91 omega reliability. The relative frequencies of activity in these categories were summed; a high score represented a higher proportion of negative speaker acts. We further divided the negative speaker scale into two subscales: negative agenda building (complain, criticize, and negative relationship talk) and negative affect (put-down, escalate negative affect, and other negative affect). Because three items will always factor into one scale (Schuessler 1971), we analyzed the correlations for the items making up the two scales. As shown in Table 1, the correlations are fairly high. We summed the items that constituted negative agenda building; a high score indicated more negative agenda building. Likewise, we summed the items that made up negative affect, with a high score representing more negative affect. The negative listener acts (no back channels and negative facial expression) were correlated highly ( $r = .54$ ). We added the items; a high score designated frequent negative listener behavior.

Four of the five positive speaker acts also tended to co-occur, and formed a single factor with a .65 omega reliability. However, separate scales of positive agenda building and positive affect could not be built reliably. The positive listener codes factored into one scale with a .76 omega reliability. We summed the items for this scale with a high score designating positive listener behavior.

### *Analyses*

We conducted two types of analyses. First, we examined the rates at which respondents displayed each of the coded actions relative to all other coded actions for the couple. This analysis gives the probability of each type of act across the whole discussion. Yet this procedure does not show the extent to which one type of action by one person is followed by a reaction on the part of the spouse. To learn this, we need sequential analysis (Bakeman and Gottman 1986).

Sequential analysis examines the order or chain of actions (Bakeman and Gottman 1986) in a conversation. The analysis may involve long or short chains of interaction. In this research, we analyzed only the action by one spouse that immediately follows a particular action by the other spouse—that is, the response of each person to any one action by the other. This allowed us to identify particular behaviors that may trigger negative actions. As in the analysis described above, we calculated the relative probability (rather than the frequency) of a response to an action. We computed this by obtaining the number of occurrences of a particular response to an action, and dividing that by the total number of responses to that action for the couple. This value provides, for each person, the proportion or probability of a particular response to an action relative to other responses which follow that action in the discussion. Because any one turn may involve more than one thought unit, multiple codes could occur for any one turn; multiple codes could occur as well on the following turn. To account for this possibility, we paired each code for each turn with every code that occurred in the following turn.

## RESULTS

### *Effects of Gender as Status*

We first present results relevant to the hypothesis pertaining to the effects of gender as status ( $H_1$ ). The first and second columns in Table 2 present the means and standard deviations of the positive and negative speech acts, and the positive and negative summary scales. The third column presents the gender status differences (husband minus wife), controlling for age, education, occupational status, gender identity, and the control

Table 2. Overall Means, Standard Deviations, and Gender

Variable	$\bar{x}$	( $\sigma$ )	Gender Difference <sup>a</sup> (Husband-Wife)	Gender Difference <sup>b</sup> (Husband-Wife)
Negative Agenda Building				
Complain	2.69	(3.28)	-.75**	-.79**
Criticize	2.73	(3.56)	-.64**	-.60**
Negative relationship talk	6.25	(11.47)	-1.08**	-1.03**
Negative Agenda Building: Response				
Yes, but	3.36	(2.94)	-.34**	-.37**
Differences of Speech Acts (N = 556)				
Defensive/Self-protect	1.95	(3.59)	.22**	-.17**
Negative Affect				
Put-down	.64	(1.61)	.01	.01
Escalate negative affect	.39	(1.33)	-.12**	-.10**
Other negative	.35	(.89)	-.07*	-.07**
Early closure	.17	(.52)	-.01	-.00
Negative Listener Acts				
No back channels	.01	(.13)	.00	.00
Look away/down	10.13	(9.13)	1.51**	-1.70**
Negative facial expression	.05	(.34)	-.01	.01
Positive Agenda Building				
Neutral/Positive description	57.56	(14.70)	.84**	.56*
Task information	2.87	(4.06)	.07	.01
Positive Agenda Building: Response				
Assent	16.21	(10.56)	.66*	.92**
Positive Affect				
Humor	3.27	(3.33)	.25**	.25**
Other positive	1.57	(1.85)	-.08	-.10*
Positive Listener Acts				
Back channels	47.25	(2.56)	.12	.16
Look at speaker	37.80	(9.16)	-1.38**	-1.50**
Positive facial expression	3.88	(3.55)	-.88**	-.80**
Responsive facial/body	.88	(1.21)	-.21**	-.19**
Negative and Positive Acts: Scales				
Negative speaker	15.01	(19.35)	-2.44**	-2.42**
Negative agenda building	11.67	(15.53)	-2.47**	-2.42**
Negative affect	1.38	(3.09)	-.19*	-.17**
Negative listener	.06	(.43)	.00	.00
Positive speaker	78.59	(20.04)	1.67**	1.63**
Positive listener	89.81	(9.67)	-1.14*	-1.17**

<sup>a</sup> Adjusted for age, education, occupational status, gender identity, and the control identity.

<sup>b</sup> Adjusted for age, education, and occupational status.

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

identity. Because EST does not state that the effect of gender occurs net of other identities which may be created by that diffuse status, we further examined gender status differences, controlling only for age, education, and occupational status. These results are presented in the fourth column.

Two points must be made in regard to the first column. First, most of the speaker activity (58%) occurs in the task area of positive agenda building; thus the problem solving discussion can be characterized as task-oriented. Second, as has been noted in the past for task groups, more action occurs in the positive area (81%) than in the negative area. Relationship problems in these groups

are discussed most frequently in a neutral or positive tone, and back channeling and eye contact are displayed frequently by the person in the listener role. The high rate of positive over negative speech acts in a group permits the maintenance of solidarity among group members (Ridgeway and Johnson 1990). In this sample, it may be one mechanism that fosters a stable marriage.

Hypothesis 1 states that husbands will be more likely than wives to use negative behaviors in conversation, given their higher status in society. The results in Table 2 are generally in the opposite direction, however, whether we control for the other status characteristics of age, education, and occupa-

tional status as well as the gender and control identities (Column 3), or whether we control only for the other status characteristics (Column 4). Husbands are *less* likely than wives to express negative socioemotional behaviors in interaction. Wives are more likely than husbands to employ negative agenda building, including complaining, criticizing, and negative relationship talk. They are also more likely than husbands to give qualified rather than full agreement to what is said by using the "Yes, but" speech act; they are more likely to escalate negative affect; and they are more likely to engage in other negative talk. Husbands' greater use of negative behavior lies in their defensive self-protection; they manifest this in the role of listener because they have a greater propensity to avoid eye contact with the speaker than do wives. Wives express more positive socioemotional behaviors than husbands only when they are the listeners. In these cases, they are more likely to have eye contact with the speaker, to smile at the speaker, and to show responsive facial and body movement to the speaker's talk. Husbands, on the other hand, are more likely to give agreement (assent), to use neutral and positive problem description, and to use humor in the speaker role. In general, the results show that lower-status persons (wives) rather than higher-status persons (husbands) use more negative socioemotional behaviors in interaction.

#### *Equivalence Models for Wives and Husbands*

Before examining the effects of the gender and control identities on the negative and positive behaviors, we tested whether the covariance matrices for wives and for husbands were different. If the matrices were the same, then the data for wives and husbands could be pooled. The results, however, showed that the covariances differed significantly for wives and husbands ( $\chi^2_{(435)} = 2760.53, p < .01$ ); thus we estimated separate equations for the spouses. Most of the differences occurred in the variances; many of the listener codes had larger variances for husbands than for wives. Also, some codes were correlated more strongly for either wives (for example, put-downs and other negative acts) or husbands (for example, escalating negative affect and negative

facial expression). We used the maximum-likelihood procedure of LISREL (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993) to examine the hypotheses on the effects of identity on behavior. The separate equations for wives and for husbands were estimated simultaneously; thus the errors between each of the dependent variables could be correlated.

According to identity theory, the effects of gender identity on behavior should be the same for all persons because those effects are based on consensually shared meanings. The data in this study showed that the effect of wives' gender identity on their own behavior did not differ significantly from the effect of husbands' gender identity on their own behavior, and the effect of wives' gender identity on *their* husbands' behavior did not differ significantly from the effect of husbands' gender identity on their wives' behavior ( $\chi^2_{(58)} = 52.66, ns$ ). That is, masculinity/femininity has the same meaning for males and for females in this study because it registers similar effects in interaction. For this reason, we estimated the equations in Table 3 by constraining the effects of the wives' gender identity to equal the effects of the husbands' gender identity. No constraints were placed on the variances.

We conducted a similar test of the equivalence of meanings for the control identity for husbands and wives: that is, to learn whether the effect of the control identity for husbands on wives was the same as the effect for wives on husbands, and whether the effect for husbands on themselves was the same as the effect for wives on themselves. This test revealed only three cases in which the effects were different; they involved negative affect, including put-downs and escalating negative affect, and the negative affect composite scale. In these cases, the effect of the husband's control identity was stronger than that of the wife's control identity. Therefore, with these three exceptions, the effects of wives' and husbands' control identities were also constrained to be equal in the estimation procedure. Table 3 presents the standardized LISREL estimates controlling for age, education, and occupational status.

#### *Effects of Gender as Identity and of the Control Identity*

In the overall results, we note that the error correlations (shown in the last column of

Table 3. Standardized LISREL Estimates of the Models for Wives and for Husbands (N = 278)<sup>a</sup>

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables							
	Gender Identity		Control Identity		Age	Educ	Occ Status	Correlated Error <sup>b</sup>
	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband				
Acts								
Negative Agenda Building								
W Complain	—	—	—	07*	— 16**	— 15	—	26**
H Complain	—	—	09*	—	—	—	—	—
W Criticize	06*	—	09**	08**	— 13*	—	—	45**
H Criticize	—	07*	11**	10**	— 13**	—	—	—
W Negative relationship talk	07*	06*	19**	17**	— 11**	— 10**	—	69**
H Negative relationship talk	07*	08*	20**	21**	— 14**	—	—	—
W Yes, but	—	—	—	—	— 20**	—	—	35**
H Yes, but	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
W Defensive	07*	12**	09*	08*	—	—	—	71**
H Defensive	12**	07*	08**	08**	— 10*	— 09*	—	—
Negative Affect								
W Put-down	09*	—	—	14**	—	—	—	35**
H Put-down	—	08*	—	32**	— 10*	— 15*	15*	—
W Escalate negative affect	—	—	—	28**	—	—	—	49**
H Escalate negative affect	—	—	11**	29**	—	— 14*	—	—
W Other negative	—	07*	12**	09**	—	—	—	17**
H Other negative	08*	—	11**	14**	—	— 19**	—	—
W Early closure	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11*
H Early closure	—	—	—	—	—	17*	— 14*	—
Negative Listener								
W No back channels	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	00
H No back channels	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
W Look away	10*	—	09*	—	—	—	—	27**
H Look away	—	07*	—	07*	—	—	—	—
W Negative facial	—	—	07*	—	—	— 15*	—	15*
H Negative facial	—	—	—	12*	—	—	—	—
Positive Agenda Building								
W Neutral/Positive description	—	—	— 15**	— 08**	—	—	—	59**
H Neutral/Positive description	—	—	— 10**	— 16**	—	—	09*	—
W Task information	—	—	— 08*	— 08*	—	—	—	79**
H Task information	—	—	— 09*	— 08*	—	—	—	—
W Assent	—	— 07*	— 10*	— 14**	24**	—	12*	.09*
H Assent	— 07*	—	— 13**	— 08*	14*	25**	— 15*	—
Positive Affect								
W Humor	—	—	— 12**	— 10*	—	—	12*	45**
H Humor	—	—	— 10*	— 11**	19**	— 10**	—	—
W Other positive	— 10**	—	—	—	—	—	—	35**
H Other positive	—	— 11**	—	—	—	—	—	—
Positive Listener								
W Back channels	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	47**
H Back channels	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
W Look at	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.26**
H Look at	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
W Positive facial	—	—	— 10**	—	10*	—	—	50**
H Positive facial	—	—	—	— 12**	—	—	—	—
W Responsive facial/body	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	38**
H Responsive facial/body	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Negative and Positive Acts Scales								
W Neg speaker	08*	07*	18**	17**	— 13**	— 13**	—	65**
H Neg speaker	08*	09*	20**	20**	— 16**	—	—	—
W Neg agenda build	07*	—	17**	15**	— 14**	— 13**	—	61**
H Neg agenda build	—	08*	19**	20**	— 16**	—	—	—
W Negative affect	09*	07*	10**	25**	—	—	—	47**
H Negative affect	07*	09*	11*	32**	— 11*	— 18**	14**	—
W Negative listener	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	00
H Negative listener	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
W Positive speaker	—	—	— 19**	— 16**	07*	—	13**	72**
H Positive speaker	—	—	— 17**	— 19**	16**	07*	—	—
W Positive listener	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	02**
H Positive listener	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

<sup>a</sup> Empty cells represent nonsignificant effects.

<sup>b</sup> Each correlation applies to the husband-wife pair of variables, and is reported on the wife line.

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 3 for each pair of equations) between wives' and husbands' behaviors on each of the dependent variables were generally posi-

tive and significant, indicating a high degree of reciprocity in activity. The profile of each person's activity across the categories tends

to be similar to that of his or her spouse. If the husband escalates negative affect, then the wife escalates negative affect. If the wife uses neutral problem description, the husband does so as well. Although our sequential analysis (discussed later) does not find an immediate reciprocity in the categories of behavior, the overall tendency is clearly present.

In the effects of the identity variables, we see that the more masculine either the wife's or the husband's gender identity, the more likely that each will use negative speech acts in conversation and will show negative affect. This finding supports Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 states that a more feminine gender identity will increase the likelihood of more positive behaviors in conversation. This hypothesis is supported only with respect to the expression of "other positive affect." In general, whereas Table 2 revealed that the status of being female predicts more use of negative speech acts in conversation, the results in Table 3 show that the meaning of being male (rather than the meaning of being female) positively predicts the use of these negative behaviors. In this interesting phenomenon, the status effects of being male or female run counter to the effects of the self-meanings of masculinity/femininity.

A second point about the effects of gender identity on interaction is that for most behaviors, the actor's gender identity influences the behavior itself. Indeed, identity theory predicts that people will behave in a manner consistent with their own identity. For several of the behaviors, however, spouse's gender identity also seems to influence the individual's behavior. This outcome is not predicted by identity theory, which deals only with the relationship between a person's own identity and behavior. Each of these effects is independent of the other, not only because each effect controls for the other but also because the husband's and wife's gender identities are relatively independent of each other ( $r = .01$ ). It is likely, however, that the correlations arise because of the reciprocity that we noted earlier for these behaviors.

As shown in Table 3, for example, one of the determinants of engaging in negative relationship talk is having a more masculine identity and having a spouse with a more masculine identity. These are not the only determinants, however. Each behavior also seems to be strongly reciprocated: The more one spouse uses negative relationship talk, the

more the other does as well. These effects, taken together, could result in the observed effect coefficients. Let us say that the wife is more masculine and engages in more negative relationship talk. As a result, the husband also engages in more negative relationship talk, given the reciprocity of behavior. The wife's identity has an effect on the husband's behavior only because the husband is responding to the wife's behavior; therefore her gender identity affects him only indirectly.

The effects of the control identity also show some significant patterns. First, the results support Hypothesis 4, on the influence of a more dominant control identity on negative behaviors in conversation.<sup>5</sup> Those with a more dominant control identity are more likely to complain, criticize, engage in negative relationship talk, be defensive, use put-downs, escalate negative affect, and engage in other negative behaviors. They are also more likely to engage in the negative listener behavior of looking away and assuming negative facial expressions. The three effects that were not constrained to be equal for husbands and for wives (put-downs, escalating negative affect, and the negative affect composite scale) are related more strongly to men's control identity than to women's. Finally, our findings support Hypothesis 5, which states that a less dominant control identity will influence the expression of positive behaviors in conversation. Table 3 shows that both husbands and wives with a less dominant control identity are more likely to engage in neutral/positive problem description, providing task information, assent, humor, and positive facial expressions.

Overall the effect of the control identity on the speech acts is somewhat stronger and more consistent across types of behavior than is the effect of gender identity, as indicated by

<sup>5</sup> When examining the effects of the control identity, one might argue that age, education, and occupational status should be examined to control for a spurious relationship between the control identity and the conversational behaviors. For example, youthfulness is related to controlling one's partner (Stets 1995b). In addition, the young and those from the lower class have diminished control over their life (Stets 1995b); because negative behaviors produce deference on the part of others, these people may use them frequently to increase their status and power (Lee and Ofshe 1981). As the results show, controlling for these factors does not diminish the effect of the control identity on the outcome behaviors.

the differences in the magnitude of the estimates. In every equation where gender identity and the control identity are both significant, the effect of the control identity is larger than that of the gender identity. Both, however, register similar effects in interaction. In keeping with our hypotheses, being masculine and being dominant, which share self-meanings of being powerful, both generate negative rather than positive behavior in interaction.

### *Sequential Analyses*

Whereas the above results show general tendencies of persons with a particular gender status, gender identity, or control identity to engage in negative or positive behaviors, the action/reaction data from the sequential analysis can show the extent to which these are responses to specific actions or to all behavior on the part of the spouse. Tables 4, 5, and 6 show the influence of one's gender status and identity on the likelihood of particular speaker and listener responses in a given turn to the spouse's speaking and listening behaviors in the preceding turn. Again, the responses are measured in relation to all *responses* by the couple to a particular behavior in the preceding turn (separately for speaker and for listener behavior). The speaker and listener behaviors in the preceding turn are listed along the side of the tables; the responses are shown along the top. In each table we indicate the direction of significant effects of an identity or status on the response (controlling for sex, age, education, occupational status, and the measured identities, as appropriate). Table 4 presents the effects of gender as status, Table 5 presents the effects of gender as identity, and Table 6 presents the effects of the control identity.

A + in Table 4 indicates that a particular response is more likely to be made by a husband than by a wife; while a - indicates that a particular response is more likely to be made by a wife than by a husband. For example, the + in Row 6, Column 4 indicates that husbands are more likely than wives to respond to a put-down by their spouse in the preceding turn by engaging in a "Yes, but . . ." response, while the - in Row 13, Column 2 indicates that wives are more likely than husbands to respond with a criticism to a neutral or positive problem

description by the spouse in the preceding turn.

In Table 5 a + indicates that a particular response is more likely for a person with a more masculine gender identity, while a - indicates that a particular response is more likely for a person with a more feminine gender identity. For example, the + in Row 1, Column 8 means that when one spouse made a complaint, insofar as the other spouse had a more masculine identity (controlling for the status characteristics and the control identity), that spouse was significantly more likely than a spouse with a more feminine identity to respond with "other negative" behaviors. Alternatively, a - in Row 20, Column 15 means that spouses with a more feminine identity who smiled while listening to their spouses, in one turn, agreed (assented) with their spouses in their next turn as speaker.

A + in Table 6 indicates responses that are more likely for persons with a more dominant control identity, while a - indicates responses that are more likely for a person with a less dominant control identity. The shaded cells in Tables 4, 5, and 6 indicate that the sequence represented by that cell occurred too infrequently to be analyzed.

In the results for Table 2, we saw that (contrary to the expectations of EST) women were more likely to engage in a number of negative behaviors, while men were more likely to engage in positive or neutral behavior. Table 4 shows the sequence of activity between the husband and the wife, and the degree to which being male or female increases the likelihood that certain behaviors follow particular behaviors displayed by the spouse. Table 4 shows that women are likely to use negative behaviors partially in response to negative behaviors on the part of their husband in the preceding turn, but they are especially likely to use the negative behaviors of complaining, criticizing, and negative relationship talk following neutral or positive problem description and assent by their husbands (see Columns 1, 2, and 3 for Rows 13 and 15).

In addition, women are more likely to use these forms of negative behavior following positive listening behavior on their own part in the preceding turn, independently of what their husband was doing. That is, if the wife, in the role of listener in the preceding turn, acted by providing back channels, looking at

Table 4. Direction of Significant Effects of Gender as Status for Current Speaker Turn Where Spouse Is Listener<sup>a</sup>

Preceding Turn	Negative Talk (Person)								Negative Listen (Spouse)				Positive Talk (Person)				Positive Listen (Spouse)				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
<b>Negative Talk (Spouse)</b>																					
1 Complain	-						-														
2 Criticize																					
3 Neg. relationship talk	-						-					+								+	
4 Yes, but																	+			+	
5 Defensive/Self-protect	-						-														
6 Put-down					+																
7 Escalate neg. affect					+																
8 Other neg.	-						-														
9 Early closure																					
<b>Negative Listen (Person)</b>																					
10 No back channels																					
11 Look away/down	-																				
12 Neg. facial expression																					
<b>Positive Talk (Spouse)</b>																					
13 Neutral/Pos. description	-						-						+							+	+
14 Task information																				+	+
15 Assent	-																			+	+
16 Humor																					
17 Other pos.																				+	+
<b>Positive Listen (Person)</b>																					
18 Back channels	-																+				+
19 Look at speaker	-												+								+
20 Pos. facial expression	-																			+	+
21 Responsive facial/body	-																			+	+

<sup>a</sup>Positive signs indicate that being male increases the probability of a particular response ( $p < .05$ ); negative signs indicate that being female increases the probability of the responses. Shaded cells represent insufficient occurrences for analysis. Analysis controls for age, education, occupational status, gender identity, and the control identity.



Table 5. Direction of Significant Effects of Gender Identity for Current Speaker Turn Where Spouse Is Listener<sup>a</sup>

Preceding Turn	Negative Talk (Person)									Negative Listen (Spouse)		Positive Talk (Person)									Positive Listen (Spouse)	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
<b>Negative Talk (Spouse)</b>																						
1 Complain																						
2 Criticize		+							+													
3 Neg. relationship talk		+									+											
4 Yes, but		+																				
5 Defensive/Self-protect																						
6 Put-down																						
7 Escalate neg. affect																						
8 Other neg.																						
9 Early closure		+							+													
<b>Negative Listen (Person)</b>																						
10 No back channels																						
11 Look away/down																						
12 Neg. facial expression																						
<b>Positive Talk (Spouse)</b>																						
13 Neutral/Pos. description		+																				
14 Task information																						
15 Assent																						
16 Humor																						
17 Other pos.																						
<b>Positive Listen (Person)</b>																						
18 Back channels																						
19 Look at speaker																						
20 Pos. facial expression																						
21 Responsive facial/body																						

<sup>a</sup>Positive signs indicate that a more masculine identity increases the probability of a particular response ( $p < .05$ ); negative signs indicate that a more feminine identity increases the probability of the response. Shaded cells represent insufficient occurrences for analysis. Analysis controls for sex, age, education, occupational status, and the control identity.

Table 6. Direction of Significant Effects of Control Identity for Current Speaker Turn Where Spouse Is Listener<sup>a</sup>

Preceding Turn	Negative Talk (Person)									Negative Listen (Spouse)			Positive Talk (Person)			Positive Listen (Spouse)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
<b>Negative Talk (Spouse)</b>																					
1 Complain			+			+															
2 Criticize			+				+		+												
3 Neg. relationship talk			+			+															
4 Yes, but			+		+																
5 Defensive/Self-protect			+			+															
6 Put-down			+			+															
7 Escalate neg. affect			+								+										
8 Other neg.			+				+		+												
9 Early closure			+								-										
<b>Negative Listen (Person)</b>																					
10 No back channels																					
11 Look away/down	+		+				+				+										
12 Neg. facial expression																					
<b>Positive Talk (Spouse)</b>																					
13 Neutral/Pos. description	+	+	+			+															
14 Task information			+																		
15 Assent	+	+	+			+	+	+	+												
16 Humor									+												
17 Other pos.	+		+				+														
<b>Positive Listen (Person)</b>																					
18 Back channels	+	+	+			+	+	+			+										
19 Look at speaker	+	+	+			+	+				+										
20 Pos. facial expression			+																		
21 Responsive facial/body		+									+										

<sup>a</sup> Positive signs indicate that a more dominant identity increases the probability of a particular response ( $p < .05$ ); negative signs indicate that a more submissive identity increases the probability of the response. Shaded cells represent insufficient occurrences for analysis. Analysis controls for sex, age, education, occupational status, and gender identity.

the speaker, and using positive facial and bodily expressions, she was likely to engage in complaining, criticizing, and negative relationship talk when it was her turn to talk (see the bottom left-hand corner of Table 4). Husbands, on the other hand, were likely to engage in neutral or positive description, assent, or humor following their own positive listener behavior (see Columns 13, 15, and 16). Negative behavior by husbands usually took the form of "Yes, but . . ." or defensive self-protection in response to defensiveness, put-downs, and escalation of negative affect by the wife in the preceding turn (see Columns 4 and 5). Defensive self-protection by the husbands was also likely to follow their looking at their spouse and providing back channels in the preceding turn while their spouse was speaking.

Table 5 shows, in agreement with our hypotheses, that husbands *and* wives with more masculine gender identities tend to respond to the spouse's negative talk with negative talk of their own. Criticism, negative relationship talk, defensive self-protection, and other negative behaviors all are more likely responses of more masculine persons (husbands or wives) to negative talk by the spouse (see the top panel of Table 5). We also see that more masculine persons tend to respond to neutral or positive problem description with criticism or a put-down (see row 13). On the other hand, the more feminine one is, whether a husband or a wife, the more likely that one will respond to both negative and positive talk in a positive manner, generally moving the discussion toward agreement or providing task information.

These results are similar to those presented in Table 3, although it is clearer now that the behaviors are responses to particular behaviors by the spouse rather than general tendencies to express oneself in a particular manner. For example, criticizing and defensiveness are masculine responses (see Columns 2 and 5), but we now see that they are masculine responses to certain forms of negative behavior by the spouse, such as criticism, negative relationship talk, and early closure. According to identity theory, more masculine people should make more negative responses because their gender-relevant self-perceptions are being disturbed. Criticisms or negative talk may challenge more masculine

persons' view that they are competent, autonomous, and "in charge" in situations.

Table 6 examines the effects of a more or less dominant control identity on the part of one person to various speech acts by the spouse, while controlling for the status characteristics and gender identity. We find that both husbands and wives with a more dominant control identity are more likely to respond to *either negative or positive talk* from their spouse with negative, oppositional talk of their own, especially negative relationship talk (which seems to be provoked by almost everything), put-downs, and escalating negative affect (see the left-hand side of Table 6). They are also likely to criticize or complain whenever their spouse takes a more positive tack. A husband or wife with a less dominant control identity generally responds with positive behavior, moving the discussion toward a neutral or positive task orientation or providing humor or agreement. This positive response also seems to be generalized to both preceding positive and preceding negative talk by the spouse.

The response of a dominant control identity is thus both similar to and different from the response of a more masculine person. Both involve negative oppositional behavior, but the response of the dominant control identity is more extreme, is more generalized as a reaction, and takes a slightly different form (negative relationship talk, put-downs, and escalating negative affect, as opposed to criticisms and defensive self-protection). At the same time, the response of a person with a less dominant control identity is like the response of a more feminine person, though again it is more extreme and more generalized. This finding confirms our hypotheses that the control identity and the gender identity are generally aligned as to meanings, but that they differ in specifics.

Table 6 also suggests the particular behaviors that trigger "control" responses by disturbing self-relevant perceptions. For example, it appears that both neutral/positive problem description and assent provoke a variety of responses (see Rows 13 and 15). For those who have a dominant control identity, all of these responses are negative, implying attempts to regain and affirm control, whereas they are positive for those with a less dominant control identity. Also, it appears that providing back channel feedback or looking at the spouse during his or her

preceding turn is a prelude to either negative talk (if the person has a dominant control identity) or positive talk (if the person has a less dominant control identity; see Rows 18 and 19).

In summary, the results of the sequential analysis show that the negative behaviors manifested by persons on the basis of gender as status or identity, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, are not simply general dispositions but are more focused responses to particular behaviors on the part of their spouses in the preceding turn. Women are more likely than men to respond negatively to their spouse, but they tend to do so more in response to neutral or positive problem description or assent on the part of their husbands than in response (for example) to criticism, put-downs, or escalating negative affect. Men's defensiveness ("Yes, but . . ." and defensive self-protection) tends to occur more in response to put-downs and escalating negative affect on the part of their wives. On the other hand, persons with a more masculine gender identity are likely to engage in negative behavior in response to other negative behaviors (such as criticism or negative relationship talk) or to neutral or positive problem description. Finally, unlike the focused gender-based responses, negative behavior based on a more dominant control identity seem to occur in response to everything the spouse does (except the use of humor).

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We began by trying to understand the impact of gender as status, and of gender and control as identities, on socioemotional behaviors in interaction. The extension of EST predicts that power will be manifested in negative, critical, oppositional behavior, and that this behavior is more likely to be used by higher-status persons (husbands) than by lower-status persons (wives). Contrary to these predictions, we found that being male *decreased* the likelihood of expressing negative, oppositional behavior, while being female *increased* this likelihood.<sup>6</sup> On the

other hand, when considering gender as identity, we found, in accordance with IT, that a more masculine gender identity (as well as a more dominant control identity) increased, rather than decreased, negative socioemotional behavior in interaction. Thus the effect of gender as status is very different from the effect of gender as identity. We wish to deal with two issues in terms of these findings. One issue is to *explain* these seemingly contradictory results; the other is to *assess their implications* for EST and IT.

#### An Explanation

To clarify these different findings, we make two important points. First, it is the *meaning* of behavior that is important; both IT and our extension to EST correctly identify negative behaviors as indicating power and control. Second, it is important to conceptualize individuals both as members of a social category and as agents with particular identities. One's status position in society is itself communicated as a signal in interaction. Others respond to this signal in terms of (among other things) the meaning implied by the diffuse status characteristic. Thus, as Person A's *position* is communicated to B, and B responds to this, A then responds to Person B's response *on the basis of A's own identity*. In this way, gender as status and gender as identity each play a role in determining the individual's behavior in an interaction. To illustrate this point more clearly, we consider the following.

Gender as status signals one's position in the social structure, and the degree to which one has power, resources, access, and control of one's fate. It has been argued that the performance of lower-status persons in a group (in terms of success in accomplishing the group's task) is judged by a stricter standard than that of higher-status persons (Foschi 1989; Foschi and Foddy 1988). Such a standard exists because of lower-status people's presumed inability to perform as well as higher-status people. This situation

<sup>6</sup> One might reason that the person who brought up the disagreement might be more offended and thus might be more likely to display negative behaviors. The initiator of the topic of disagreement, however, was no more likely to engage in negative than in positive behaviors in comparison with the noninitiator. In addition, when we

controlled for the originator of the topic of disagreement, all of our results remained unaffected. We also examined whether an interaction existed between the topic originator and gender in producing negative and positive behaviors; we found none. Finally, we examined whether some topics generated more negative behaviors than others; again, we found no effects. These results are available on request.

has been labeled a “double standard” because different standards are applied to different people who possess different states on relevant status characteristics (Foddy and Smithson 1989). This discrimination makes it more difficult for low-status people to prove their competence. Indeed, in regard to gender, research demonstrates that men are judged to be more competent than women in interaction (Etaugh and Kasley 1981; Gerdes and Garber 1983; Wood and Karten 1986), and that women must perform better than men if their influence is to be considered equal to men’s (Pugh and Wahrman 1983).

Given the double standard, it is expected that women, on average, will have to work harder than men to be viewed as capable in interaction.<sup>7</sup> In the present research, if negative behaviors are associated with meanings of power and control in a task group, then wives will use these behaviors even more than husbands so as to be seen as credible and capable in interaction. Wives’ more negative behavior, rather than reversing the power and prestige order within the marriage, simply helps to equalize power between themselves and their husbands (Foddy and Smithson 1989).

#### *A Partial Test of the Explanation*

If women, as members of social category, are discredited in terms of competence and power, then, from an identity perspective, this discrediting disturbs their self-concept. They may counter such a disturbance only by increasing the negative, oppositional character of their behavior (which has meanings of power and control). We argue that the discounting of women is categorical (tied to the social structure), but that the amount of such discounting by men may vary individually. If this is correct, we would expect that in marriages where husbands have more “traditional” attitudes about gender (which tend to discount women), their wives would be held to a stricter standard of performance than wives whose husbands have less traditional attitudes about gender. Consequently, in an effort to prove their competence, wives with more traditional husbands would display more

negative behaviors in interaction than wives with less traditional husbands.

We investigated this possibility by analyzing wives’ behavior given their husbands’ responses on the Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence and Helmreich 1978). The AWS, a 15-item scale, contains statements about the roles and responsibilities women ought to have in society. Respondents are to indicate how much they agree with each statement. Items include, for example, “Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers” and “There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted.” The items formed a single factor with a .90 omega reliability. We summed the items; those below the median on the AWS designated more traditional husbands, and those above the median represented husbands who had more equalitarian attitudes toward women.

The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7. We examine the wives’ behavior given their husbands’ AWS scores, controlling for age, education, occupational status, gender identity, and the control identity. The results strongly confirm our expectations: Wives whose husbands scored low (more traditional and less equalitarian) on the AWS were significantly more likely to display negative, oppositional behaviors in interaction than were wives whose husbands scored high on the AWS. The former frequently complained, criticized, engaged in negative relationship talk, used put-downs, escalated negative affect, and looked away and down while listening. They were unlikely to employ positive description of a problem or assent, or to look at the speaker when listening.

When we examined the correlations of husbands’ behavior with the AWS, we found that traditional husbands were significantly more likely than more equalitarian husbands to engage in criticism, negative relationship talk, and put-downs, and were more likely to escalate negative affect.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, these traditional husbands were significantly less likely to use neutral or positive problem description and assent. In general, these husbands’ negativity may be their mechanisms for expressing their traditional attitudes about women. Indeed, such behaviors are consistent with nonacceptance of women as

<sup>7</sup> This point is similar to the argument that women work harder than men (with comparable attributes) in the labor force, even though they work for less money (Bielby and Bielby 1988).

<sup>8</sup> These results are available on request.

Table 7. Mean Levels of Activity by Women with Husbands Who Are Low (Traditional, N = 156) or High (Nontraditional, N = 120) on the AWS Scale

Activity Category	Husband's AWS Score		Significance of Difference
	Low	High	
Negative Agenda Building			
Complain	3.66	3.46	
Criticize	3.96	2.84	**
Negative relationship talk	9.70	5.06	**
Negative Agenda Building: Response			
Yes, but	3.75	3.77	
Defensive/Self-protect	1.68	1.84	
Negative Affect			
Put-down	.83	.45	*
Escalate negative affect	.79	.25	**
Other negative	.48	.36	**
Early closure	.15	.21	
Negative Listener Acts			
No back channels	.00	.00	
Look away/down	13.29	10.43	**
Negative facial expression	.05	.03	
Positive Agenda Building			
Neutral/Positive description	53.06	59.58	**
Task information	3.23	2.45	
Positive Agenda Building: Response			
Assent	14.71	15.69	*
Positive Affect			
Humor	3.07	3.01	
Other positive	1.54	1.82	
Positive Listener Acts			
Back channels	53.66	54.66	
Look at speaker	35.74	37.80	**
Positive facial expression	3.29	2.89	
Responsive facial/body	.65	.63	
Negative and Positive Acts: Scales			
Negative speaker	21.20	14.26	**
Negative agenda building	17.27	11.37	**
Negative affect	2.19	.97	**
Negative listener	.03	.01	
Positive speaker	72.38	80.10	**
Positive listener	93.34	95.96	**

<sup>a</sup> Means are adjusted for age, education, occupational status, gender identity, and the control identity.

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

equals. Insofar as wives are exposed to this negative treatment because of their husbands' attitude toward women, they may respond with negative behavior of their own (behavior that is used by more masculine and more controlling people), perhaps in an endeavor to ward off being discounted. Thus they work harder than wives of nontraditional husbands to show that they deserve respect.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The findings of Table 7 disconfirm the idea that wives display more negative behavior because they are seen as more competent at tasks dealing with relationship issues, since wives are more negative when their husbands view them as more incompetent. Furthermore, other analyses on the data in this study show that younger spouses (rather than older spouses) and spouses with a lower occupational status (rather than those with a higher occupational status) are more likely to engage in negative

### Implications

We now address the implications of these results and interpretations for EST and IT. The findings of this study and the reasoning outlined above are consistent with those of other studies which have found that wives act more negatively than husbands in marital interaction and that wives' greater negativity can be traced to their subordinate position (Guthrie and Noller 1988; Krokoff 1987; Margolin and Wampold 1981; Notarius and Johnson 1982; Raush et al. 1974; Thompson and Walker 1989). Presumably, because

behavior in interaction, thereby showing that low status, not high status, produces negative action (Stets 1995d).

wives are in a weaker position, they rely more heavily on coercive communication to convey their views, while husbands, because of their more powerful position, can afford to be conciliatory. The findings of this study are also consistent with evidence that weaker actors in an exchange are more likely than powerful actors to use coercive tactics; these include women (Canary, Cunningham, and Cody 1988), low-level managers (Kanter 1977), and children (Patterson 1982). Weaker actors are more likely to use such tactics in an endeavor to control the other (Canary and Cupach 1988; Canary and Spitzberg 1989; Molm 1990).

These results have two possible implications for the extended EST model. First, the extended model is correct in expecting higher-status persons to use more negative behaviors. These results, however, would hold only in a limited number of conditions that include the traditional EST experimental setting (but not the conditions we have studied here). Alternatively, this extension to EST is not correct. If the first implication is correct, this study would contribute by identifying some of the characteristics that limit scope conditions of the EST extension, such as when the task is internal to the group (and discussions thus take a more informal, more personal tone); when the setting lacks emotional neutrality (because the actors are to discuss disagreements); when individuals know each other well and thus have developed enough mutual trust to permit negative behavior without the risk of losing the relationship; or a combination of all of these. Such conditions may signal that individuals in this situation, particularly women, can release inhibitions and behave negatively. In fact, marriage may be viewed as a culturally appropriate arena in which to "vent" feelings, especially because the outcomes (resolution to problems) affect the actors' daily lives.

Second and alternatively, the results of this study may suggest that the extension of EST to affective behaviors does not hold, at least under the conditions that we have examined. Recent laboratory research, however, testing EST in the conventional fashion, shows that negative emotion is compatible with low status rather than high status (Lovaglia and Houser 1996). Because this finding is consistent with our own results, it suggests more support for the latter of these arguments on EST than for the former.

The results for IT have two implications that we wish to emphasize. The first is that they reaffirm the importance of social structure as the context in which identities play out their agency (Stryker 1980). We saw that gender as status focuses on behavior by others which is directed toward oneself as an occupant of the status position or social category (male/female), and on the meanings conveyed by oneself as a member of that social category. In contrast, gender as identity (masculine/feminine) involves behavior enacted by oneself as an active agent attempting to verify and maintain that particular identity in response to categorical treatment by others, using the resources and meanings available within the social category.

The second implication concerns extending IT to incorporate not only role identities such as gender identity, but also the control identity as a person identity. We saw that although each of these operated as a control system to counter disturbances, as all identities do, and although they had somewhat overlapping meanings that were being controlled (dominance and power), important differences existed. One's gender identity is based in a social structural division of the members of society, which presumably helps to maintain the social system. One's control identity is based on one's personal way of acting as an agent, which helps to sustain the individual.

We saw that the respondents' gender identity was disturbed by only a few particular behaviors on the part of the spouse, but that their control identity was disturbed by almost everything the spouse did. Only future research can determine whether this is a difference between role identities and person identities in general or a difference between these two particular identities. In addition, the behaviors that were used to counter the disturbances were different. Respondents (male and female) with a masculine *gender* identity engaged more in criticism and defensive self-protection, while those with a more dominant *control* identity (male or female) engaged in negative relationship talk, put-downs, and escalating negative affect. Future research must determine the particular meanings that such behaviors are aimed at controlling.

### Conclusion

This research offers several important messages. First, because gender has the

characteristics of both status and identity, it is an important arena for understanding the interface between social structure and the individual. Gender as *status* provides a social structurally based signal to which others respond in regard to one's power and competence. Research shows that others discount the importance, relevance, power, and influence of women relative to men. In the present research, we have seen that some husbands (particularly those with a lower AWS score) discount women more than others. The data also show that insofar as such discounting occurs, women increase their level of negative, oppositional behavior to compensate. This reaction by women is a function of the agency of their identities to maintain a match between perceived self-meanings and identity standards. Thus social structure and the individual are linked through action and reaction in interaction.

Second, gender as *identity* provides individuals with the standard for assessing self-meanings in their interactive setting and for adjusting their behavior to bring these perceived self-meanings into alignment with

that standard. In general, and without considering any disturbances to the perceptions, we have seen that both men and women with more masculine gender identity standards will, on average, engage in more of the negative, oppositional behavior to bring their self-perceptions into line with their identity standards. On the other hand, if that alignment is disturbed by the actions of others responding to gender as status, then all persons with that status will receive a similar average disturbance and will act to compensate. Unfortunately women, in acting to compensate (by trying harder), may confirm to men only that they (women) need to try harder because they are less strong, less valuable, competent, and so forth. This is consistent with research which finds that negative behavior positively influences judgments of another as incompetent (Canary and Cupach 1988; Canary and Spitzberg 1989). Thus the discounting continues in a stable, self-sustaining pattern (Foddy and Smithson 1989), as does compensation by increased negative, oppositional behavior.



Appendix:  
Rapid Couples Interactional Scoring System (RCISS)<sup>a</sup>

Category	Definition and Example
<b>NEGATIVE SPEAKER ACTS</b>	
Negative Agenda Building: Own Views	
Complain	Bemoans one's suffering without explicitly blaming the other for it; whiny. Expresses feelings of unfairness, being deprived, wronged, or inconvenienced. Example: <i>I never get to go anywhere.</i>
Criticize	An expression of hostility or dislike to something specific that the other has done. Example: <i>You left dirty dishes all over the house AGAIN.</i>
Negative Talk	A statement dealing with the existence, nature, cause, or effect of a relationship problem that is delivered in a negative tone. Example: <i>Our financial situation is pretty bad because of your doctor bills</i> (Nature of problem).
Negative Agenda Building: Response	
Yes, But	Explicit or implicit statement of qualified agreement or apology. Example: <i>I'm sorry I made you mad, but I really felt that I had to make my point.</i>
Defensive	Denial of responsibility for past or present problems. Example: <i>You didn't clean the cat box. Well, I never said I would.</i> (The second sentence is the defensiveness).
<b>NEGATIVE AFFECT</b>	
Put-Down	Demeaning or embarrassing comment. Example: <i>You're so full of it.</i>
Escalate	Increase in hostile language or increase in hostile verbal tone.
Negative	Example: Statements beginning with "And another thing"; louder voice.
Other	Negative nonverbal messages that accompany one's talk.
Negative	Example: <i>Sadness in voice, heavy sighing, jaw clenching, pounding of fist, or finger pointing.</i>
Early Closure	An attempt to end the discussion on a topic before a solution is reached because the person thinks the problem has been resolved or, alternatively, is uncomfortable with the topic and doesn't want to discuss it further. Example: <i>Well, I'm done with this topic.</i>
<b>NEGATIVE LISTENER ACTS</b>	
No Back Channels	Absence of nonverbal behaviors that communicate an interest in what the speaker is saying. Put-Down Demeaning or embarrassing comment. Example: <i>You're so full of it.</i>
Look Away	Example: Absence of head nod, head tilt, or leaning toward speaker. Absence of eye contact with the speaker. Example: Stares at one's lap or the wall
Negative Facial	Negative affect revealed in the face Example: <i>Frowning.</i>
<b>POSITIVE SPEAKER ACTS</b>	
Positive Agenda Building: Own Views	
Neutral/Positive Description	A statement dealing with the existence, nature, cause, or effect of a relationship problem that is delivered in a neutral or positive tone. Example: <i>I think we have a problem with the kids</i> (existence of problem).
Talk Information	Issue-oriented or factual statements concerning past, present, or future behavior or events that are related to the problem being discussed. Example: <i>I just talked to your mother on the telephone.</i>
Positive Agenda Building: Response	
Assent	Verbal behaviors used to acknowledge that the speaker is being heard. This would include repeating part of the speaker's talk. Example: <i>Yeah. Mm-hmm. I see. I know. Right.</i>
Positive Affect	
Humor	A lighthearted statement that is almost always accompanied by laughter from the other.
Other	A positive event that occurs between partners that displays warmth or understanding, and is either verbal (as in compliments or supportive comments) or nonverbal (as in a hug or kiss).
Positive	Example: <i>You're doing better at your share of the housework and I appreciate that.</i>
<b>POSITIVE LISTENER ACTS</b>	
Back Channels	Presence of nonverbal behaviors that communicate an interest in what the speaker is saying. Example: Head nod, head tilt, or leaning toward the speaker
Look at Speaker	Presence of eye contact with the speaker.
Positive Facial	Positive affect revealed in the face. Example: Smile.
Responsive Face/Body	A nonverbal behavior that could be translated into a verbal response. Example: <i>The smile that says, "I like your idea." The perplexed look that says, "I don't understand what you mean." The raised eyebrow that says, "You're kidding."</i>

<sup>a</sup> Italicized categories represent those which we added to the RCISS in this study.

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