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Anger in Close Relationships: An Interpersonal Script Analysis

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The authors conducted an analysis of anger scripts in close relationships from a relational schema perspective focusing on the interpersonal experience of anger and on the sequencing of anger events. The amount of anger elicited by various instigating events was found to differ for women and men. More important, there was evidence of an interpersonal script for anger. Reactions of angry people were predicated on anticipated partner responses. Gender differences in interpersonal scripts were found only when the angered person chose to react in a negative way (e.g., aggression). Women and men held similar scripts for anger when the angered person reacted in a prosocial manner. Implications of these findings for script analyses of emotion and for close relationships are discussed.

Anger, similar to any emotion, is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Abelson (1981) pointed out,

> A sizeable set of inferences can be made from the knowledge that, say, "John is angry." A negative thing has happened to John; he blames it on someone; he regards it as unjust; he is aroused, flushed, and prone to swear or lash out; he may seek revenge on the instigator, and so on" (p. 727).

Emotion researchers have identified key elements of anger episodes, including instigators (e.g., being treated unfairly or wrongly), cognitive concomitants (e.g., obsessive thinking about the event), physiological reactions (e.g., increased heart rate), and behavioral manifestations such as yelling or swearing or attempting to control the expression of anger (e.g., Averill, 1982; Camras & Allison, 1989; Fischer, 1991; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Kovecses, 1995; Lakoff & Kovecses, 1983; Mascolo

& Mancuso, 1991; Russell & Fehr, 1994; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). Despite variations in methodology and samples, the degree of convergence between these investigations has been impressive (see Fehr & Baldwin, 1996, for a review).

Script theory offers a useful framework for understanding the cognitive representation of emotions such as anger. Indeed, emotion theorists, ranging from biological theorists to social constructionists, are increasingly embracing the script concept (e.g., Berkowitz, 1993; Fehr & Russell, 1984; Fischer, 1991; Kovecses, 1995; Shaver et al., 1987). In Tomkins's (1979) biological theory, for example, the most basic or primitive relation between an emotion and the object of that emotion is a scene. Affect-laden scenes become connected to one another through a process of psychological magnification. Scenes that are sufficiently magnified can result in the generation of a script defined as "the individual's rules for predicting, interpreting, and controlling a magnified set of scenes" (Tomkins, 1979, p. 217). At the other end of the continuum, Averill's (1982) social constructivist conceptualization of emotions as syndromes also can be construed as a script approach. In his research on anger, Averill (1982, 1983) has delineated instigators, impulses felt, behavioral reponses, physiological re-

sponses, thought patterns, and so on. Thus, the concept of scripts is a common thread running through recent writings by emotion theorists even though they may disagree on the origin, elements, and temporal sequencing of events.

In our view, two points should be emphasized as theoretical and empirical work on emotion scripts continues to develop, namely the interpersonal nature of emotion events and the temporal sequencing of emotion events. Emotion theorists are beginning to acknowledge the interpersonal or relational quality of emotion (see e.g., Parkinson, 1996). For example, Lazarus (1995) recently renamed his theory of emotion "cognitive- motivational-relational" (p. 184) and has begun to identify core relational themes corresponding to various emotions (see also Lazarus, 1991). Emotion has even been defined as a form of social relationship (deRivera, 1984; de Rivera & Grinkus, 1986). However, empirical work, especially in the prototype tradition, continues to focus on intrapersonal rather than interpersonal scripts. Granted, all manner of events can be represented as a script, and there is much to be learned from accounts of how emotion is experienced by an individual in isolation (i.e., the person's thoughts, physiological reactions, etc.). However, these analyses do not take into account the fact that the experience of emotion is generally an interpersonal event. When people are asked what caused an emotion such as anger, for example, in most cases the misdeeds of another person are seen as responsible (e.g., Averill, 1982; Fehr & Baldwin, 1996; Parkinson, 1996; Perlman, 1990; Shaver et al., 1987; see also Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994, for an interpersonal analysis of guilt). Given that anger, love, guilt, or hatred are usually experienced in an interpersonal context, people's emotion scripts are likely to involve knowledge of patterns of interactions with others—even specific others, in specific relationships—in addition to knowledge of their own internal state. We shall argue that examination of such knowledge structures is critical to an understanding of individual differences in emotion—in this case, gender differences in the experience of anger.

Script analyses of the cognitive representation of emotion also would benefit from increased attention to the temporal sequencing of emotion events. According to Abelson (1981), scripts involve expectations not only about the occurrence of events but also about the order of those events, such as from instigation to arousal to action to outcomes. The idea of an event sequence is implicit in cognitive appraisal theories of emotion in which an individual's interpretation of an instigating event is postulated to determine the particular emotion that is experienced (e.g., Clore, Ortony, Dienes, & Fujita, 1993;

Frijda, 1988; Lazarus, 1991). For example, in the case of anger, "In goes a frustration or an offense, and out comes anger" (Fridja, 1988, p. 349). The experience of an emotion such as anger, in turn, produces a state of action readiness such as "the urge to do some of the things that remove or harm its agent" (p. 351). We argue that examining in more detail the sequencing of emotion events affords a more complex understanding of the links or contingencies between specific instigators, specific reactions, and specific expectations about outcomes.

Given the interpersonal nature of emotion, one important class of contingencies concerns the relation between an individual's reaction when experiencing an emotion such as anger and his or her partner's response. Although this issue has received scant attention from researchers interested in the cognitive representation of emotion, clinical research on actual interactions of spouses has elucidated the important role that contingencies between partners' responses play in marital distress. For example, Gottman and Levenson (1985) (see also Levenson & Gottman, 1983) found that conflict-laden interactions of maritally distressed couples were characterized not only by greater negative affect (compared to happily married couples) but also by greater reciprocity of affect: The expression of negative emotion on the part of one spouse was likely to elicit a response in kind from the other. Biglan et al. (1985) found that among couples who were maritally distressed, the wife's display of depressive behavior tended to lessen the husband's aggressive behaviors. Aggression from the husband was linked with a reduction in the wife's depressive behavior. In his research on dysfunctional interaction patterns, Christensen (1988) has identified a demand-withdraw pattern in which one partner, typically the wife, makes a request of her partner, who responds with silence and withdrawal. This reaction serves to intensify the demands, which are then met with increased withdrawal. Extrapolating from these findings, we would suggest that in the context of an emotion such as anger, the angered person's reaction does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is shaped, at least in part, by the response that is anticipated from an interaction partner (see Parkinson, 1996, for a similar line of reasoning). Furthermore, we would postulate that these expected responses differ depending on the gender of the respondent.

To summarize, script analyses of emotion provide an incomplete account of the cognitive representation of emotion events to the extent that the interpersonal nature of emotion and the sequencing of or contingencies between emotion events are ignored. We sought to address these shortcomings by conducting an analysis of anger scripts in close relationships. In particular, we as-

sessed women's and men's likely reactions to various elicitors of anger as well as the kinds of responses they would expect from a romantic partner. In conducting this research, we adopted a relational schema perspective because of its interpersonal focus and attention to the sequencing of interpersonal events.

EMOTION SCRIPTS:
A RELATIONAL SCHEMA PERSPECTIVE

As already noted, the script concept has been adopted and elaborated in a range of theoretical models. A recent development in the social cognitive field is the formulation of relational schemas, defined as "cognitive structures representing regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness" (Baldwin, 1992, p. 461). Following Bowlby (1969), Horowitz (1988), and others, the assumption is that people develop working models of their relationships and not just of self and other in isolation and that these interpersonal models function as cognitive maps in navigating the social world. The components of a relational schema include an interpersonal script for an expected pattern of self-other interaction along with an associated self-schema and an associated other-schema. The following is an example: A clinical psychologist we know described a client who purchased a newspaper each morning only to have his wife read it at the breakfast table rather than chat with him. The man decided that the next day, he would grab the paper from his wife and throw it away, "so that we can calmly discuss why this makes me so angry." From a social cognitive perspective, this interaction can be analyzed in terms of self-schemas (e.g., the angry self schema) or other-schemas (e.g., the inconsiderate spouse schema). However, to fully capture the meaning of this episode, the interaction between self and other must be taken into account (i.e., the interpersonal script).

The interpersonal script is a cognitive structure representing a sequence of actions and events that is usually derived from repeated similar experiences. Importantly, it is assumed that there can be a number of different "tracks" that a given script can follow (Abelson, 1981). The script includes knowledge about patterns of interaction, specifically expectations about what behaviors tend to be followed by what responses. This knowledge is represented in the form of if-then contingencies, such as, "If I sulk, then my partner will give in," "If I lash out, then my partner will attack," or "If I demand, my partner will withdraw." In our clinical example, there is evidence of a rather complex interpersonal script: The man expects that if he buys the paper, then his wife will read it over breakfast; when she reads it, he knows he will feel angry. He then uses this script to formulate a plan for behavior,

expecting that "If I take the paper away, then we can calmly discuss my anger."

As can be seen in this example, the if-then nature of the script serves as a basis for generating interpersonal expectations and for planning behavioral responses. Expectancies about interpersonal outcomes have long been recognized as part of the display rules and social context of emotion. As Frijda (1988) commented, "Often, when crying in distress or anger one casts half an eye for signs of sympathy or mollification" (p. 356) (see also Frijda & Mesquita, 1994). Moreover, different consequences may be expected based on how the emotion is expressed. For example, Bob may be aware that during an angry exchange, his partner is more likely to give in if he sulks than if he explodes. Such knowledge presumably plays a role in determining the behaviors that people choose in emotion-laden interactions.

Individual Gender Differences in Interpersonal Scripts

Previous research led us to anticipate predictable differences between people in their models of anger. For example, emotion researchers who view emotion as culturally specific have been concerned with the identification of different emotion scripts in different cultures (e.g., Kitayama & Markus, 1994). Even within a culture, emotion scripts are thought to vary depending on one's gender, status, profession, and so forth (e.g., Ellsworth, 1994; Kitayama & Markus, 1994). It seemed advisable, therefore, to constrain the situations and relationship characteristics under examination. We chose to analyze anger scripts in close heterosexual relationships, focusing on the contingencies that are perceived between various instigators, actions of self when angry, and anticipated reactions from a relationship partner. (As mentioned earlier, a close relationship is the domain most often reported when people give accounts of significant emotion experiences.) Within the context of close relationships, we focused specifically on gender differences in these scripts, given that research has often revealed differences between women and men in elicitors and expression of anger. As is discussed shortly, findings differ from one study to the next, although this is possibly because different researchers have examined different aspects of a complex network of social information. Our hope was that a more detailed examination of women's and men's anger scripts—the causes of anger, anger expression, and anticipated partner responses—might reveal the complexity of the contingencies perceived between these aspects of anger episodes.

ANGER SCRIPTS: BASIC
ELEMENTS AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

Causes of Anger

There is a very large literature documenting the kinds of events that elicit the emotion of anger (see Russell & Fehr, 1994). Many writers consider frustration or the thwarting of a goal a major, if not the major, cause of anger (e.g., Anastasi, Cohen, & Spatz, 1948; Hall, 1999; Heinrichs, 1986; Hunt, Cole, & Reis, 1958; Izard, 1977; Mandler, 1984; Meltzer, 1933; Spielberger, Jacobs, Russell, & Crane, 1983). Other common causes are threats to self-esteem (e.g., Anastasi et al., 1948; Feshbach, 1986; Izard, 1977; Kemper, 1987) or threat more generally (e.g., Gaylin, 1984; Likierman, 1987; Rubin, 1986). In Kemper's (1987) view, "Anger results from interaction outcomes in which expected, customary, or deserved status has been denied or withdrawn by another actor who is seen to be responsible for the reduced status" (p. 275). Weiner, Graham, and Chandler (1982) maintained that anger is experienced when personally relevant negative outcomes are attributed to factors controllable by others. Thus, anger is frequently conceptualized as an emotion that is elicited by the actions of other people.

Gender differences. Women and men report many of the same causes of anger. However, one gender difference is that anger is somewhat more likely to be an interpersonal event for women (see Fehr, 1996). More specifically, women's anger tends to result from behaviors performed by a close other, whereas men are more likely to be angered by the actions of strangers. Lohr, Hamberger, and Bonge (1988), for example, found that men were angered most by physical injury (damage to oneself or one's property) followed by inconsiderate others (strangers), indignation, victimization, verbal assault, and disorder in their environment (e.g., children's toys underfoot). Women were most angered by personal threat (verbal and emotional assault) followed by personal injury (e.g., unfair treatment), insensitive others, victimization, and helplessness.

Studies that have focused on elicitors of anger in the context of close relationships also report both gender differences and similarities. To give one example, Buss (1989) asked university students and newlyweds which of 147 upsetting acts had been performed by their romantic partner or spouse during the past year. There was no gender difference in the reported frequency of upsets. However, women and men found different kinds of events upsetting. Women were more likely than men to report that their partner had angered them by being condescending, neglecting (rejecting, unreliable), inconsiderate, insulting of appearance, and so on. Men were more likely to feel angered by partner behaviors such as being physically self-absorbed (e.g., preening), moody, and sexually withholding. Women and men were equally angered by behaviors such as abuse, sexualizing others, and possessiveness (jealousy, dependency). In a second study, Buss examined the magnitude of anger or upset created by these elicitors. Women regarded the elicitors, overall, as more upsetting than did men. Specifically, women expected to be more upset than were men if their partner was: condescending, possessive (jealous, dependent), abusive, physically self-absorbed, insulting of appearance, and sexually aggressive. These acts also were perceived differently depending on whether they were committed by a woman or a man. Being moody and sexually withholding were seen as more upsetting if performed by a woman than a man. However, insulting the partner's appearance and being sexually aggressive produced more anger if performed by a man.

Anger Expression

When angry, people react in a variety of ways (see, e.g., Fehr & Baldwin, 1996, for a review). They may withdraw and avoid the situation. They may behave agressively either directly or indirectly. Anger also can be expressed in more prosocial ways, such as discussing the situation, expressing one's feelings, and trying to negotiate a satisfactory outcome (e.g., Averill, 1982; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Mascolo & Mancuso, 1991; Shaver et al., 1987).

Gender differences. "And so at my funeral they sat in rows of weeping men and grim-faced women," observes a murdered newspaper writer in a Robertson Davies (1991, p. 16) novel. The author goes on to explain "for in our day there has been a reversal which makes it perfectly all right for a man to give way to feeling, whereas women must show no such weakness" (p. 16). The reversal that the novelist describes appears to exist only in fiction. The most robust gender difference in the literature on expression of anger is that women are more likely to cry when angry than are men—in fact, four times as likely according to Averill (1983) (see also Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992). In Averill's (1983) extensive analysis of anger accounts, this was the only major and consistent gender difference.

Others have focused on who is more likely to express anger directly: women or men. Among popular writers, it is commonly believed that women shy away from expressing anger. For example, Lerner (1980) declared, "Put simply, women tend to be overly inhibited, and men not inhibited enough, in the direct expression of anger and aggression" (p. 137) (see also Bernardez-Bonesatti, 1978; Halas, 1981; Lerner, 1985). Some researchers have reached a similar conclusion (e.g., Campbell & Muncer, 1987; Crawford et al., 1992; Greenglass & Julkunen, 1989; Lohr et al., 1988). Kopper and Epperson (1991) found gender role but not gender differences in anger expression such that masculine types were more likely to

report expressing anger openly than were feminine types.

In contrast, there is evidence that it may be men who avoid expressing anger overtly, especially anger toward women (e.g., Blier & Blier-Wilson, 1989). Canary, Cunningham, and Cody (1988) asked students to rate the degree to which they used 47 different tactics during a recent conflict. Women reported greater use of the more direct tactics, such as personal criticism and showing anger, than did men; men were more likely to engage in the avoidant tactic of denial (although this tactic was not reported frequently by either gender). Similarly, in an analysis of gender differences on five conflict tactics scales, men scored significantly higher on only the Indirect Approach scale (Josephson & Check, 1990). Thus, there is some evidence of a gender difference in the direct expression of anger, although the direction of this difference is not clear.

Expected Responses to
Different Expressions of Anger

What outcomes from others do people expect in response to expressions of anger? Gergen and Gergen (1988) described a study by Davidson, Gergen, and Gergen in which undergraduates first imagined that their roommate had told them "I am really angry at you" and then answered how they would respond. All participants reported that they would ask their roommate why she or he was angry. The researchers provided a reason, namely that the participant had betrayed the roommmate's confidence, and again solicited the participant's response. These responses were then shown to a new group of undergraduates, who were asked how they expected the angry roommate would react to the participant. It was found that the roommate's anticipated reaction differed depending on how the participant had responded; if the participant expressed remorse, for example, for having betrayed the confidence, then compassion, caution, or anger were seen as probable roommate reactions. Compassion and caution responses were also seen completing the interaction. If, however, the participant responded with anger, then it was expected that the roommate would express anger in return, which would serve to perpetuate the interaction.

In the conflict literature, a similar methodology was developed by Miller (1991). Participants were asked to write scripts about same-sex friendship pairs engaged in a conflict precipitated by events such as a broken promise. For each stage of the conflict (early, middle, end), they rated the likelihood of various responses. For example, at the middle stage, possible responses included apologizing, making excuses, or retaliating. Based on these ratings, Miller was able to map out the most likely script for a variety of conflict events.

Gender differences. Miller (1991) found few gender differences in her analysis of conflict in same-sex friendships. (Davidson, Gergen, and Gergen did not analyze their data for gender differences.) However, gender differences might be expected in the context of heterosexual relationships. Many writers have suggested that women inhibit the expression of anger because they fear consequences such as rejection and perhaps even the loss of the relationship. In contrast, men do not anticipate such negative reactions and, in fact, may even expect positive outcomes such as admiration (e.g., Bernardez-Bonesatti, 1978; Campbell & Muncer, 1987; Halas, 1981; Lerner, 1985).

OVERVIEW

Our study of anger scripts was conducted in three parts. Part 1 investigated the elicitors of anger in close heterosexual relationships. Women and men rated how angry they would feel if their romantic partner performed a number of anger-provoking acts. In Part 2, the respondents' possible reactions when feeling angry were assessed. Finally, in Part 3, we asked participants what reactions they would expect from their partner in response to their expressions of anger. This three-pronged approach allowed an examination of women's and men's self-schemas for anger (Part 1), their other-schemas (i.e., Part 2, the partner's response, and importantly, the interpersonal script (i.e., Part 3, the response anticipated from the partner as a function of the participant's reaction when angry). Based on the literature, we predicted that women might be somewhat more angered than men by negative events in the context of a close relationship (e.g., Buss, 1989) and would be more likely than men to express hurt feelings (Averill, 1983). We were less confident in predicting the direction of gender differences in the direct expression of anger. As mentioned earlier, the literature is mixed on whether men or women are more likely to engage in such behavior, possibly because they tend to expect different kinds of negative responses (e.g., denial, rejection) from their partner. Our hope was that a closer examination of the if-then contingencies between self's actions and other's responses might help to clarify this ambiguity.

METHOD

Participants

Introductory psychology students (N = 124; 51 men, 73 women) at the University of Winnipeg participated in this research for course credit. Their average age was 20.73 years. In terms of relationship status, 24.2% of the participants indicated that they were not currently dating or romantically involved, 28.2% were casually dating,

31.5% were seriously or exclusively involved, 3.2% were engaged, 4% were cohabiting, 5.6% were married, and 3.2% selected the category "other" (e.g., divorced, widowed). Thus, the majority of participants were romantically involved. The average duration of these relationships was 13.63 months.

Procedure

Participants completed a questionnaire consisting of three major sections designed to assess the degree of anger elicited by various instigating events (Part 1), possible reactions when angry (Part 2), and anticipated partner responses to self's expression of anger (Part 3). They were instructed to picture themselves in each situation with respect to their current partner. To accommodate participants who were not currently romantically involved, two additional options were presented: responding with regard to a former partner or in terms of "what generally happens in your relationships." Those who had never been romantically involved were asked to answer according to what they would expect to happen.

Part I: Causes of anger. We consulted the anger and conflict literatures to derive a set of instigators of anger in close heterosexual relationships. Based on open-ended descriptions of conflict events in marriages, Peterson (1983) identified four major categories of instigating events: criticism, rebuff (one person appeals to another for a desired reaction, and the other fails to respond as expected), cumulative annoyance (the other person repeatedly engages in an annoying act), and illegitimate demand. We chose three of Peterson's elicitors—criticism, rebuff, and annoyance—given that the majority of the anger studies reviewed earlier included one or more of these instigating events. Averill (1982, 1983) focused on the illegitimacy or lack of justification for behaviors (e.g., unwarranted criticism, unfair treatment) and on negative behaviors that could be avoided but were allowed to happen through negligence or lack of consideration. Gergen and Gergen (1988) used betrayal of trust as an instigating factor in their research on anger interactions. This is a frequent cause of anger (see Fehr, 1996). We therefore also included the instigators of lack of consideration/negligence and betrayal of trust.

These categories of possible instigators were presented to pilot participants who were asked to generate events that would exemplify each category. We then chose the event that was most representative of the responses for each elicitor (see Table 1). For example, for the elicitor unwarranted criticism, we selected the following event: "Your partner criticizes you for small mistakes you make or for your clothing or appearance." Participants rated how much anger they would experience in each situation using a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Part 2: Reactions when angry. In the next part of the questionnaire, participants rated their likely reactions in each of these anger-provoking situations. Each instigating event (e.g., "Your partner forgets your birthday") was listed on a separate page followed by the question "How would you respond?" Participants then rated the likelihood of six possible reactions (in which 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very likely*). We were limited in how many categories we could use given the large number of ratings that participants were required to make. Drawing from the sources cited earlier as well as from the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (Rahim, 1983), we narrowed down the possible reactions to direct aggression, indirect aggression, avoidance, expression of hurt feelings, talking it over, and giving in/conciliating (see center column of Table 2). For each of the reactions, participants were provided with a brief description (e.g., for avoidance: "Avoid the issue and/or avoid your partner, become silent, leave the room, withdraw").

Part 3: Anticipated partner responses. In the final section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to imagine being angry and reacting in each of the six ways described in Part 2. For each reaction (e.g., "If you are angry and you avoid the issue and/or avoid your partner, become silent, withdraw"), they rated the likelihood that their partner would respond in each of nine different ways (in which 1 = *not at all likely* and 7 = very likely) (see Table 2, last column). In generating these expected partner responses, we assumed that partners could respond in the same six ways in which the participants reacted. Using the same set of reactions had the advantage of allowing us to determine whether certain actions (e.g., aggression) might be most likely to produce a response in kind (i.e., aggression in return). We also gleaned three additional responses from the literature that were only appropriate as reactions to anger from another person (i.e., not as actions that self could take when angry), namely rejection, denial of responsibility (taken from Averill's, 1982, research) and minimizing/mocking (e.g., Crawford et al., 1992; Lerner, 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Part 1: Causes of Anger

Anger ratings were analyzed in a 2 (gender) × 5 (type of instigator) analysis of variance. There was a significant main effect for instigator, $F(4, 476) = 45.59$, $p < .001$. Betrayal of trust was the most anger provoking, followed by cancellation of plans (rebuff), criticism, forgetting of birthday (negligence), and, finally, cumulative annoy-

TABLE 1: Anger Elicitors

	Overall	Women	Men	p
Betrayal of trust	5.98	6.19	5.73	.05
You have trusted your partner by telling some very personal information, then he or she uses the information to take advantage of you.				
Rebuff	4.79	5.03	4.40	.05
You have suggested that your partner and you spend the evening together. At the last minute, he or she cancels to do something else.				
Unwarranted criticism	4.77	5.51	3.71	.001
Your partner criticizes you for small mistakes you make or for your clothing or appearance.				
Negligence/lack of consideration	4.50	5.25	3.40	.001
You partner forgets your birthday.				
Cumulative annoyance	3.57	3.68	3.33	*ns*
Your partner persists in an extremely annoying habit (e.g., talking to you during movies, clicking pens, cracking knuckles).				

ance (see Table 1). The fact that four of the five instigators received average anger ratings higher than the midpoint of the scale (i.e., 4.00) suggested that these were satisfactory examples of anger-provoking situations. The high rating assigned to betrayal of trust is consistent with other research showing that betrayal is an event that is regarded as particularly upsetting and damaging in close relationships (e.g., Davis & Todd, 1985; Jones & Burnadette, 1994; Shackleford & Buss, 1996; see Fehr, 1996 for a review). There was also a main effect for gender, $F(1, 119) = 36.44$, $p < .001$, indicating that, overall, women expected to feel more angered by these events than did men. Other researchers have reported a similar gender difference (e.g., Buss, 1989; Egerton, 1988). This effect was moderated by a Gender × Instigator interaction, $F(4, 476) = 7.84$, $p < .001$. As Table 1 shows, although women gave higher ratings than did men for all scenarios, this difference was largest for forgetting of birthday and personal criticism followed by cancellation of plans and betrayal of trust, with no significant difference on cumulative annoyance. Thus, it appears that women's greater propensity to be angered may hold particularly for negative events directed at self. A partner's annoying mannerisms did not engender greater self-reported anger for women than for men.

Part 2: Possible Reactions When Angry

How did women and men expect to react to these anger-provoking situations? To answer this question, reaction ratings were analyzed in a 2 (gender) × 5 (anger event) × 6 (type of reaction) analysis of variance. Each main effect and interaction was significant at the level of $p < .01$ or less. We will highlight the most important findings. First, there was a significant main effect for type of reaction, $F(5, 610) = 67.64$, $p < .001$. Talking and expressing hurt feelings were seen as the most likely actions in response to anger followed by indirect aggression, avoidance, and giving in/conciliating, with direct aggression the least likely (see Table 3). There also were

main effects for gender, $F(1, 122) = 8.85$, $p < .01$, and instigating event, $F(4, 488) = 22.76$, $p < .001$, which are best interpreted in light of significant higher order interactions.

Gender   Anger Event. The gender by anger event interaction was significant, $F(4, 488) = 4.24$, $p < .01$. Women assigned higher reaction ratings to all of the anger events except for the instigator personal criticism, in which men assigned higher ratings.

Gender   Reaction. The gender by reaction interaction also was significant, $F(5, 610) = 5.99$, $p < .001$. Specifically, women were more likely than men to report the use of both direct and indirect aggression and to express hurt feelings (see Table 3). Thus, our findings are consistent with previous research showing that women are more likely to express hurt feelings when angry (e.g., Fehr & Baldwin, 1996). The results also are consistent with previous research showing that women are more likely than men to report expressing aggression, at least in the context of a close relationship (e.g., Canary et al., 1988). There is some controversy in this literature over whether this gender difference reflects actual behavior in relationships or simply a gender difference in the willingness to report aggressive behaviors (see Fehr & Baldwin, 1996). Unfortunately, our data cannot resolve this issue.

Anger Event   Reaction. Different actions were seen as more or less likely in different situations, $F(20, 2440) = 14.80$, $p < .001$. The major finding here was that in the context of a partner's annoying habit, the action of talking about it was more likely than in the other situations, and the action of expressing hurt feelings was less likely.

Gender   Anger Event   Reaction. Finally, the three-way interaction was significant, $F(20, 2440) = 1.99$, $p < .05$. Univariate analyses revealed that women and men expected to react differently to the various anger events. As Table 4 shows, women were more likely than men to report that when angered by their partner's annoying mannerisms, they would respond with indirect aggres-

TABLE 2:   Elements of an Interpersonal Script for Anger

Elicitors	Subject's Response	Partner's Response
Betrayal of Trust	Avoid	Avoid
Rebuff	Aggress directly	Aggress directly
Negligence/lack of consideration	Talk it over/ compromise	Talk it over/ compromise
Cumulative annoyance	Aggress indirectly	Aggress indirectly
Unwarranted criticism	Conciliate	Conciliate
	Express hurt feelings	Express hurt feelings
		Deny responsibility
		Reject
		Mock, minimize

TABLE 3:   Women's and Men's Reactions to Anger-Eliciting Situations

	Overall	Women	Men	p
Avoid	3.27	3.32	3.19	ns
Aggress directly	2.59	2.87	2.20	.01
Talk it over	4.66	4.59	4.75	ns
Aggress indirectly	3.54	3.91	3.00	.001
Give in/conciliate	2.98	2.86	3.14	ns
Express hurt feelings	4.55	4.85	4.12	.001

sion (e.g., complaining to someone else, getting angry at something or someone else). When rebuffed, this same gender difference was found; in addition, there was a tendency for women to express hurt feelings. Following betrayal of trust, women were more likely than men to report that they would express hurt feelings and engage in both indirect and direct aggression (although the latter finding was only marginally significant). These gender differences were also obtained when the instigating event was negligence/lack of consideration, although in this situation there was also a tendency for women to report that they would avoid the issue. Finally, in the context of personal criticism, women were more likely than men to react with direct and indirect aggression and to express hurt feelings, whereas men were more likely to report giving in or conciliating. Looking at the entire pattern of means (see Table 4), it seems that gender differences in reactions were most likely in situations where there were gender differences in level of anger. (Note that in all analyses, the action by gender interactions remained even when the level of anger was covaried out.)

Part 3: Anticipated Partner Responses

What responses did people expect from their partners in reaction to various expressions of anger? Expectations were analyzed in a 2 (gender) × 6 (self's reaction) × 9 (type of expected partner response) analysis of variance. Once again, all main effects and interactions were significant except for the gender main effect, $F(1, 115) = 1.33$, $p > .10$.

The main effect for self's reaction, $F(5, 575) = 48.98$, $p < .001$, indicated that participants expected more responses (of various kinds) from their partner when the self engaged in direct aggression, followed by avoidance, indirect aggression, talking it over, and expressing hurt feelings. Partners were expected to be least likely to respond when the self gave in/conciliated. There was also a main effect for expected partner response, $F(8, 920) = 67.11$, $p < .001$. As depicted in Table 5, talking it over and expressing hurt feelings were seen as the most likely responses to self's expression of anger, followed by giving in/conciliating and then denying responsibility, mocking or minimizing the situation, and aggressing indirectly. The least expected responses were direct aggression and rejection. Consistent with the way they described their own likely actions, then, participants expected their partner's responses to be characterized by talking it over rather than aggressing. They also anticipated that the more prosocial actions were least likely to provoke a strong response from their partner.

Self's Reaction   Gender. A significant interaction was obtained between self's reaction and gender, $F(5, 575) = 2.94$, $p < .05$. Men were more likely than women to anticipate responses (of various kinds) from their partner when reacting to anger with direct aggression, indirect aggression, and giving in/conciliating. Women were more likely than men to expect their partner to respond when they reacted to anger by talking it over. There were no gender differences in expected partner responses when self reacted by avoiding the situation or expressing hurt feelings.

Response   Gender. There was a significant response by gender interaction, $F(8, 920) = 2.34$, $p < .05$. As shown in Table 5, men were more likely to expect their partners to express hurt feelings and to reject them, and women were somewhat more likely to expect to be mocked.

Reaction   Response. As we anticipated, however, people's expectations were shown to be more complex when specific if-then contingencies were examined. The significant reaction by response interaction, $F(40, 4600) = 23.69$, $p < .001$, indicates that our participants had scripts for which actions on their part were most likely to lead to which responses from their partner. Generally speaking, people expected more positive responses to positive ac-

TABLE 4:   Women's and Men's Reactions to Particular Anger Events

	Betrayal of Trust		Rebuff		Negligence		Annoying Habit		Personal Criticism	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Avoid	3.14	3.58	3.25	3.44	3.81	3.02+	2.58	2.60	3.82	3.27
Aggress directly	3.37	2.85*	2.60	2.23	2.67	1.96**	2.26	2.00	3.45	2.02****
Talk it over	4.18	4.63	4.84	4.67	3.99	4.58	5.53	5.25	4.42	4.46
Aggress indirectly	4.34	3.58**	3.95	3.27**	4.29	2.96****	3.30	2.37***	3.67	2.73**
Give in/conciliate	2.44	2.94	3.30	3.62	2.64	2.38	3.00	3.00	32.93	3.63**
Express hurt feelings	5.58	4.87***	4.96	4.42*	5.66	4.48****	2.74	2.67	5.33	4.12****

$*p < .10.$ $**p < .05.$ $***p < .01.$ $****p < .001.$

TABLE 5:   Expected Partner Responses to Self's Expression of Anger

	Overall	Women	Men	p
Avoid	2.93	2.90	2.96	ns
Aggress directly	2.37	2.29	2.48	ns
Talk it over	4.76	4.66	4.89	ns
Aggress indirectly	3.11	2.98	3.29	ns
Give in/conciliate	4.08	4.12	4.02	ns
Express hurt feelings	4.44	4.20	4.79	.01
Deny responsibility	3.55	3.60	3.49	ns
Reject me	2.12	1.91	2.43	.01
Mock/minimize the situation	3.12	3.31	2.84	.07

Figure 1   Expected partner responses to self's expression of anger: Aggression versus talking it over.

tions (e.g., talking it over, expressing hurt feelings) and more negative responses to negative actions (e.g., directly or indirectly expressing aggression), consistent with previous research on anger interactions (e.g., Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Figure 1 illustrates the expected pattern of responses in reaction to self's expression of direct aggression (an example of a negative action) compared to the more prosocial action of trying to talk it over.

Gender Reaction Response. The importance of studying the contingencies between actions and responses becomes clear in the context of gender differences. The significant three-way gender by action by response interaction, $F(40, 4600) = 2.28$, $p < .001$, indicates that gender differences in expectations were not constant but rather varied according to the script that was being followed. Univariate analyses revealed that there were significant gender by expected response interactions only in relation to certain behaviors on the part of self. Specifically, this interaction was significant only when self aggressed directly ($p < .001$) or avoided the issue ($p < .05$) and was marginally significant for indirect aggression ($p = .053$). An examination of gender differences in expected responses within each of these actions shows that in response to avoidance, men were more likely to expect their partners to talk and to express hurt feelings, whereas women were marginally more likely to expect that their partner would mock them or minimize
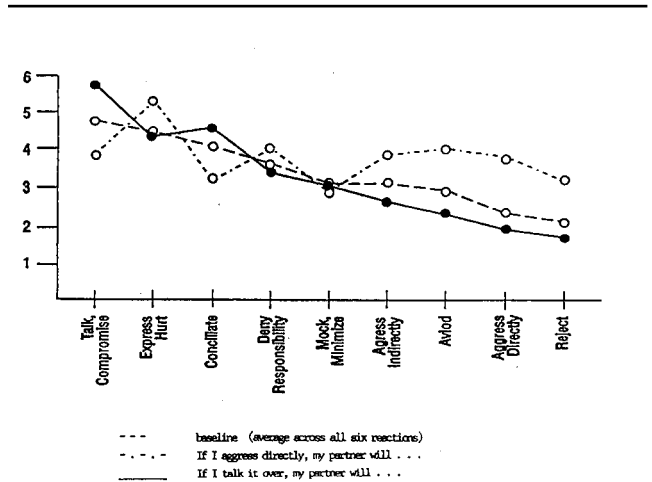
the situation (see Table 6); in response to indirect aggression, men were more likely than women to expect their partners would reject them, express hurt feelings, and respond with indirect aggression in return (although the latter finding did not reach statistical significance). As Figure 2 illustrates, men and women showed the greatest number of differences in response to direct aggression. In this context, men were more likely to anticipate that their partner would avoid them, reject them, express hurt feelings, and (marginally) respond with indirect aggression; women were more likely to expect that their partner would deny responsibility and mock them.

In contrast to the gender differences in the domains just mentioned, there were no gender by expected response interactions when self chose to talk it over (see Figure 3), express hurt feelings, or give in/conciliate (all $Fs < 1.5$, $ps > .30$). Thus, it seems that gender differences in expected partner responses appeared only when these responses were considered vis-à-vis certain actions on self's part. Specifically, gender differences in expectations were most likely in response to the fairly negative actions of direct and indirect aggression and of avoid-

TABLE 6:   Gender Differences in Expected Partner Responses as a Function of Self's Expression of Anger

| | Self's Reaction to Anger | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Avoid | | Aggress Directly | | Talk it Over | | Aggress Indirectly | | Give In/Conciliate | | Express Hurt Feelings | |
Expected Partner Response	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Avoid	3.71	3.54	3.55	4.33**	2.49	2.15	3.08	3.42	1.88	2.06	2.71	2.27
Aggress directly	2.45	2.35	3.51	3.94	1.92	2.08	2.41	2.73	1.59	1.92	1.88	1.88
Talk it over	4.63	5.23**	3.95	3.81	5.59	5.87	4.15	4.38	4.73	4.90	5.00	5.60**
Aggress indirectly	3.42	3.52	3.51	4.19*	2.55	2.65	3.48	4.06*	2.05	2.63**	2.64	2.48
Give in/conciliate	4.21	3.90	3.37	2.98	4.53	4.46	3.35	3.31	4.34	4.83	4.75	4.83
Express hurt feelings	4.25	5.15***	4.73	5.87****	4.41	4.46	4.34	5.06**	3.49	3.88	4.14	4.48
Deny responsibility	4.38	4.06	4.31	3.60**	3.37	3.42	3.58	3.59	3.15	3.30	2.90	3.06
Reject me	1.95	2.15	2.63	4.02****	1.70	1.98	2.27	3.04**	1.49	1.98**	1.49	1.63
Mock/minimize	4.14	3.44*	3.45	2.48***	3.30	2.73	3.27	2.64*	3.03	3.00	2.97	2.87

*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$. ****$p < .001$.
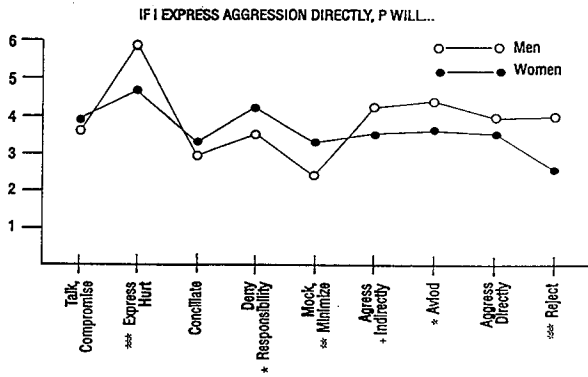
Figure 2   Gender, differences in expected partner responses to self's expression of anger: Expression.
+$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.
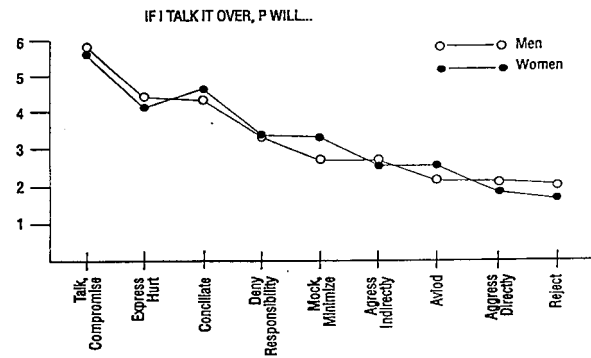

Figure 3   Gender differences in expected partner responses to self's expression of anger: Talking it over.

ance. Gender differences were less evident in response to the more prosocial actions of talking it over and expressing hurt feelings or the debatably prosocial action of giving in/conciliating.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Causes and Expressions of Anger

Our results showed numerous gender differences as well as lower order effects in the cognitive representation of the causes and expression of anger in close heterosexual relationships. Overall, betrayal of trust was reported as the most anger-provoking instigator, adding to other research identifying this relationship threat as a key context for anger in close relationships (e.g., Fehr, 1996). Against this backdrop was a gender difference: Women reported finding events more anger provoking

overall, particularly forgetting a birthday and personal criticism events that seem to reflect the partner's regard. We surmise that women's greater propensity to be angered in these contexts may reflect their greater sensitivity to the quality of their close relationships and their greater motivation to achieve intimacy in these relationships (e.g., McAdams, 1988) as well as, perhaps, their reported greater tendency to derive self-esteem from close relationships (Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992). Thus, as others have argued, anger appears to result from a threat or frustration vis-à-vis a valued goal.

There were also gender differences in participants' expectations about their own and their partners' likely reactions. In general, people anticipated that they and their partners would react by talking things over rather than expressing aggression. As in other research (e.g., Fehr & Baldwin, 1996), women were more likely than men to say they would express hurt feelings. Women also

were more likely to report they would behave aggressively. The fact that this gender difference was most pronounced in the contexts of negligence/lack of consideration and personal criticism suggests, again, that it may be women's greater attunement to relationship quality that underlies this difference. The interaction with instigator type also suggests a possible reason for inconsistencies in the literature: Gender differences may be more or less apparent depending on the extent to which important relationship issues (including interpersonal evaluation) are implicated.

Thus, consistent with standard self- and other-schema research, our participants were able to report on their own experience of anger as well as their partners' likely responses. These findings are valuable in their own right. However, as discussed next, by taking the research a step further and examining the contingencies between self and other (i.e., the interpersonal script), we discovered important information that could not have been gleaned by focusing on self- and other-schemas in isolation.

Interpersonal Scripts

By examining the contingencies between self and other (i.e., the interpersonal script), we were able to shed additional light on the inconsistencies in previous research. Our results show that women and men hold similar anger scripts under some conditions but not others. Specifically, women's and men's scripts for anger in heterosexual relationships were similar in situations in which the angered person chose to express anger in a positive or prosocial way. In such cases, both women and men expected their partner to react in kind (i.e., respond in a positive way such as talking it over). In contrast, when the angered person chose to react in a more negative way, such as aggressing directly, women and men held different scripts. Women were more likely than men to expect that their partner would deny responsibility. In contrast, men were more likely to expect that their partner would express hurt feelings, avoid them, or reject them.

One reason researchers and theorists from a variety of backgrounds are converging on the script construct is that it affords an integration of emotion with cognition, culture, biology, and, importantly, motivation. Following expectancy-value formulations of emotion, expected partner response is likely to be an important variable governing the motivation underlying the expression of emotion. People anticipate that there are different interpersonal payoffs and costs for different expressions of emotions such as anger. For example, as Parkinson (1996) has suggested,

> If emotions make claims about the definition of objects or events in the shared social situation, then perhaps one of the *purposes* of expressing emotion is to make these claims, or to achieve the indirect interpersonal benefits that making these claims produces. (p. 671)

Earlier, we mentioned Biglan et al.'s (1985) finding that depressed women's display of depressive behaviors lowered the probability of aggressive behavior from their husbands, whereas the husband's aggressive behaviors decreased their wife's depressive behaviors. In interpreting this finding, the authors suggest that, "The woman's depressive . . . behavior is one means of reducing the aversive behavior of her husband. He, in turn, can achieve brief respite from her depressive behavior by displaying aggressive behavior" (p. 446). Thus, the way that people choose to express emotion appears to stem, at least in part, from the interpersonal consequences of that response. According to relational schema theorists (Baldwin, 1992), expectations about partner responses are based largely on a history of repeated interactions. If a man is angry and engages in direct aggression, he may learn that his partner is likely to reject him and/or behave aggressively in return rather than conciliate (see Table 6). This may account for the finding that participants in our study reported rarely aggressing when angry. He may also learn that if he is angry and instead chooses to talk about it, his partner will be less likely to reject him and more willing to talk it over.

With regard to gender differences, as mentioned earlier, feminist writers (e.g., Lerner, 1985) have argued that women avoid the overt expression of anger in intimate, heterosexual relationships because of feared consequences such as rejection and loss of the relationship. Men, on the other hand, are rewarded for expressing anger directly. Our results suggest that women indeed anticipate negative outcomes when expressing anger but only when expressing anger in a negative way. In that situation, interestingly, it is not so much that they fear rejection but rather that they anticipate that their partner will refuse to accept responsibility for the situation. Contrary to the view that men reap benefits from the direct expression of anger, our findings suggest that men, similar to women, anticipate negative consequences for expressing anger—at least when expressed in a negative way. However, the outcomes that they expect are different from those that women anticipate. In fact, in our study, it was men, not women, who feared rejection from their partners. To our knowledge, the conditions under which women and men hold different anger scripts have not been previously identified. An important direction for future research will be to identify differences in

women's and men's interpersonal experiences that might give rise to these different anger scripts.

Limitations and Future Directions

Additional research is required to address the limitations of the current investigation. First, the reliance on our undergraduate student sample limits the generalizability of the findings. Although most of the participants were currently involved in a romantic relationship, the majority of these were dating relationships. It is unclear whether these relationships would have sufficient longevity to have established patterns of relating pertaining to anger issues. Thus, we are currently replicating this study with a community sample of married adults.

Second, the approach used in the current study should be expanded to identify the full set of interpersonal scripts held by women and men across a range of relationship contexts. Given our focus on anger scripts in close heterosexual relationships, our findings should not be misconstrued as supporting conclusions concerning the cognitive representation of emotion by women in general or men in general. To make such claims, it would be necessary to replicate this research in a variety of interaction contexts. Indeed, anger scripts are quite likely to differ depending on the gender of the interactants as well as the nature of the relationship (e.g., friendship versus romantic relationship, close versus nonclose relationship). The experience and expression of anger should also be quite different in avoidantly attached versus securely attached couples, for example, or in exchange versus communal relationships or equal versus unequal power pairings.

Finally, the reliance on self-report methodology is another limiting factor of this research. Our assumption is that people's scripts are "tolerably accurate" (Bowlby, 1969) representations of their interpersonal experiences; thus, our examination of relationship cognition is inextricably tied up with actual patterns of interaction in our participants' lives. However, what people say they do when angry may well differ from what they actually do in anger situations for all the reasons well recognized in self-report research. A combination of behavioral studies (e.g., involving videotaped interactions between partners discussing a conflict issue; Gottman & Levenson, 1985) and social cognitive research (e.g., reaction-time paradigms; Baldwin, Fehr, Keedian, Seidel, & Thompson, 1993) would clarify the links between actual patterns of interaction and their cognitive representation in scripts.

Future social cognitive research could build on previous studies of relational schemas: Consider, for example, that specific interpersonal scripts are hypothesized to be linked to specific views of self and other (Baldwin, 1992). Accordingly, a person who feels angry in response to a betrayal of trust and whose protestations are largely ignored by his or her partner could feel ineffectual and unworth—self-concepts that would not necessarily be associated with other anger episodes. Priming research could be used to map the spread of activation from specific emotions to specific views of self and other. Dependent measures could include interpretations of a partner's ambiguous behavior, selective memory for script-relevant behavior by self and other, and so forth (Baldwin, 1995).

In conclusion, the concept of scripts is increasingly employed in emotion theory and research. One strength of this development is that it could eventually facilitate an integration of cultural, cognitive, and biological models of emotion. A second strength is that a focus on scripts leads to a careful consideration of the complexities of interpersonal interaction, defining the social context for the experience and expression of emotion. As our results show, much can be learned from examining the if-then interpersonal contingencies represented in people's emotion scripts.

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