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Jealousy and the Meaning (or Nonmeaning) of Violence

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Previous research has indicated that jealousy is one of the major triggers of domestic violence. Three studies here examined North Americans' ambivalent feelings about jealousy and jealousy-related aggression. In Study 1, it was shown that participants believed both that jealousy can be a sign of insecurity and a sign of love. In Study 2, it was shown that this equating of jealousy with love can lead to the tacit acceptance of jealousy-related violence. In Study 3, it was shown that a relative acceptance of jealousy-related aggression extends to cases of emotional and sexual abuse by husbands against their wives. In both Studies 2 and 3, men who hit or abused their wives over a jealousy-related matter were judged to romantically love their wives as much as those who did not engage in abuse. Violence in the context of a non-jealousy-related argument was seen quite negatively, but it lost a great deal of its negativity in the jealousy case.

Keywords: *jealousy; domestic violence; jealousy-related aggression*

He that is not jealous is not in love.

—St. Augustine

Let's say I committed this crime [the murder of ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson]. Even if I did do this, it would have to have been because I loved her very much, right?

—O. J. Simpson

Each year in the United States, approximately 1,500 women are murdered by a current or former husband or boyfriend (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1993). Homicide is, of course, at the most extreme end of a continuum of violence. Many more women will be abused physically, sexually, and emotionally by a current or former husband or boyfriend.¹ In terms of physical violence, probability sampling estimates indicate that each year in the United States, an estimated 2 million women are severely assaulted by an intimate male partner (Straus & Gelles, 1990).

Undoubtedly, such actions arise from a complex set of factors (sociological, psychological, biological, cultural, and so on) and the forces legitimating such behavior are many (Koss et al., 1994). This article examines one such legitimating force, namely, beliefs about male jealousy, and it attempts to show how relatively widespread beliefs about jealousy, love, and violence can combine to create a dangerous syllogism in which domestic violence is at least relatively acceptable. Specifically, we explore the ways in which jealousy is often construed as arising from love, which can lead to the perception of jealousy-mediated violence as—if not an “act of love” (Jones, 1994)—at least as relatively understandable. The construal of jealousy as love can negate considerably the meaning of a violent act.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JEALOUSY IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Jealousy is an extremely important factor in men's violence against women. Evolutionary psychologists have

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argued that an early ancestral environment of “mild effective polygyny” (which increased the chances of cuckoldry) and the substantial parental investment required of men (which increased the cost of cuckoldry) would have led men to be acutely sensitive to threats of an interloper (Wilson & Daly, 1992, p. 300). Among the more extreme reactions to such threats is violence against either the potential rival or against the woman. In their *Homicide* book, Daly and Wilson (1988) go through an impressive array of evidence both arguing for the plausibility of an evolutionary account of jealousy and examining the predictions one would derive from evolutionary theory about the frequency, timing, and surrounding circumstances of spousal homicides. Daly and Wilson (1988, p. 202) note that for every sample they have examined, the primary cause of male on female violence has been sexual jealousy or the threat of desertion by the wife (see also Buss, 2000).

There may be an evolved predisposition toward jealousy in the face of real (or imagined) relationship threat. However, it is also true that there are large cultural differences in how and how often adaptations are expressed. In the case of jealousy, there may be cultural differences in, among other things, (a) the frequency, variety, and types of events that elicit jealousy; (b) the social legitimacy the emotion of jealousy is given; and (c) the behavioral responses to jealousy that are considered appropriate. The acceptance of violence in response to jealousy-invoking situations may be particularly variable across cultures. In experimental studies, for example, Vandello and Cohen (in press) and Grandon and Cohen (2002) illustrated the way jealousy-related violence is given greater legitimacy and is more tolerated in honor cultures as compared to nonhonor cultures. And in archival analyses of cross-national, intra-national, and ethnographic data, Vandello and Cohen (2002a), for example, examined the way spousal abuse rates varied as a function of a culture’s concern with women’s purity as well as their role in the marriage and family (see also Ghazal & Cohen, 2002; Vandello & Cohen, 2002b).

Given the plausibility of an evolved predisposition toward jealousy and potential cultural variation in its expression, it becomes interesting to focus on beliefs about jealousy and jealousy-related violence within a North American context because there is an intriguing tension in North American culture between various meanings ascribed to jealousy (Salovey, 1991; Stearns, 1989). On one hand, jealousy is seen as an indication of insecurity (or in extreme cases, pathology; Margaret Mead [1977] described it as a “festering spot in every personality so afflicted” [p. 126]). On the other hand, jealousy is often seen as an index of love or commitment (Buss, 2000). Both views have support in North American culture, although many people tend to back away

from the jealousy-as-love interpretation when one asks explicitly and straightforwardly about jealousy-related violence.

Jealousy, violence, and love. Understandably so, much of the previous empirical research examining the link between jealousy, violence, and perceptions of love has relied on self-reports from people who are themselves either abusers or abused. For example, Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd, and Christopher (1983) found that approximately 32% of abusers and 27% of abused persons in their sample thought of the violence as stemming from love. In fact, in the participant-generated list of possible motives for the violence in their relationship, love was ranked third behind anger and confusion (hate was ranked last). Similarly, Dobash and Dobash (1979) reported that women often perceived their husbands’ jealousy as indicating the seriousness of their commitment. However, it might be argued that the perspectives of the batterer and the battered become deviant through the course of the abuse. Thus, the present studies examined how nonclinical populations, outside of an abusive relationship, perceived jealousy-related violence and whether a jealousy motive can negate the meaning of the violent act in their perceptions.

In the first study, we examined whether people really do equate jealousy with love. Basically, Study 1 tested whether people believed in the Augustinian notion that “he that is not jealous is not in love.” In the second and third studies, we examined whether people viewed jealousy-related violence as deriving from romantic love (perhaps a love that was too intense) and were *relatively* accepting of it. Fundamentally, Studies 2 and 3 explored whether people believe in some (weaker) version of the sentiment espoused by accused wife killer O. J. Simpson: “Let’s say I committed this crime [the murder of ex-wife Nicole Simpson]. Even if I did do this, it would have to have been because I loved her very much, right?” (Farber, 1998, p. 58).

Stated explicitly, the above statement looks pathological, and of importance, it may be quite difficult to examine the beliefs we are studying in Experiments 2 and 3 by simply asking respondents straightforwardly about their attitudes. Vandello and Cohen (in press), for example, asked a sample of students to rate how understandable (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very understandable*) it would be if a man struck his wife under a variety of circumstances. The average jealousy-related item (e.g., “the wife danced suggestively with another man at the bar,” “the wife tells the husband she is having an affair,” etc.) received a 1.5, with the most extreme item (“the husband catches the wife in bed with another man”) receiving a 2.04. Such traditional methods probably drastically underestimate people’s tacit approval of jealousy-related violence both because of social desirability concerns and because peo-

ple do not realize how much they do tacitly support such aggression. When asked about in this straightforward manner, jealousy-related violence is likely to be condemned and seen as immature or pathological. However, in the context of specific cases, the jealousy-as-love meaning may subtly color people's judgments, making jealousy-related violence "different" from other forms of violence.

Normally, people should think an act of violence indicates a lack of love: Someone who hits his wife probably loves his wife less than someone who does not. However, in the case of jealousy-related violence, the perception of jealousy as love should considerably negate the meaning of the violent act. In this case, a jealous husband who uses violence may be perceived as just as loving (or perhaps more loving) than one who does not use violence. Given an involving scenario, simply asking people to imagine what they would think of a man who was jealous of his wife and hit her gives some information about people's explicit beliefs in such cases. However, also asking the counterfactual—that is, asking about a man who got jealous but did *not* hit his wife—fleshes out even more our understanding of what the violence actually means (or, of importance, does not mean) to people in such instances.

Romantic and companionate love. There are different definitions and types of love that can involve commitment. In terms of the jealousy-as-love construal, the most relevant type would be romantic love—that is, a love that goes beyond liking, embraces the concept of passionate caring, and desires intimacy (see, e.g., Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002; Sternberg, 1988). Less likely to be implicated in jealousy would be companionate love—a "cooler" sort of love that involves respect and concern but that lacks the "hotter" emotional elements of romantic love. Furthermore, respect and concern can be given to a great number of potential partners, whereas the objects of romantic love can seem more or less irreplaceable (see also Franiuk et al., 2002, on folk theories of love). Jealousy indicates a (real or imagined) threat to the relationship—a threat made especially serious when one feels a strong need for a particular person because that person cannot be replaced. Thus, our hypotheses about jealousy and the meaning (or nonmeaning) of violence are mostly applicable to the hotter romantic love concept, although we also included items relevant to companionate love in Experiments 2 and 3 for preliminary examination.

STUDY 1: IS JEALOUSY SEEN AS A SIGN OF LOVE?

Inspired by the findings of Buss, Larsen, Westen, and Semmelroth (1992) where men were shown to have a physiological reaction to an imagined sexual infidelity by

their romantic partner, we asked our participants to evaluate the physiological graphs of men who were supposedly "subjects" in the Buss et al. (1992) study. These supposed subjects had been instructed to imagine their wives (a) innocuously talking, (b) flirting, or (c) cheating with another man. For each of these three scenarios, our participants were presented with the responses from two different "husbands": one jealous and the other not jealous. This study was a 2 (man's response: jealous or not jealous) \times 3 (imagined behavior of woman: innocuous, strong flirted, or cheated) within-subjects design, with participants making a series of ratings about the "husbands."

Method

Procedure. Participants were 156 undergraduate students (89 women, 66 men) from a North American university. Five female undergraduate research assistants recruited people from various places on campus during a 2- to 3-day period. (To keep the questionnaire short, we included only a skeletal set of measures in this study that were fleshed out more in Studies 2 and 3.) The experimenter explained that research has found that men have different reactions to the thought of their romantic partner interacting with another man and then explained the Buss et al. (1992) study in which men were asked to imagine their wives with another man while their physiological responses (heart rate and blood pressure) were being recorded. We told participants that we had some results from this study and wanted their opinion about some of these men's responses. Participants then read each of these three scenarios supposedly imagined by the subject, the order of which was counterbalanced: (a) "Imagine that you are walking down the street and see your wife laughing and talking to a man you don't know" (innocuous condition); (b) "Imagine that you are walking down the street and see your wife laughing and talking to a man you don't know. Your wife keeps touching the other man's thigh. At one point, she leans over to whisper something in his ear and then kisses him on the cheek" (strong flirted condition); and (c) "Imagine that you came home and found your wife in bed having sex with another man" (cheated condition).

For each condition, participants read about two husbands: one who became jealous as he imagined the vignette and the other who did not. The jealous husband's blood pressure and heart rate were depicted as rising after just thinking about the vignette and he responded with a 6 on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) to the question "How jealous are you?" The non-jealous husband's blood pressure and heart rate did not change after just thinking about the vignette and his response to the jealousy question was a 2.

Dependent measures. Participants were asked to rate how much each husband loved, passionately cared about, and wanted to be with his wife; these ratings were averaged into a romantic love scale ($\alpha = .90$). Our single-item measure related to companionate love in this study asked about how much the husband respected his wife. Another single item asked participants how long they thought the couple's marriage should last. These ratings were made on a 1 to 5 scale. In addition, participants were asked to make seven ratings of how understandable each husband's reaction was. The resulting scale ($\alpha = .82$) had four items asking about how appropriate, understandable, acceptable, and reasonable the response was and three asking about how immature, insecure, and foolish the husband was (reverse-scored). These ratings were made using semantic differential scales from 1 to 7.

Results and Discussion

We predicted that as the wife's behavior became less innocuous, participants would perceive the jealous husband's response as more loving and more favorable compared to a non-jealous husband's response. A series of 2 (response: jealous or non-jealous) \times 3 (behavior: innocuous, strong flirted, or cheated) \times 2 (participant sex: male or female) within-subjects repeated measures multivariate analyses of variance revealed all predicted Response \times Behavior interactions to be significant. As may be seen in Table 1, as the wife's behavior became increasingly provocative, the non-jealous husband became perceived as increasingly less loving than the jealous husband, $F(2, 304) = 142.04, p < .001$. Participants also believed that as the wife's behavior became more provocative, jealousy became indicative of more respect than non-jealousy, $F(2, 302) = 111.23, p < .001$, and that the man's non-jealous reactions boded ill for the relationship when compared to his jealous ones, $F(2, 292) = 65.03, p < .001$. Finally, as the wife's behavior became more provocative, the ratings for how understandable the jealous reaction was increased, whereas the ratings for the non-jealous reaction decreased, $F(2, 304) = 256.34, p < .001$.

Interactions with gender. There were significant three-way interactions between gender, husband reaction, and triggering event for both the romantic love and respect variables, $F(2, 304) = 5.49, p < .005$, for the love variable and $F(2, 302) = 3.66, p < .03$, for the respect variable. The three-way interactions for the other two variables were not significant (both $ps > .12$). For both the love and respect variables, the general pattern was similar for both men and women. The difference was that the interaction patterns tended to be more extreme for the female respondents than the male respondents. For the men only, the interactions were significant at $F = 35.83, p < .001$ (love) and $F = 28.6, p < .001$ (respect). For the

TABLE 1: Mean Ratings as a Function of Woman's Behavior and Man's Response in Study 1

	Innocuous	Flirted	Cheated	Interaction p Value
Romantic love				
Jealous	4.16 (.79)	4.38 (.68)	4.37 (.75)	
Non-jealous	3.97 (.96)	3.04 (1.13)	2.09 (1.20)	<.001
Respect				
Jealous	2.75 (1.23)	3.34 (1.15)	3.44 (1.28)	
Non-jealous	4.31 (1.03)	3.37 (1.33)	2.16 (1.37)	<.001
Prognosis				
Jealous	2.94 (1.37)	2.90 (1.47)	2.24 (1.50)	
Non-jealous	4.48 (1.00)	2.99 (1.52)	1.81 (1.36)	<.001
Understanding				
Jealous	3.09 (1.37)	4.69 (1.20)	5.44 (1.09)	
Non-jealous	5.77 (1.14)	4.16 (1.36)	3.04 (1.25)	<.001

NOTE: Five-point rating scales were used for romantic love, respect, and prognosis, with higher values indicating more love, more respect, and better prognosis. Seven-point rating scales were used for the understanding rating, with higher values indicating more understanding. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

women only, the interactions were significant at $F = 130.65, p < .001$ (love) and $F = 101.59, p < .001$ (respect).

Within-imaginary scenario tests of difference between jealous and non-jealous husbands. Within each imaginary scenario, tests of differences between jealous and non-jealous husbands also were informative. As might be expected, the husband who gets jealous (as opposed to the one who does not get jealous) imagining his wife's infidelity is thought of better on all four indicators, shown in column 3 of Table 1 (all $ts > 3.61$, all $ps < .001$). Perhaps more interestingly, in the innocuous situation (column 1), people are less understanding of the husband who gets jealous, think he is less respectful, and think less of the marriage (compared to when the husband does not get jealous) (all $ts > 12$, all $ps < .001$), but even in this innocuous case the jealous husband tends to be seen as more loving (jealous $M = 4.16$, non-jealous $M = 3.97$), $t = 2.21, p < .05$ (although this difference was driven by the men, male M for jealous = 4.24, M for non-jealous = 3.68, $t = 6.52, p < .001$; female M for jealous = 4.09, M for non-jealous = 4.19, $t = 1.17, p > .25$). Finally, in the intermediate case for both men and women (imagining the flirting, column 2), the jealous husband was seen as more loving, $t = 15.62, p < .001$, and his actions more understandable, $t = 3.38, p < .001$. There were no significant differences on the respect and prognosis variables in this intermediate condition (both $ts < 1$).²

Overall, these results suggest that participants (a) believe jealousy can be a sign of love, even when they say they do not understand why the husband is jealous (the innocuous case), and (b) show strong approval for jealousy occasioned by infidelity and strong condemnation when it is not exhibited. (In the intermediate case, par-

ticipants showed mixed reactions to the jealous husband.) In Studies 2 and 3, we examine the implications of these beliefs about jealousy and the way that they might transform the meaning of violence in a relationship.

STUDIES 2 AND 3: CAN JEALOUSY NEGATE THE MEANING OF VIOLENCE?

Studies 2 and 3 were designed to test the notion that because people may implicitly equate jealousy with love, this may lead them to discount, minimize, and perhaps even look at jealousy-related violence through “love-colored” glasses (Jones, 1994). The seemingly innocuous findings of jealousy implying love in Study 1 set the stage for a more dangerous syllogism when violence is added to the mix. People generally view spouse abuse as indicating a lack of love, but in Studies 2 and 3, we experimentally test whether the construal of jealousy as love may considerably negate the meaning of a violent act.

STUDY 2

In Study 2, participants were asked to listen to and evaluate two audiotapes, each depicting a man being interviewed about the most recent conflict he had with his wife. The tapes were varied in terms of (a) the trigger event (all participants heard both a jealousy-related and a non-jealousy-related conflict) and (b) husband’s response (half of the participants heard about a husband who hit his wife while the other half heard about a husband who did not hit her in reaction to the trigger event). Of importance, the trigger events for the jealousy-related and non-jealousy-related conflicts were rated by independent judges (60 introductory psychology students from the subject pool) who heard both tapes and judged the conflicts to be equally bad, anger provoking, and intentional.³

In judging the husband’s response to these events, we expected that participants would be extremely disapproving of the “hit” response, if the conflict concerned a non-jealousy-related matter. However, we expected very little difference, or at least a much smaller difference, between the hit and no-hit conditions if the conflict involved jealousy. In other words, we expected the hit would lose a substantial part (if not all) of its negativity if it was part of a jealousy-related conflict.

Method

Procedure. Participants were 49 introductory psychology students (24 men, 25 women) from a North American university.⁴ When participants arrived at the lab, the study was introduced to them ostensibly as part of a larger study of married couples who had been interviewed separately about various aspects of their married life. The experimenter explained that we had short

excerpts from these longer interviews for participants to listen to and evaluate.

The experimenter explained that it was important to understand what people outside of a relationship think about a relationship because they can often affect how couples themselves view it. She also explained that this is especially critical after a fight or argument when these “outside others” may influence how couples respond. She explained that they would be listening to excerpts from interviews of two different men. In each case, the man described the most recent conflict he had with his wife, and participants were to make a series of judgments about what they heard on the tape afterward. (Before beginning the tape, participants were asked to read over some basic demographic information about the couple [to equate the two middle-class couples in terms of age, income, occupational status, number of years married, level of education, and number of children].)

Stimulus tapes. In the jealousy tape, participants heard a man tell a story of how he and his wife went to a party together and how, at some point during the party, he noticed that his wife was “doing all this flirty stuff” with another man. The man made it clear that neither he nor his wife had been drinking. He then described how he had to urge his wife numerous times to leave the party, saying that she did not want to leave because, he suspects, she wanted to flirt some more. He finally convinced her to leave the party. However, they began arguing shortly after they arrived home. At the climax to the argument, he either (a) hit her to “give her something to think about” or (b) left and went to a friend’s home to cool off by playing a game of pool. The tape ends with the interviewer asking him, “Do you usually react that way?” He replied “yes” in both conditions. In the hit condition, he said that he had hit her once before because she was flirting and that he “just gets so jealous.” In the no-hit condition, he said that once before he had left and went over to a friend’s after they had argued because she was flirting and that he “just gets so jealous.”

In the non-jealousy tape, participants heard a man describe how he went to lunch with some business clients. When he tried to pay with his credit card, the waiter said that his credit was over the limit, embarrassing him in front of his clients and “putting him in a bad spot at lunch.” He said he got “really angry” because he and his wife had previously discussed not using this credit card but that she had obviously decided to completely disregard their agreement. He went home to confront his wife about putting him in a bad situation in front of his clients. He arrived home to discover his wife “wearing the clothes that she bought with the credit card, and wearing the make-up, and sitting there watching TV that she probably paid for with that credit card, too.” They began arguing and, at one point, he said that she told

him “well . . . it’s my credit card, too, and I can use it when I want.” At the climax to the argument, he either (a) hit her to “get my point across” or (b) left and walked for a mile or so to cool off. Finally, the interviewer asked, “Do you usually react that way?” Again, he replied “yes” in both conditions. In the hit condition, he said that he has hit her once before because she had broken an agreement they had made. In the no-hit condition, he said that when he gets angry like that, he handles it by going for a walk.

Dependent measures. After each tape, participants were asked to make a series of ratings along several different dimensions. A scale indicating how much romantic love the husband felt toward his wife comprised ratings of how much the husband loved, passionately cared about, needed, and wanted to be with his wife (all on 5-point scales, $\alpha = .84$). A scale indicating how much companionate love the husband felt toward his wife comprised ratings of how much the husband respected and was concerned with his wife (5-point scales, $r = .58$, $p < .001$, $\alpha = .73$). A scale indicating how understandable the husband’s reaction was comprised ratings of how understandable, justifiable, acceptable, and good the husband’s actions were and (reverse-scored) how insecure, immature, foolish, and dumb he was (7-point scales, $\alpha = .93$). A scale indicating participants’ prognosis for the marriage comprised items that asked how long participants thought the couple’s marriage should last, how long they thought it would last, and two items concerning whether the wife ought to stay with or leave her husband (“If you were the wife, would you stay or leave?” and “If you were the wife’s best friend, would you tell her to stay or leave?”) (these four items were standardized and combined, $\alpha = .87$). Finally, we also added a scale examining how morally bad the husband was. This scale comprised ratings of the man as selfish, mean, vengeful, sadistic, self-centered, a bad husband, a bad dad, and a bad man (7-point scales, $\alpha = .90$).

Results and Discussion

Jealousy and violence interaction. As may be seen in Table 2, we found consistent patterns of effects for each of our dependent measures. We predicted that the violence would carry a very negative meaning if it was in the context of a non-jealousy argument but could lose much if not all of its negativity if the violence stemmed from jealousy. A series of 2 (trigger event: jealousy or non-jealousy) \times 2 (response: hit or no-hit) mixed-factor multivariate analyses of variance revealed all predicted Trigger \times Response interactions to be significant (see Table 2).

As expected, the man who hit his wife was seen as not romantically loving of his wife if the conflict occurred over a non-jealousy-related matter (hit $M = 2.90$, no-hit

TABLE 2: Mean Ratings as a Function of Trigger Event and Man’s Response in Study 2

	<i>Jealousy</i>	<i>Non-jealousy</i>	<i>Interaction p Value</i>
Romantic love			
Hit	4.36 (.57)	2.90 (.80)	
No hit	4.22 (.58)	3.40 (.98)	<.04
Companionate love			
Hit	3.43 (.75)	2.30 (.84)	
No hit	3.62 (.65)	3.17 (1.16)	<.04
Prognosis/advice			
Hit	-.29 (.67)	-.53 (.57)	
No hit	.30 (.71)	.63 (.58)	<.01
Understanding			
Hit	4.56 (1.35)	4.02 (1.43)	
No hit	6.09 (1.18)	6.73 (2.26)	<.04
Morally bad (lower = more bad)			
Hit	3.82 (.83)	2.90 (1.15)	
No hit	4.31 (.64)	4.54 (1.09)	<.002

NOTE: Five-point rating scales were used for romantic and companionate love, with higher values indicating more love. Seven-point rating scales were used for understanding and moral badness, with higher values indicating more understanding and less moral badness. The prognosis and advice items were standardized and combined, with higher values indicating a more favorable prognosis. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

$M = 3.40$), $t(47) = 2.38$, $p < .05$. However, if the conflict was over jealousy, the man who used violence was seen as romantically loving his wife as much (or even trivially more so) than the man who did not use violence (hit $M = 4.36$, no-hit $M = 4.22$) $t(47) = .67$, $p > .50$. The interaction between the jealousy and violence factors was significant, $F(1, 47) = 4.64$, $p < .04$. Furthermore, in this case, it is also interesting to note that the jealous husband who hits his wife is actually seen as more loving than the non-jealous husband who does not hit his wife, $t(47) = 4.57$, $p < .002$.

A similar, although less extreme, pattern also emerged for the companionate love items. Again, the man who hit his wife was seen as not very companionately loving of his wife if the conflict occurred over a non-jealousy-related matter (hit $M = 2.30$, no-hit $M = 3.17$), $t(47) = 3.78$, $p < .005$. However, if the conflict was over jealousy, the hit did not significantly affect ratings of how much the man companionately loved his wife (hit $M = 3.43$, no-hit $M = 3.62$), $t(47) = .83$, $p > .40$. The Jealousy \times Violence interaction was significant, $F(1, 46) = 4.27$, $p < .04$.

Participants also believed that jealousy attenuated the negativity of the hit for all the other dependent measures, making a big distinction between hit versus no hit in the non-jealousy condition but making significantly less distinction between hit and no hit when the argument stemmed from jealousy. Specifically, if the man was jealous (as opposed to not jealous) it mattered much less

whether the man hit his wife or not in terms of the prognosis for the couple's marriage, interaction $F(1, 46) = 6.51, p < .01$; how understandable the husband's reaction was, interaction $F(1, 46) = 4.29, p < .04$; and the judgment of the husband as morally bad, $F(1, 46) = 10.31, p < .002$, as seen in Table 2. For the three variables above, differences between the husband who hit versus did not hit in the jealousy case were on average only half as large as the hit versus no-hit differences in the non-jealousy case.

Summary. In sum, participants saw no difference between hitting and not hitting in judging how much the jealous husband romantically loved (and even, in this case, companionately loved) his wife. For the romantic love variable, the negative meaning the violence had in the non-jealousy case was completely lost in the jealousy case. For other dependent measures, such as ratings of how understandable the reaction was, prognosis for the marriage, and ratings of the man as morally bad, people made much less of a distinction between violent and nonviolent husbands when the conflict was over jealousy, as compared to when it was not. Overall, the negativity of the hit was greatly reduced, if not totally eliminated, across measures when it resulted from the man's jealousy.

STUDY 3

As in Study 2, participants in Study 3 were asked to listen to and evaluate a scenario depicting a man being interviewed about the most recent conflict he had with his wife. However, this time we changed the type of abuse. Participants were presented with only one audiotape, which was varied in terms of (a) the trigger event (participants either heard a jealousy-related or a non-jealousy-related conflict) and (b) the husband's response (participants either heard the husband respond by doing nothing abusive or heard the husband respond by abusing his wife, either emotionally or sexually). As Jacobson and Gottman (1998) have shown, emotional abuse serves a similar function as physical abuse and, often, is viewed as more noxious and damaging by wives and female partners than is physical violence. We thus included emotional abuse as well as rape in this study to draw on a wider sample of abuse domains. (The same trigger events from Study 2 were used, again equating the jealousy and non-jealousy-related conflicts for how bad, anger provoking, and intentional the triggering events were perceived to be.)

In judging the husband's response to these events, we again expected that participants would be extremely disapproving of the abuse (sexual or emotional) if the husband was not acting out of jealousy. In contrast, however, we expected this negativity would be greatly diminished if the husband's abusive response was part of his jealous

reaction. In addition, in Study 3, we also asked about whether participants had participated in programs or workshops addressing issues of sexual assault. This would allow us to examine whether domestic violence education would moderate the predicted jealousy and abuse interaction or lessen the acceptance of abuse generally.

Method

Procedure. Participants were 186 introductory psychology undergraduate students (87 men and 99 women) from a North American university. The procedure, cover story, and stimulus audiotapes were similar to those of Study 2, with the exception of how the narrative ended. Study 3 was a completely between-subjects design; thus, we re-recorded the stimulus tapes using only one actor for all tapes for tighter experimental control. Also, in the non-jealousy-related condition, the man says that he is coming home after a business dinner (not lunch) to give the story a closer proximity to bedtime. In the ending to all stories, the man and his wife get into bed after arguing over the triggering event and the woman says, "Don't even touch me!" The man describes how he keeps thinking about the triggering incident and then in the no-abuse condition, he gets out of bed and goes to sleep on the sofa. In the emotional abuse condition, he gets out of bed and screams at her at the "top of his lungs" for 4 hours, criticizing her and calling her a "bitch" and a "slut" and so on until he eventually stops and goes to sleep on the sofa. In the rape condition, he begins touching and kissing her while she repeatedly tells him to stop and keeps pushing him away. She continues saying "no" and trying to push him off of her, even after he penetrates her and has sex. She continues to struggle, then he stops and goes to sleep on the sofa.

In all conditions, the interviewer ends by asking the man, "Do you think that was the best way to respond?" and in all conditions the man says it was not and that talking about things would have been much better.

Dependent measures. After listening to the tape, participants were asked to make a series of ratings along several different dimensions. The same composite measures from Study 2 were used. For Study 3, we were also interested in participants' perceptions of how masculine the husband was; thus, we included items assessing the husband's traditional masculinity. This scale comprised items rating the husband as brave, courageous, strong, assertive, active, and competent (7-point semantic differential scales, $\alpha = .64$).

In the rape condition, we also asked participants three final questions: (a) should the wife file rape charges against her husband, (b) would you vote to convict the man of a felony sexual assault if charges were filed and you were a jury member, and (c) would you vote

to convict him on misdemeanor sexual misconduct charges (a lesser offense) if you were on the jury. Regarding whether the wife should file rape charges, ratings were made on a 1 (*definitely should not file*) to 7 (*definitely should file*) scale. The two conviction questions were answered on a 1 (*definitely vote not guilty*) to 7 (*definitely vote guilty*) scale. Because jealousy seems to reduce the negativity of a physical assault (Study 2), we predicted that the man's jealousy also would reduce the likelihood that participants would (a) think that the wife should file rape charges and (b) convict the husband of rape charges if the case went to court and they were on the jury.

Results and Discussion

Jealousy and abuse interaction. We predicted an interaction such that when the abuse stemmed from a non-jealousy-related incident, it would be seen as very unloving and bad. If it stemmed from a jealousy-related incident, the abuse would have far less negative meaning or the negativity might even be eliminated completely. Consistent with the findings of Jacobson and Gottman (1998), the predicted interaction pattern looked similar for both the emotional and sexual abuse scenarios. Therefore, the abuse conditions were combined and we conducted a series of 2 (trigger: jealousy vs. non-jealousy) \times 2 (response: abuse vs. no-abuse) \times 2 (participant sex: male vs. female) \times 2 (domestic violence workshop: yes vs. no) analyses of variance.⁵

As may be seen in Table 3, the man who abused his wife was seen as not very romantically loving of her if the abuse occurred along with a non-jealousy-related incident (abuse $M = 3.34$, no-abuse $M = 3.72$), $t(87) = 2.00$, $p < .05$. However, if the conflict involved jealousy, the man who abused his wife was seen as romantically loving his wife as much as the man who did not abuse her (abuse $M = 4.45$, no-abuse $M = 4.46$), $t(87) = .07$, $p > .90$. The interaction between the jealousy and abuse variables was significant, $F(1, 176) = 3.78$, $p < .05$. In fact, it is again interesting to note that the jealous husband who abuses his wife is actually seen as more loving than the husband in the non-jealous scenario who does not abuse his wife, $t(85) = 5.62$, $p < .001$.

In terms of companionate love, the Abuse \times Jealousy interaction did not occur, $F(1, 176) = 1.80$, $p > .18$; however, there was a marginally significant three-way interaction involving sex of participants ($p < .10$). Men made a much bigger distinction between abuse and no abuse in the non-jealousy case (abuse $M = 2.38$, no-abuse $M = 3.68$) but made a significantly smaller distinction between abuse and no abuse when jealousy was involved (abuse $M = 3.11$, no-abuse $M = 3.55$), Abuse \times Jealousy interaction for men only, $t(82) = 2.46$, $p < .02$. However, this interaction did not occur for women, $t < 1$.

TABLE 3: Mean Ratings as a Function of Trigger Event and Man's Response in Study 3

	Jealousy	Non-jealousy	Interaction p Value
Romantic love			
Abuse	4.45 (.52)	3.34 (.65)	<.05
No abuse	4.46 (.59)	3.72 (.71)	
Companionate love			
Abuse	3.17 (.94)	2.36 (.70)	>.18
No abuse	3.92 (.77)	3.46 (.79)	
Prognosis/advice			
Abuse	-.12 (.76)	-.37 (.70)	<.06
No abuse	.25 (.64)	.50 (.52)	
Understanding			
Abuse	3.27 (1.04)	2.92 (.87)	<.09
No abuse	4.35 (.73)	4.50 (1.02)	
Morally bad (lower = more bad)			
Abuse	3.63 (.90)	3.26 (.74)	>.91
No abuse	4.46 (.64)	4.14 (.92)	
Masculine			
Abuse	4.15 (.77)	4.17 (.62)	<.05
No abuse	4.05 (.87)	4.47 (.75)	
<i>Rape Condition Only</i>			<i>Chi-Square, p Value</i>
Percentage who believe wife should file rape charges	4	31	<.01
Percentage who would vote for a felony conviction if on jury	28	54	<.06

NOTE: Five-point rating scales were used for romantic and companionate love, with higher values indicating more love. Seven-point rating scales were used for the understanding, moral badness, and masculinity ratings, with higher values indicating more understanding, less moral badness, and more masculinity. The prognosis and advice items were standardized and combined, with higher values indicating a more favorable prognosis. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

As may be seen in Table 3, in the non-jealousy case, participants thought the abuse boded quite ill for the relationship. However, they were relatively less likely to make this judgment if the abuse stemmed from jealousy, because the effect of the abuse halved in size in the jealousy condition, Abuse \times Jealousy interaction, $F(1, 176) = 3.70$, $p < .06$. For ratings of how understandable the man's reaction was, the predicted Abuse \times Jealousy interaction was marginally significant, $F(1, 176) = 2.98$, $p < .09$, with participants again making a smaller distinction between abuse and no abuse when the case involved jealousy, as compared to when it did not. Unlike Study 2, there was no sign of the predicted interaction for ratings of how morally bad the man was ($F < 1$, $p > .91$).

For ratings of how traditionally masculine the husband was, the predicted Abuse \times Jealousy interaction

also emerged. The man was seen as equivalently masculine if he abused or did not abuse his wife in the jealousy scenario (abuse $M = 4.15$, no-abuse $M = 4.05$, $t = .64$), whereas he was seen as relatively less manly if he abused his wife in the non-jealousy-related scenario (abuse $M = 4.17$, no-abuse $M = 4.47$, $t = 1.90$, $p < .10$). The interaction between abuse and jealousy was significant, $F(1, 176) = 3.92$, $p < .05$. However, it should be noted that there was a marginally significant interaction with gender in this case, $F(1, 176) = 3.61$, $p > .06$, as the effect seemed to be carried by male participants, $t(82) = 3.22$, $p < .01$, not female participants ($t < 1$).

Rape decisions. Considering only those who listened to the rape narrative, participants were less likely to think the women should file charges if the rape occurred in a jealousy-related (vs. non-jealousy-related) context and were similarly less willing to convict on felony sexual assault charges if they were on a jury in these circumstances; M s for jealousy versus non-jealousy = 2.88 versus 3.77, $t(49) = 1.93$, $p < .06$, for filing charges, and M s for jealousy versus non-jealousy = 3.48 versus 4.46, $t(49) = 2.20$, $p < .03$, for voting for a felony conviction. For the less serious misdemeanor charge, participants did not distinguish between jealousy and non-jealousy contexts, $t(49) = 1.35$, $p = .18$.

In the real world, of course, the decision to file or not file (or to vote guilty or not guilty) is a yes-no choice. Thus, we also dichotomized the rape charge variables and conducted chi-square analyses (see bottom of Table 3). In doing so, we found that whereas nearly one third of participants (31%) in the non-jealousy condition believed that the wife should file rape charges, only 4% of participants in the jealousy condition believed she should, $\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 6.28$, $p < .01$. In terms of convicting the husband on felony sexual assault charges, 54% of participants would vote guilty in the non-jealousy scenario compared to only half that in the jealousy context (28%), $\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 3.52$, $p < .06$.

Interactions with workshop participation. Of our participants, 71% said they had participated in a sexual assault workshop.⁶ There was one significant and one marginally significant interaction involving workshop participation, triggering incident, and abuse. The interactions occurred on ratings of how morally bad the husband was and how traditionally masculine he was (three-way interaction, p s $< .10$ and $.02$, respectively). In both cases, those who had been to a workshop showed less of a general tendency to excuse jealousy-related violence than those who had not. There were no significant two-way interactions between workshop participation and the abuse or no-abuse variable on any dependent measure (all F s < 2.10 , all p s $> .15$).⁷

Summary. The meaning of the abuse (as indicated by the difference between the abuse vs. no-abuse conditions) changed depending on whether the abuse was triggered by a jealousy-related or a non-jealousy-related incident. That is, there were significant or marginally significant Abuse \times Triggering Incident interactions such that participants who heard the man abuse his wife over a jealousy-related matter (vs. non-jealousy-related matter) were less likely to think the man was unloving, more optimistic about the marriage, and more understanding of his actions. Furthermore, whereas participants tended to see the abuse as less manly in the non-jealousy case, there was no such stigma for the abuse in the jealousy-related case, although this interaction was driven by male participants. Unlike Study 2, we did not find that jealousy affected how morally bad the husband was rated.

Again replicating the findings of Study 2, participants who heard about a man who abused his wife in a jealousy-related scenario saw him as romantically loving his wife as much as a man who did not abuse her. Further replicating Study 2 results, participants also indicated that the man who abused his wife in the jealousy-related context was more romantically loving than the man who did not abuse his wife in response to the non-jealousy scenario. Finally, if the jealous man sexually assaulted his wife, participants were far less likely to think the crime was rape, with 96% of participants in this condition believing the women should not file charges and 72% voting not guilty on felony rape charges if they were on a jury.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In sum, the studies presented here empirically demonstrate that there is something different about perceptions of jealousy-related violence compared to other sorts of violence. The association of jealousy with romantic love seems to change the meaning of the violent act. In Study 1, it was shown that people believe jealousy can be construed as a sign of love even if they have ambivalent feelings about how understandable it is in a specific case. In Study 2, it was shown that whereas people might normally believe violence indicates a lack of love, they did not make this attribution for jealousy-related violence: When a man hit his wife over a jealousy-related incident, people believed that he loved her at least as much as when he did not hit her. (In fact, the man was also judged as loving his wife more when he was jealous and hit her as compared to the husband in the non-jealousy narrative who did not hit his wife.) Study 3 demonstrated that these beliefs also hold for other forms of abuse, specifically, emotional and sexual abuse. Again in Study 3, in terms of romantic love, the jealous man who abused his wife and the jealous man who did not abuse

his wife were viewed as similarly loving, and again, the abusive jealous man was seen as significantly more loving than the nonviolent husband from the non-jealousy narrative. Analyses further showed that jealousy-related abuse is seen as more understandable and is less likely to be taken as a sign that the relationship is in trouble, as compared to abuse in non-jealousy situations. These last two Abuse \times Jealousy interactions were marginally significant in Study 3, replicating significant interactions in Study 2.

North Americans have very ambivalent attitudes about jealousy, seeing it sometimes as a sign of insecurity, sometimes as a sign of love, and sometimes as both simultaneously (see Vandello & Cohen, in press, 2002a, for discussions of variability within the United States on this issue). When this jealousy turns into violent behavior, however, North Americans are very likely to shun the jealousy-as-love construal, at least when asked about the violence in an explicit and straightforward manner (Vandello & Cohen, in press). However, the jealousy-as-love construal probably still shapes their perceptions in ways they may not realize. A violent act that people would judge harshly and that would indicate a lack of love in one case is seen in a far more charitable light if it was prompted by a jealousy-provoking incident. These studies suggest that it is not just some pathological men trying to justify their own violence or some women trying to make sense of their own victimization who regard jealousy-related violence this way. Apparently, “normal” outside others (at least in this nonclinical student population) also buy into some version of this way of thinking.

Limitations and Conclusions

In terms of design, Study 1 was a completely within-subjects experiment, Study 3 was a completely between-subjects experiment, and Study 2 was a mixed between- and within-subjects experiment. That the results converged across these types of designs is quite reassuring. However, there are several factors that qualify our results.

Triggering events. The jealous and non-jealous trigger events in Studies 2 and 3 were rated as equally anger provoking, bad, intentional, and blameworthy. However, our use of only two trigger events raises the possibility that our findings are unique to these two events. Follow-up studies that include a larger pool of triggering events that are quantitatively equivalent in their “badness” but qualitatively different in whether they invoke jealousy should be quite useful.

Null and negating effects. In Studies 2 and 3, there were no differences between the abusive jealous husband and the nonabusive jealous husband for romantic love ratings. This was not because we had an ineffective abuse

manipulation (the abuse led to a significant difference in perceptions in the non-jealous case). This noneffect also does not seem due to a lack of power—the means are virtually on top of each other in Study 3, and in Study 2, if anything, the abusive jealous husband is viewed as trivially more loving than the nonabusive jealous one. Perhaps the best way to think about the nondifference in the jealous conditions is as a negating or canceling out effect: Normally, people think violence indicates a lack of love. But this normal inference gets negated when the violence occurs because of jealousy. Further related to the point above, it would be good to build a larger sample of jealousy and non-jealousy narratives to see how often and how completely this negation occurs across a range of provocations.

Love as an excusing factor: Manipulating perceptions of love directly. We have argued that perceptions of love may be a factor in people’s evaluations of violence on other dimensions. Because jealousy is associated with love, it may lessen people’s condemnation for a violent act. And, indeed, for both Studies 2 and 3, perceptions of love (both romantic and companionate) were significantly or marginally significantly correlated with being understanding of the husband’s actions, optimistic about the future of the marriage, less condemning of the moral badness of the act, and (in Study 3) with opposition to filing rape charges or voting for a felony sexual assault conviction (all r s between .25 and .69, all p s < .06). However, to examine love as an excusing factor and go beyond correlational analyses, a further study could manipulate participants’ perceptions of love directly and show that perceived high or low levels of love in a relationship color the way incidents of subsequent violence are interpreted.

Scenario variations. Further research also could create scenario variations that examine questions such as, How would people judge other reactions the man could have to his wife’s infidelity (such as talking the matter out, expressions of deep sorrow, resignation, or seeking a divorce)? Also, are the present results peculiar to male anger—what would participants think about a woman’s appropriate response to her husband’s infidelity? That an overwhelming amount of male-female violence stems from concern over the woman’s fidelity led us to these studies as a first step, but pursuing these other issues also should prove useful.

Broadening the sample. Finally, conclusions are also limited, of course, by our sample. Our participants were young and unmarried and were predominantly middle-class North Americans (median parental income of \$80,000/year). It remains to be seen how this study might hold up with people who are married or older or who belong to populations that are more or less

concerned with fidelity, more or less accepting of violence, more or less egalitarian in their gender roles, and so on. An important addition to this study also would involve examining real-world spousal abuse cases from various populations. If the results of this study generalize, all other things equal, jealousy-related violence cases should be less likely to involve arrests, less likely to be brought to court, less likely to lead to conviction, and less severely punished (if convicted).

Overview and future directions. The three studies above are consistent with North Americans having a real ambivalence about jealousy (Stearns, 1989). It is regarded both as a sign of immaturity and as a sign of love—and, as in Study 1, it may be regarded simultaneously as a sign of love even when it is immature. When this jealousy explodes into violence against the wife, this aggression is not something North Americans may explicitly endorse. However, the jealousy-as-love construal is something not so easily submerged. It colors people's perceptions of abuse: Jealousy-related aggression is seen as quite different from non-jealousy-related aggression, and the jealousy context considerably negates the meaning of the aggressive act.

In three studies above, we have tried to examine how our participants' ambivalent feelings about jealousy manifest themselves when thinking about jealousy and aggression. In other cultures and in subcultures within North America, jealousy may have more or less legitimacy, it may be more or less connected to concerns about honor, and it may be more or less likely to trigger violence. Future work can examine further the ways an ambivalence about the emotion of jealousy might manifest itself in North America, can flesh out the way jealousy is seen in other cultures or in various subcultures, and can examine the way feelings about this emotion shape perceptions of jealousy-related violence in various cultural contexts.

NOTES

1. This article deals only with male violence against women in a heterosexual relationship. Women too commit violence against and kill their husbands, but this is usually less severe and in response to violence by the man (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, pp. 34-36). Intimate violence is, of course, not limited to heterosexual relationships. Much less is known about the frequency and severity of intimate violence between gay and lesbian couples.

2. All contrasts in this study, as in Studies 2 and 3, were performed with the error term from the overall interaction.

3. After listening to the conflict (but not the ending) on each tape, these independent raters were asked the following three questions: (a) how bad was what the wife did, (b) if you were the husband, how angry would you be, and (c) how much does the wife's behavior appear to be on purpose or intentional. Ratings were made on a 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very*) scale. For the jealousy-related conflict, the mean ratings (with standard deviations in parentheses) for how bad, anger provoking, and intentional were 3.72 (1.04), 4.07 (1.07), and 3.75 (1.16), respectively. For the non-jealousy-related conflict, the mean ratings (with standard

deviations in parentheses) for how bad, anger provoking, and intentional were 3.63 (0.94), 4.02 (1.00), and 3.57 (1.10), respectively. Paired *t* tests revealed no significant differences between the jealousy versus non-jealousy tapes in terms of how bad, $t(59) = -.58, p = .56$, how anger provoking, $t(59) = -.39, p = .69$, and how intentional, $t(59) = -1.13, p = .26$, the woman's actions were. As further evidence that the jealousy and non-jealousy-related scenarios were seen in equivalent terms, we asked participants from Studies 2 and 3 who was to blame for the conflict. In both Studies 2 and 3, the wife was seen as slightly more blameworthy than the husband, and this was true to the same extent for both the jealousy and the non-jealousy-related scenarios ($p > .50$ and $p > .25$ for the effect of scenario type on blame judgments for Studies 2 and 3, respectively). Thus, although it is difficult to make a jealousy and non-jealousy conflict equivalent on every single dimension, at least for the two studies here, the scenarios seem equated in terms of how bad, anger-provoking, intentional, and blameworthy the wife's triggering actions were.

4. Small cell sizes precluded meaningful analyses of any gender differences in the relative evaluation of jealousy-related violence. Thus, we did not include gender as a factor in this study. Preliminary analyses also revealed that there were no significant three-way interactions between gender, jealousy versus non-jealousy-related provocations, and the presence or absence of violence.

5. Participants did not significantly differ in their evaluations of the emotional abuse and sexual assault for any of the interactions examined for our key dependent variables (all *p* levels for the 2 [rape vs. emotional abuse] \times 2 [jealousy vs. non-jealousy] interactions were $.23 < p < .85$). Furthermore, if the ANOVA is not collapsed and the predicted interaction contrast in the 2 (trigger: jealousy or non-jealousy) \times 3 (response: no abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse) ANOVA is tested, all significance levels look very similar to those shown in Table 3. *F* levels for the 2 \times 3 interaction contrast for the romantic love, companionate love, prognosis, understanding, moral badness, and masculinity judgments were $p < .05, p < .15, p < .02, p < .08, p < .86$, and $p < .08$, respectively.

6. Sexual assault workshops are presented in some residence hall, fraternity or sorority, or orientation sessions, and thus, 71% of the students had participated in at least one of them.

7. Except for those reported in the text, there were no three-way interactions involving abuse, jealousy, and participant's gender (all *F*s $> .14$). Also, there were no two-way interactions of abuse and participant's gender (all *F*s < 1).

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